

Uber of Grace

We often talk about our desire to pursue God, but what's easy to forget is that God is also constantly pursuing us! And nowhere in the Bible is this more evident than in the book of Jonah, whose story reminds us that we cannot outrun or outpace the relentless pursuit of God.



INTRODUCTION

Today Pastor David reminded us of the importance and power of prayer and surrender. The true story of Jonah spending three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish is an excellent example of both.

STARTER QUESTION

Close your eyes and imagine for a moment that you ran from God and you were thrown into the sea and swallowed by a huge fish. How do you feel...what thoughts are going through your mind? Have you felt this way before? What should you do?

INTO THE WORD

1. Review Jonah chapters 1 and 2. Compare and contrast Jonah's actions in both chapters and the outcomes of those actions. Does it seem surprising how much mental and physical effort Jonah devoted to refusing God's command and running away? Is it even more shocking to read and understand how much agony and stress he endured before coming to the "I surrender" moment with God? Has there been a time in your life when you responded in a similar manner as Jonah? What have you learned today that you can apply to a situation like that in the future?
2. We were reminded today of the power of prayer and were given reasons why we should pray. Consider the following examples in scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Matthew 6:5-15, Genesis 25:21, Exodus 9:29, and 2 Samuel 24:25. What happens when you pray?
3. Pastor David advised us that when we surrender ourselves to God, it changes everything! Consider the following examples in scripture: Jonah 2:1-10, James 4:7-8, 2 Chronicles 30:8, and Job 27:2-10. What happens when you surrender to God? Can you think of other examples?

APPLICATION

4. Think of a time in your life where circumstances were nearly overwhelming in terms of conflict, complexity, and mixed emotions. Did you feel like you were buried alive? Knowing what you know now and after hearing today's message, how would you handle a situation like that now or advise a friend who may be experiencing that now?
5. Consider a time in your life when you prayed about something and you got what you requested. Compare to that a time in your life when you prayed about something and you did not get what you requested (or at least not the way you expected or hoped for). What might be some similarities between the two experiences and what might be the reason for different outcomes (at least in your perception)?

PRAYER

Dear God – Thank you for loving us so much that you run after us when we run from you. Please help us to accept your grace and to stop running away from you when things get hard. Help us to remain faithful and to trust you to handle everything according to your perfect plan. Amen.

SUGGESTED ANSWER GUIDE / MORE FOOD FOR THOUGHT FOR SELECTED QUESTIONS:

Question 1: In chapter 1, Jonah attempted to flee to Tarshish, which as we learned last week was the complete opposite direction that God asked him to go, and it was four times the distance away. He went to Joppa, located a boat going to Tarshish, purchase a ticket, got on board, and hunkered down at the bottom of the boat to shut the world out and sleep. As if he could escape God! Obviously, he could not – he was thrown into the sea and swallowed by a huge fish! He resisted trusting God, deprived God of the pleasure of obedience, would not allow God to change him or align him to God's larger plan...and look what happened to him.

In chapter 2 (as Pastor David shared with us), Jonah closed the relational gap with God by praying (verse 2), he expressed himself and shared with God verbally and emotionally (verses 3-5), he shifted his burdens to God (verse 6), surrendered his soul to God (verse 7), and expressed/felt gratefulness despite his predicament (verses 8-9)...and was vomited out from the fish!! He got a second chance!!

From the sermon we learned to give careful consideration to times or areas of our life when sin has crept in or taken a firm hold. This is a strong indication we are running from what God wants for us or refusing to shift our burden into His hands, even if we don't realize what we are doing. We also learned to be aware of God's grace when it appears. This is a clear sign God is running after us, pursuing us in love.

Question 4: First and foremost, PRAY! Talk to God honestly and earnestly about what is going on in your life and how you feel about it. He can take it!

- Consider and commit to the actions on your part that are needed to close the relationship gap with God.
- Discuss what it would mean to verbally and emotionally process the largest concerns in your life with God.
- Identify what you can do in practical and spiritual ways to shift a major burden to God.
- Determine why it is so hard to surrender your soul and will completely to God, then do it anyway.
- Believe in faith that more gratefulness to God will result from His growing presence in your life.

Question 5:

Similarities

- You demonstrated your trust in God and God came through with what He felt was best.
- You pleased God by coming to Him.
- God used your prayer to change you.
- You became aligned with God's sovereign plan.

Differences

- You trusted God, but God's sovereign plan was different than yours.
- You didn't really trust God or have faith, but God came through anyway with what He felt was best.