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*Hey leaders! We are in week 2 of our series, “**Man Overboard**”! In the book of Jonah, God is a missionary God who shows compassion on His enemies in Ninevah. God is also a missionary God to His own prophet, and He pursues the repentance of a whole city with the same passion as the one person who runs into the belly of the fish. We all run from God, and we all must turn back to Him in repentance.*

NEED A RESOURCE, HAVE A QUESTION, OR WANT TO HAVE A CONVERSATION?  
Let us know how we can help! Contact your groups director or [discipleship@rockbridge.cc](mailto:discipleship@rockbridge.cc)

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**“Jonah saw God’s will as punishment. Jesus saw God’s will as nourishment.”**

[Warren Wiersby]

**LEADER RESOURCES || Leader Note** *We do our best to equip, empower, and encourage you to shepherd your group well. Access a resource by clicking on the underlined title and share them with your group!*

- **Passage Summary**
  - God’s pursuit of Jonah pays off–Jonah repents, at least partially, and prays. The prayer of Jonah is more the focus of the chapter than the fish is–it isn’t what’s happening TO Jonah that matters most, but what is happening IN Jonah.
- **Secret Church 23**
  - David Platt on Jonah’s Prayer. The teaching starts about 10 minutes into the video.

**ENGAGE & CONNECT || Leader Note** *The goal for the icebreaker is to prepare your group for the conversation ahead by connecting with one another’s hearts and building joy together.*

Who in your group would be most likely to go hunt Jonah’s big fish and mount it on their wall?

**BEGIN WITH PRAYER || Leader Note** *Begin your time together thanking God for his presence and praying His word back to Him. Ask a few people to pray, taking a posture of humility and dependence!*

Lord, help us receive Your word and what we need to feed our souls today. We all have times when things go dark, when You’re challenging our stubbornness. Help us to see You in the belly of the fish, still gracious, providing for us, and bringing us home all at the same time. Amen.

*“I called to the LORD in my distress,  
and I cried to my God for help.  
From his temple he heard my voice,  
and my cry to him reached his ears.”*

[Psalm 18:6]

**BIG IDEA || Leader Note** *Read this aloud so your group knows the theme of today’s reading and discussion.*

Our relationship with God is all that really matters, and God will go to great lengths to bring us back into that relationship... no matter the price to Him or us.

**PASSAGE & DISCUSSION || Leader Note** Have people read aloud the passage as instructed. Your role is to FACILITATE, so keep your group moving along, encourage people to share, and look for opportunities to point out the grace and glory of God! Here are two reminders: 1) Every question does not have to be answered ... go where the Spirit leads! 2) Answers do not have to be read aloud ... they're for guidance!

1. In the sermon we heard, "*Jonah was awake but must be restored.*" What is the difference between being "awake" to God and being "restored" into relationship with Him? What are the steps along that path? *Answers may be something like "being repentant, not just knowing you did wrong but actually taking steps to do it right, changing the path/behavior, the same as knowing you put a sock on the floor versus picking it up and apologizing," etc.*

Have someone read aloud Jonah 1:17-2:10. Consider having someone else read it aloud again, possibly in a different translation to gain another perspective (i.e. CEB, the Message, Amplified).

