

Jonah: A Sacrifice to the Lord

Discussion Guide for Jonah 1:7–16 on Sep. 27th & 28th, 2025

Summary

As Jonah flees from God, a storm threatens to sink the ship carrying him to Tarshish. The sailors cast lots and God reveals Jonah's disobedience. Confronted, Jonah confesses who he is and who God is, and he offers himself to be thrown overboard. The sailors first resist but eventually pray to Yahweh, acknowledging His sovereignty, and then toss Jonah into the sea. The storm ceases, and the sailors respond with fear, sacrifice, and vows to the Lord. This passage shows God's mercy in exposing sin, His sovereignty over creation, and the foreshadowing of the gospel: one life laid down to save many.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for revealing Yourself even in our disobedience. Thank You that in Your mercy, You expose our sin so that we might repent and find forgiveness. As we study Jonah, remind us of the sacrifice of Christ—One who gave His life so that many could live. Give us hearts to confess, to worship, and to trust in Your sovereign hand. Amen.

Ice Breaker

Have you ever been "caught" in something wrong and felt both the shame of exposure and the relief of being free from hiding? What did you learn from that experience?

Key Verses

1. Jonah 1:7–9
2. Jonah 1:12–13
3. Jonah 1:14–16

Questions

1. Why is it a mercy of God to expose Jonah's sin through the casting of lots? How does confession free us from shame?
2. Jonah confessed his identity and proclaimed who God is even while disobeying. What does this teach us about identity in Christ versus our moments of failure?
3. The sailors first tried to save themselves by rowing harder. How do we sometimes try to "row harder" instead of trusting God's way?
4. In verse 14, the pagan sailors pray directly to Yahweh. What does this show about God revealing Himself to outsiders? How should this shape our view of evangelism?
5. Jonah offered himself as a sacrifice so others might live. How does this point us to Jesus, the greater Jonah?
6. The sailors respond to God's mercy with worship and vows. How can we make worship more than ritual and a true response of gratitude in our daily lives?

Life Application

Confess one hidden sin to God (and to a trusted believer if needed), pray daily for someone far from Him, and choose one act of worship outside Sunday—serve, give, or share Christ.

Key Takeaways

1. God's mercy often comes through exposure, leading to repentance and forgiveness.
2. Our identity is in God, not in our failures.
3. Trying to "row harder" in our strength only delays surrender to God's plan.
4. God reveals Himself even to outsiders—He wants the nations to know Him.
5. Jonah's sacrifice foreshadows Jesus, whose death brings life to many.
6. The proper response to God's mercy is worship in all of life.

Ending Prayer

Lord, we praise You for Your mercy that does not let us run far. Thank You for exposing our sin so we might repent and for sending Jesus, the greater Jonah, who gave His life to save us. Help us to worship You not only with our lips but with our lives. Lead us to trust Your sovereignty and reflect Your mercy to those around us. In Jesus' name, amen.