

Week Beginning: 4<sup>th</sup> August 2019

Worship Series: #7 in series

living sharing growing

## Theme Verse

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6

## Remember This Week

God has a job for you to do, He'll give you help to see it through.  
All you need he has in store, the riches of his grace, there's always more  
There is no need to run or hide, for God is always by your side.  
So get on up and walk His way, sharing his love day by day.



MAJOR QUESTIONS FROM THE MINOR PROPHETS



**I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him."**

**Lamentations 3:19-24**

Heavenly Father, Despite our wandering and our stumbling in the dark you are always with us. No matter what we do or how we try to separate ourselves from you, you are always calling us back, waiting with divine grace and love. Meet us again with your grace and love which are new every morning as we gather around your word. Amen

1. Share your highs and lows since you last met with one another.
2. Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?
3. When faced with a challenging situation, is your immediate response one of fight, flight or freeze?
4. What is the biggest injustice you have ever personally witnessed? What was your response to that situation?
5. Have you ever had to deliver bad news? How did you do it? How did it go?

Most of us are fairly familiar with the story of Jonah. God gives him some bad news to deliver to some nasty people. Jonah doesn't want any part of it and so runs full steam ahead in the opposite direction. But Jonah's reluctance eventually had consequences beyond what he could have imagined.

Read Jonah 1:1-13

6. What key words/thoughts/ideas/questions arise for you as you hear this text?
7. Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh and fulfill God's request. What reasons might he have had? What excuses have you tried with God?
8. Jonah's decision had some unexpected consequences for some innocent sailors. When you walk away from God, who is the focus of your thinking, yourself, God or others? Might there be unexpected consequences?

I'm sure you have all heard the saying "God works in mysterious ways". It sounds like a verse from Isaiah 55:8, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. One of Jonah's problems was that he thought he knew better than God. Jonah also thought that by refusing to do what God had asked, that he could thwart the will of God. That if he refused to take God's message, then God would be forced to destroy the wicked people of Nineveh.

It's funny because Jonah obviously knew God was 'a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity (Jonah





4:2b); but he had forgotten that God was also all powerful and the creator and sustainer of all. Sometimes we fall into a similar trap. In our focus on the grace and forgiveness God offers us through Jesus, we can lose sight of the fact that our God is the all powerful creator of the universe. The same God who parted the Red Sea for Moses and the Israelites, the same God who brought down the walls of Jericho.

9. *When you are asked to consider what God is like, what characteristics do you think of first? How does this affect the way you relate to God? Is it possible to balance the 'Loving Father' side of God's character with the 'Holy and Righteous Judge' part?*

Jonah goes on to be caught in a storm, thrown overboard to appease an angry God, swallowed and kept alive inside a big fish for three days and nights before being hurled back onto the beach, presumably somewhere not too far from Nineveh. To cut a familiar story short, the time he spent inside the big fish sees Jonah change his attitude to God's request, and so he reluctantly delivers God's message to Nineveh. The people of the city repent of their wicked ways and are saved from God's coming judgement and destruction.

### Read Jonah 4

There is an interesting contrast in the book of Jonah, between the people of Nineveh and Jonah the prophet. On the one hand you have a wicked group of people who appear to have diverted so far from God's intent that their wickedness has caught God's attention. Yet when these wicked people hear God's voice via his prophet, they immediately repent and return to God. The prophet Jonah, on the other hand, presumably had a relatively tight relationship with God, at least close enough that God trusted him with a message to deliver. Yet this man, this prophet of the Lord, physically tries to run and hide from God. He refuses to get on board with God's plans even after it was all said and done.

11. *As Christian's, God has intrusted us with his word and tasked us with teaching to people of all nations. What parts of that task frighten you?*
12. *Jonah was upset because God was prepared to withhold his judgement of Nineveh upon their repentance. What kind of history would make it hard for you to accept someone as a new part of God's family?*
13. *Are their elements of Jonah's thinking alive in the church today? How do you see that being manifested, 1) in our church, 2) in the wider church?*
14. *Jonah may have eventually delivered God's message to Nineveh, but do you think that was all that God had wanted Jonah to do?*

There are ultimately two stories of lost people here. God is at work calling both of them back to himself. However, it was ultimately the one who was 'closer' to God who had the hardest time finding his way back, if in fact he ever did!

It is easy, after being a Christian for a while, particularly if you stay part of the same church, to become blind to what God is calling you to do. We can expect God to keep doing the same thing in the same way. We get upset when he wants to do something different because it makes us uncomfortable. God's way might not be easy, it might not always make sense or seem fair from our perspective, but God's plans are always good.

15. *How can we make sure that our relationship with Jesus is not just a personal safehouse or bunker, but rather a base of operations which equips us for mission?*
16. *Scripture and prayer are the two main tools we have been given to determine what God is calling us to do. If you are not sure where God is leading you, how might you incorporate more scripture and prayer into your life?*

*Praying out loud in a group can be intimidating, especially if you have not ever done it much before. However, when God's people come together in prayer it is a wonderfully powerful thing.*

*Consider praying out loud for each other, asking that God might empower and prepare you for the tasks he has in mind for you to do. Ask that he would make those opportunities clear and that he might use your LifeGroup to build his kingdom here on earth.*

Turn to the person next to you and make the sign of the cross on the palm of their hand or forehead as you say:

*Name, may God be with you where ever you go. Amen.*

