

WTF LIFE MAJOR LESSONS | from the MINOR PROPHETS



LESSON 7 – JONAH

FACILITATOR'S

Note

The prophecy of Jonah is unlike any of the other prophecies in the Bible. In fact, Jonah's prophecy is only 8 words, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" (Jonah 3:4) The rest of the book is written in narrative form (it is about a prophet rather than by a prophet) and gives us a unique look at who God is and how we (like Jonah) often respond to God. In Jonah we discover that God is a universal God (God to all people and the entire universe) and that His desire is to save ALL humankind should they choose to repent. This is the message that we are to preach to all we come into contact with. But often, like Jonah, we do not like the fact that God will offer His grace to everyone. While other prophets were often reluctant to share God's Word due to their feelings of inadequacy and failure, Jonah was reluctant not because he feared failure, but because he feared success. He did not want the Assyrians to receive the mercy and forgiveness of God. Perhaps even today we are reluctant to share the Gospel of grace for some of the same reasons. This study will help us delve into not only who God is, but also who we are. This will force us to consider whether we are servants who work with God or in opposition to Him. The choice is ours. His will and purpose will be accomplished...but often in spite of us.

Through this lesson we hope to provide material that will provide knowledge (HEAD); then ask questions that will bring us understanding (HEART); and then motivate participants to go and live the Word in the world and demonstrate Godly wisdom (HANDS).

HEAD  **→ HEART**  **→ HANDS** 

We hope that by this study your class participants will not only hear, know, and understand the Word, but that they will also be driven to become the "Living Word" to the world around us. Your role in this process as a class facilitator is very important. Go beyond these lessons to demonstrate how what the Minor Prophets teach us can and should be lived daily. Use your life and the lives of others as examples of this "Living Word" concept.

*As always, we would encourage you to begin preparing for this lesson by digging into the Word and reading through the book of **Jonah**. We also encourage you to read/scan through **2 Kings 14:23-25** as a background to the book. As you move through **Jonah**, jot down any thoughts that come to you and particular passages that stand out and speak to you. We assure you that these will come into play as you facilitate this discussion. It is then that you should approach this lesson plan and use it (and others) only as a guide for the weeks to come. Your group is different than all the rest and so your lessons should be adapted accordingly.*

WTF LIFE MAJOR LESSONS | from the MINOR PROPHETS



PRAYER



Begin your time with a prayer asking God for the guidance of His Holy Spirit as you and your class seek to encounter Him through His Holy Word.

FOCUS

- Presentation of introductory and textual material on the prophesy of Jonah.
- Recognize the greatness of God and that He wants to save ALL humankind, if they will just turn to Him and repent.
- Understand that God is the one and only God of all that exists.
- Realize that we cannot run from what God wants us to do.
- God will use us to accomplish His will. We must choose if we will work with Him or in opposition to Him.

DISCUSSION STARTERS (OPTIONAL)

- When you think of the book of Jonah, what is the first thing that comes to your mind? Why?
- Have you ever found yourself trying to run from what God wanted of you? How did it turn out? Share your experience and what you learned.
- Has there ever been someone you didn't feel God should offer salvation to? Why?
- Have you ever found yourself not afraid of failing, but afraid of succeeding? Why would one fear success?
- Is it necessary to completely understand a command of God before we obey it? Why do we believe that we must understand or make sense of God before we can follow and obey Him?
- Does God and His commandments/requirements always make logical sense? What is our duty to God?

KNOWLEDGE HEAD

From God's Word through Jonah

- OVERVIEW
 - Author
 - Jonah means, "dove".

