

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ recognize their need for a Savior (Romans 3:22–24).

SCRIPTURE

JONAH 3



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Nineveh is referred to as “that great city” in this passage. As the center of the growing Assyrian empire, it is believed to have had a population of nearly a million people in and near the city fortified by towers and walls.¹ Obviously, a city far from the ways of God (why else send Jonah), it must have been a violent place (Jonah 3:8; Nahum 3:1–3). This might explain part of the reason Jonah ran from God’s calling the first time. But fresh from the big fish’s belly (Jonah 2:10), Jonah was much more receptive to God’s instruction when it came the second time. God’s message through Jonah drastically changed “the great city” of Nineveh for the better.

Check out the *Teacher Prep Video* for this lesson: <https://vimeo.com/1065876236>

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

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

OPTIONAL: Give students an opportunity to lead the prayer.

1–2 minutes

OPENING QUESTIONS

- How was the week? What’s the best thing that’s happened? Anything major going on?
- What’s the worst news you’ve ever had to give someone? What was the best news?

3–5 minutes



EXPLORE

EXPLORE GOD’S WORD

3–5 minutes

The people of Nineveh heard God’s message through Jonah and repented. They were hopeful for and dependent on God’s mercy and forgiveness. Despite the great wickedness of Nineveh (v. 1:1), God showed them mercy after they turned from their evil ways and turned towards God. Like Nineveh, our own wickedness deserves destruction (Romans 3:23 and 6:23), but God gives us mercy and salvation when we turn to him.

Read Jonah 3:1–4 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- Share a time you were nervous/scared to do something you knew God wanted you to do
Answers will vary. Come prepared with your own example to help get the conversation started.
- How has God used your obedience to him to impact the lives of others?
Answers will vary but may include: sharing the Gospel with friends and they became believers, showing kindness to someone else and others followed your lead, etc.



Say something like: We can never be sure how God will choose to use us. When we are obedient to his calling and guidance, he can use us to make big impacts for his Kingdom.

Read Jonah 3:5–9 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- Since they weren't followers of God, why do you think the Ninevites believed God and his message through Jonah?
We can't know for sure. It's possible people witnessed Jonah being spit out of the fish and spread word about the miracle. What's important to note is that our job is to obediently share God's Word. How people respond is between them and God.
- How is your faith in God evident through your actions?
Answers will vary but could include displays of fruit from the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–24), consistently choosing God's way over our own (Matthew 16:24–25), thinking of others above ourselves (Philippians 2:3–4), etc.
- What do you think happens when our words about following Jesus don't match up with our actions?
It's hard for nonbelievers to see the importance of Jesus and the life-changing difference he brings when there is no difference between our words and actions and the words and actions of nonbelievers.



Say something like: Our commitment to the Lord must be more than just words. Surrendering to the Lord means allowing him to change all areas of us to be more in line with his Son.

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

Read Jonah 3:10 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- If God is willing to give forgiveness to anyone who wants it, what does that mean for us?
Obviously, we are to forgive others as God has forgiven us (Ephesians 4:32). This is easier said than done, but if Jesus can forgive the people who killed him while they were killing him (Luke 23:34), we can forgive others for whatever they've done to us.
- Who in your life do you need to forgive or seek forgiveness from?
Answers will vary. Don't rush through this last question. Give students time to think. Tell them to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal their hearts.



Say something like: Forgiveness is life-changing (Romans 6:23). Because we have all needed it (Romans 3:23), we should all be willing to give it.



CONNECT & APPLY

CONNECTION

5-7 minutes

Show your students how Scripture connects to their lives: Use the example below OR share personal instances of sinful mistakes you've made that haven't stopped God from choosing to use you.



Example: The Apostle Paul is probably the greatest example we have of what a Christ-follower should look. However, before Paul became an apostle, he was known as Saul, a pharisee zealous to persecute followers of Jesus. Before meeting Jesus on his way to bind up followers of the Way, Paul spoke of "threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9). Despite all of this, God chose to forgive, save, and use Paul in massive ways.

- Is it possible for someone to be so sinful that God refuses to forgive them?
No. It is possible for people to refuse to seek God's forgiveness, but if we repent and confess our sins, God is faithful in his forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

2-3 minutes

Disciples of Christ recognize their need for a Savior (Romans 3:22-24).
Use the *Mark of a Disciple* to reinforce the lesson and challenge students to apply it to their lives.

APPLY IT

5-10 minutes

What steps can you take this week to be more forgiving of those around you who may or may not ask for forgiveness?



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 will embrace the forgiveness God offers them and others.

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.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
1 John 1:9 (ESV)

NOTES

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¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Jon 3). Victor Books.