2. It isn't being at rock bottom that brings Jonah back, but it's PRAYING at rock bottom. What does rock bottom look like for you? What is a rock bottom prayer you've prayed? *Answers should vary, but there will probably be some agreement as to a few elements of this: hopelessness, no energy to try, nowhere to go, trapped, wit's end. Rock bottom prayers are often beautifully simple, like "God... help. Save me. I can't do this anymore."*
3. This whole being in the belly of a fish... is it a good thing or a bad thing? *Let's get some healthy discussion going! Nobody wants to be in the belly of a fish. It is not the career move we dreamed of. But that or the sea? That or drowning? That or being allowed to continue running? That or slandering God's name further for his whole life, living as a thief of glory wearing the name of God but not His mercy? Yeah. The fish is better.*
4. Matt mentioned that God is a jealous God for what's His. (You can read Exodus 34:14) Have you considered that God is jealous FOR you? How is that different from Him being jealous OF you? *God's relationship with His children is close—it's like adoption, like marriage. If you have a child, and that child isn't ever home, you're jealous for your little one to be with you. If you have a spouse, but your spouse would rather be anywhere but with you, you are jealous to spend time with them. Our idolatry sparks jealousy in God, because we aren't together when we should be. This is not petty. This is not coveting. It's simply longing for what **should** be.*
5. Sometimes, when we're insensitive or unresponsive to God's presence, God turns off the lights, stops the music, and brings us into "belly of the fish" moments. What has that moment been for you? *God is creative. This can be job loss, a move, a sickness, anything that strips away identity in idols or distractions and sobers us enough that we wake up and open our eyes.*
6. What environment do you hear God best in? How do you usually hear God? *Some people need external quiet to really listen, but some need music. Some people need stillness, and some hear better while washing dishes or walking through their neighborhood. It's good to affirm that we are different, and if "the way everyone else is doing it" doesn't work for you, maybe it's time to seek God in new ways, like a quiet hike or meditating on a scripture while you shower.*
7. How can Jonah be like "I cried for help, and You heard my voice" and "You cast me into the deep" all in the same breath? *God's grace sometimes looks like hard times. It's good to be brought to repentance. It was good for God to hear... and good for God to appoint a fish.*
8. In Jonah's prayer, he says, "As my life was fading away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to You." When have you had a moment when you remembered the Lord? *God brings Himself to mind in some of the most interesting times. Answers may vary, but hopefully, people in*

*your group have had times when they remembered God and had light flood into a dark place.*

9. In verse 8, it says that “those who cherish worthless idols abandon their faithful love.” What idols had Jonah been cherishing that made him abandon God so much? *Jonah may or may not have had the awareness to put his finger on his idol problem, but it is worth looking back over what we know of Jonah’s journey so far and doing a check, even if the answer might not be apparent yet. Jonah’s idolatry issue will continue to be rooted out through the next few weeks, too.*
10. Salvation belongs to the Lord. What are some ways we try to save ourselves when we get into impossible situations? What’s the difference between giving up and trying to save ourselves? *God saves. Our attempts to “do it ourselves” or “fix it” might look like repentance, but there is no surrender in them. They’re just bids for more control. This isn’t to say that apathy is the way out of a fish. But even if Jonah had railed against the rib cage of that fish, he would have found himself back in the sea. He had to wait to be spat up on shore. Prayer and waiting on the Lord is not “giving up.”*

**STEP OF OBEDIENCE || Leader Note** *This is an opportunity for people to put into practice what the Spirit is inviting them to do and live in obedience to God for the sake of love! You can encourage your group to be accountable to one another and use these to follow up with one another throughout the week.*

Jonah receives grace and acts in faith *before he is released from the fish.*

*As you consider your next step, reflect on:* 1) What situations have you been wanting to escape when you might need to experience grace IN that situation instead? 2) Where do you need restoration and grace?

*Give your group a few moments to reflect on their answers to the questions above. Then have your group answer the question aloud. Feel free to separate into smaller groups of 2 or 3 for this question, so each person has others praying with them for the needs they’re taking before the throne. The possible next steps of faith below are not for discussion, but simply a resource for your group members.*

### **Step of Faith Ideas**

1. Matt listed several pieces to restoration: Repentance, humility, confidence, assurance, consecration (being made holy), and a fresh sense of God. Which of these do you need to ask the Lord for this week?
2. Ask the Lord to restore you into the blessing of His presence.

**PRAYER FOCUS || Leader Note** *Be intentional about saving at least 5 minutes to pray together. Try the prayer activity below or pray for one another’s personal requests!*

### **The Miracle of Grace**

The turning points in our lives aren’t our situations—they’re the miracle of grace in our hearts.

- If you’ve been running from something, be still.
- If you’ve been put into a “belly of a fish” situation, remember God.
- If there’s an idol that has been guiding your steps away from God, dethrone it.
- Close your time by reading this prayer together:
  - *“Those who cherish worthless idols abandon their faithful love, but as for us, we will sacrifice to You with a voice of thanksgiving. We will fulfill what we have vowed. Salvation belongs to the LORD.”*