THE PROPHETABLE

LIFE MAJOR LESSONS | *from the* MINOR PROPHETS



- Jonah was the son of Amittai (1:1) and we from a small village (Gath-hepher – 2 Kings 14:25) approximately 4 miles northeast of Nazareth.
- Jonah evidently prophesied that Jeroboam II would restore the northern border of Israel (2 Kings 14:25).
- During the time of Jonah's prophecy, Israel was materially wealthy and had military success. However, they were in moral and spiritual decay.
- Yet, Jonah was not preaching to Israel or Judah, but instead to the Gentile people of Nineveh, the Assyrians.
 - The Assyrians were on the fast track of becoming a world empire, but they were in a state of disorder and infighting during the time of Jonah's preaching. This environment of confusion probably played into the Ninevites openness to Jonah's message.
- **Date**
 - According to the information we read of in 2 Kings 14:23-27, Jonah prophesied during the later years of Amaziah (king of Judah) and during the earlier years of Jeroboam II (king of Israel). This would have Jonah's writing around 790-780 B.C. and would put him toward the time near the end of Elisha's ministry.
- **Uniqueness of Jonah**
 - The uniqueness of Jonah often leads some to believe that it was not literal or historical but instead was an allegory, myth, or even parable. However, this is suspect due to several reasons:
 1. The book itself reveals nothing to suggest that it is intended to be taken allegorically, but instead leads one to believe that it is a historical record of actual events.
 2. The Jews, who first received the prophecy, believed it to be a historical rather than fictional. It would not make sense for the Jews to accept a story that emphasized God's forgiveness and mercy to Gentiles if it was a myth.
 3. The most critical evidence to its historicity lies with Jesus' confirmation of the story of Jonah. In fact, He related its authenticity to His own resurrection. It would be difficult not to accept its authenticity unless one doubted the resurrection of Jesus as well. See Matthew 12:39; 16:4; Luke 11:29.
 - Jonah was unlike many of the Old Testament prophets in several ways:
 1. Is a book more about the prophet than being about the oracles of the prophet
 2. The actual prophecy in the book is only 8 words (3:4)
 3. Is written in narrative form
 4. Miracles play a dominant role

WE PROPHETABLE LIFE MAJOR LESSONS | from the MINOR PROPHETS



- **Miracle of the Storm** (1:4)
- **Miracle of the Calm** (1:14-16)
- **Miracle of the Fish** (1:17)
- **Miracle of the Plant** (4:6-8)
- 5. Preaches to a foreign people (not to the Hebrews, but the Gentiles)
- 6. Only minor prophet mentioned by and likened to Jesus (Matthew 12:38-41; 16:4; Luke 11:29-32)
- 7. Addresses the universality of God (God of ALL people and all the universe)
- **Theme(s)**
 - There are two primary themes that run throughout the book of Jonah:
 1. God's love and grace is universal (for ALL humankind) (See John 3:16; Acts 10:34-43; 2 Peter 3:9)
 2. God's reign and presence is universal (the one and only God for all humankind and the entire universe) (See Psalm 139:7-12; Amos 9:2-4)
 - a. The greatness of God is demonstrated in:
 - i. His treatment of all people (even Gentiles)
 - ii. His control over nature
 - iii. His compassion and patience toward His childish and selfish prophet
 - **ASK:**
 - How does God's treatment of both the Ninevites and Jonah make you feel?
 - How do we teach those who don't have a relationship with God that this is also a part of God that they must accept in order to follow Him?
- **Jonah in the New Testament**
 - "Three days and three nights" – Matthew 12:38-41
 - "The sign of Jonah" – Matthew 16:4
 - "The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment" – Luke 11:29-32
- **THE TEXT**
 - The text of Jonah is easily divided into 4 movements of Jonah:
 - **Jonah moving away from God**
 - **Jonah moving toward God**
 - **Jonah moving with God**
 - **Jonah moving ahead of God**
 - **1:1-16 (Jonah Moving AWAY from God)**
 - Jonah is called by God and flees to Tarshish
 - God calls Jonah to go to Nineveh. Jonah attempts to flee "away from the presence of the Lord"

WE PROPHETABLE LIFE MAJOR LESSONS | from the | MINOR PROPHETS



- **ASK:**
 - Is it possible to flee from the presence of the Lord? Read Psalm 139:7-12. Why do we think we can hide from God?
- **The Miracle of the Storm:** Jonah's confession (vv. 4-10)
 - Key in on verse 10.
 - **ASK:**
 - Why would he brag about fleeing from God's presence? Do we?
- **The Miracle of the Calm:** Jonah's sacrifice (vv. 11-16)
- **1:17-2:10 (Jonah Moving TOWARD God)**
 - **The Miracle of the Fish:** Jonah's conversion (1:17-2:9)
 - Jonah's time in the belly of the fish brought him into God's presence. There he prayed to God and proclaimed the truth he discovered, "Salvation belongs to the Lord!"
 - Key in on 2:2, 6b-9
 - Jonah's deliverance (2:10)
 - God hears Jonah's prayers and delivers him from the belly of the fish. However, it is described as vomiting. Just like God wanted to vomit the Laodiceans due to their "neither hot or cold" faith, God vomits up Jonah with his "lukewarm" approach to preaching His gospel of grace to people Jonah didn't think deserved it.
 - **ASK:**
 - How do you think God likes our "lukewarmness" when it comes to either our faith or our lack of sharing it?
 - How is Jonah's time in the belly of the fish related to Jesus? Read Matthew 12:38-41; 16:4; Luke 11:29-32.
 - How does this relate to our faith and deliverance?
- **3:1-10 (Jonah Moving WITH God)**
 - Jonah's second call by God and his response to the call
 - God's message to Nineveh (3:1-4)
 - **ASK:**
 - How difficult do we need to make our "word of the Lord" to people? *Jonah used 8 words.*
 - The Repentance of Nineveh (3:5-10)
 - Key in on verses 5, 8b-10
 - **ASK:**
 - What does God require of us? Belief, Repentance, and Obedience

