

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ rely on God's grace (Ephesians 2:8-9).

SCRIPTURE

JONAH 1:17-2:10

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

This passage opens in the strangest of places, inside the belly of a big fish. Jonah acknowledged it was God who sent Jonah into the depths of the sea (v. 3). This was a consequence of Jonah's disobedience. God was disciplining one of his own to stop him from straying too far (Psalm 119:67). God's discipline is an act of love, as it is from every good father to his children he loves (Hebrews 12:5-11).¹ When Jonah refused to listen to God and ignored the Lord's call, God got Jonah's attention another way.

Check out the *Teacher Prep Video* for this lesson: <https://vimeo.com/1065876446>

FACILITATOR NOTE: We're giving you a lot of teaching material. Don't feel like you should cover everything here. You know your group better than anyone. Choose the material that will best fit your students and skip over the rest.



OPENING

PRAYER

1-2 minutes

Start your small group by asking the Lord to bless your discussion and time together.

OPTIONAL: Give students an opportunity to lead the prayer.

OPENING QUESTIONS

3-5 minutes

- How was the week? What's the best thing that's happened? Anything major going on?
- What is one chore or responsibility that you procrastinate the most before finishing?



EXPLORE

EXPLORE GOD'S WORD

3-5 minutes

In this passage, God actually saves Jonah twice. First, God sends a big fish to rescue Jonah from drowning. Second, he gives Jonah another chance at obedience by having the fish return him to dry land. In between those divine interventions, Jonah delays turning his heart back to the Lord. The Bible leads us to believe Jonah might have been inside the fish for three days before he finally decided to pray to God about his choices and circumstances. Jonah certainly didn't deserve God's mercy, but the Lord still chose to give it and save Jonah.

Read Jonah 1:17 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- How has God shown up in your life in miraculous ways?

Answers will vary but remind your students of the everyday miracles like salvation, continual forgiveness, the ability to talk directly to the Creator of all things, etc.

- Why do you think God is willing to go to such great lengths to bring us closer to him?

God loves us more than we can understand, and Scripture refers to him as Father, not just any father, but a good one (Matthew 7:11). A good father will do anything to protect and provide for his kids.



Say something like: God loves us in ways we can't fully understand. That love drives him to chase after us even when we run from him.

Read Jonah 2:1–7 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- When have you delayed doing the right thing? What consequences did you face because of the delay?

Answers will vary, but examples could include not repairing a relationship you helped damage, and now the friendship is gone; someone else was blamed for a mistake you made, and because you didn't admit to what you did, the other person was punished.

- In what areas of your life do you need a second chance?

Answers will vary. Don't rush this question. Give students time to think and respond. Come prepared with examples from your life to help get the conversation started.

- Do you think God always gives second chances? Why or why not?

Because of God's infinite love, kindness, and mercy, when we repent (turn away from our sin) and seek forgiveness, God will give us second chances (1 John 1:9).



Say something like: The God we serve is a God of second chances...and third, and fourth, and so on. This doesn't mean we can abuse his gift of grace (Romans 5:20–6:4).

FACILITATOR NOTE: If you have extra time, go through the next set of questions. If not, skip to the **Connection** section.

Read Jonah 2:8–10 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- How can obedience to God save us from making costly mistakes?

God is omniscient—all-knowing (Psalms 139:1–6; Psalms 147:5; Isaiah 40:28; 1 John 3:20). He already knows what will happen from today until the end of time. This gives him the unique ability to perfectly guide our paths (Proverbs 3:5–6; Psalms 32:8–10; Psalms 23:1–3).

- What steps can you take today that will help you become a more obedient follower of God in the future?

Answers will vary. Mention that, like our friends, the more time we spend with God, the more we get to know him and his will—study God's Word, pray, talk with mature believers who are further along in their faith journey than you, etc.



Say something like: We all make mistakes and are guilty of sin. Taking intentional steps to remain obedient to God's direction and guidance can save us from a lot of pain and mistakes.



CONNECT & APPLY

CONNECTION

5-7 minutes

Show your students how Scripture connects to their lives: Use the example below OR share a personal story where you made the most of a second chance.



Example: After graduating from the University of Northern Iowa, Kurt Warner went undrafted in the NFL. He was, however, invited to try out for the Green Bay Packers—a second chance. He didn't make the team. Not ready to give up, Warner played in the Arena Football League. To support his dream financially, he bagged groceries and stocked shelves at a grocery store. Five years later, Warner was given another chance in the NFL, winning the Super Bowl and eventually landing in the NFL Hall of Fame. Second chances can make all the difference in who we become. God is graciously a God of second chances.

- What would you say to a Christ-following friend who you know is moving away from God?
As difficult as it may be, a good friend will speak the truth to restore their friend, but they will do so in love (Ephesians 4:15). Doing so can save your friend from a lot of pain and negative consequences (James 5:19-20).

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

2-3 minutes

Disciples of Christ rely on God's grace (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Use the *Mark of a Disciple* to reinforce the lesson and challenge students to apply it to their lives.

APPLY IT

5-10 minutes

Who in your life needs a second chance? How will you give them a second chance or help them find one with the Lord?



Be specific:

- What are you going to do?
- When are you going to do it?
- Is there someone who can keep you accountable?



FACILITATOR NOTE: Allow students who are comfortable to share their plans for application. This may encourage or spark ideas for other students, plus add a level of accountability.



CLOSING

PRAYER

2-3 minutes

Take a moment to ask for prayer requests. Spend some time praying that your students would understand that God is full of second chances if we want them.

Write down any prayer requests mentioned and ask your students about them at your next meeting.

MEMORY VERSE

Send the memory verse graphic included in your download to your students later this week to keep the conversation going.

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

Lamentations 3:22-23 (ESV)

NOTES

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¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Jon 2). Victor Books.