WE PROPHETABLE LIFE MAJOR LESSONS | from the MINOR PROPHETS



- What is God's response to Belief, Repentance, and Obedience? GRACE, every time!!!
 - **4:1-11 (Jonah Moving AHEAD of God)**
 - A Narrow-Minded Preacher vs. A Gracious God
 - Jonah's displeasure with God (vv. 1-5)
 - Read all 5 verses but key in on 2 and 3.
 - **ASK:**
 - What is Jonah's problem with God?
 - Do we have the same problem with God sometimes? Explain.
 - **The Miracle of the Plant:** Jonah's discomfort, joy, and despair (vv. 6-8)
 - **ASK:**
 - How can Jonah go so easily from discomfort, to joy, to despair?
 - Do we do this in our walk with God? How?
 - God's Rebuke and Lesson (vv. 9-10)
 - **ASK:**
 - What is God trying to teach Jonah here?
 - What lessons can we learn from this?
 - Crazy thing is that there is no resolve at the end of Jonah! We do not know what happened to Jonah. Did he repent of his ways and learn from God's lessons? Did he go on sulking and never get God's point?
 - This leaves us all with the burning question: **What will we choose?** *God's grace or Self-righteousness*
 - Remember, God will use us to carry out His will. The real question is how will we be used? A willing and humble servant or an arrogant and selfish child? The choice is ours!

UNDERSTANDING ♥ HEART

- What are some of the modern-day messages that we have heard through Jonah today?
 - Do we find ourselves running from God's call? How?
 - Which movement of Jonah's do you find yourself in right now? Explain.
 - **Moving away from God?**
 - **Moving toward God?**

WE PROPHETABLE LIFE MAJOR LESSONS | from the MINOR PROPHETS



- **Moving *with* God?**
- **Moving *ahead* of God?**
- Do find yourself determining who God should save or not save? Explain.
- Do you find yourself “lukewarm” in your faith and the sharing of it? What can you do about it?
- The end of your story and faithfulness to God is open-ended right now. How do you want the end of your story to be written? Share with everyone.

WISDOM HANDS

- What messages did you hear in this lesson that need to be shared with people you know?
- Who in your group of friends or family do you need to share the message of grace found in Jonah with TODAY? Think specifically.
- Commit to each other that you will all have the courage to share the message. Pray NOW and then pray for each other through the week to have the boldness to share.

PRAYER



End your time together with a prayer. Ask God to help us in sharing His message of Love and Grace to a lost world. Commit to Him your life and your desire to move **toward** and **with** Him rather than **from** and **ahead**. Ask Him to open the eyes of our hearts through this study so that we may know Him more and develop an intimate relationship with Him that we want to share with others.

WTF LIFE MAJOR LESSONS | *from the* | MINOR PROPHETS



SEMESTER OUTLINE (SPRING 2016)

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE MINOR PROPHETS – Why Study This? (January 3)
2. HOSEA – PART 1 (January 10)
3. HOSEA – PART 2 (January 17)
4. JOEL (January 24)
5. AMOS (January 31)
6. OBADIAH & NAHUM (February 7)
7. JONAH (February 14)
8. MICAHA (February 21)
9. HABAKKUK (February 28)
10. ZEPHANIAH (March 6)
11. HAGGAI (March 13)
12. ZECHARIAH – PART 1 (April 3)
13. ZECHARIAH – PART 2 (April 10)
14. MALACHI (April 17)
15. CONCLUSION TO THE MINOR PROPHETS (April 24)