



Discussion Guide
Man Overboard – Part 3
LEADER GUIDE

Hey leaders! We are in week 3 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

"Jonah did not weep over the city, but Jesus, the true prophet, did.... Here is a perfect heart—perfect in generous love—not excusing, not harshly condemning."
[Tim Keller]

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
o In Jonah 3, God's grace is persistent, restoring, and rescuing. By grace, Jonah has reached a new level of submission that leads to obedience to God's purpose for his life. Jonah becomes an instrument in God's hand to offer mercy to Nineveh. God is ready to show more mercy and give more grace than we're ready to receive and offer to others.

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.

What is the one thing you've had to repeat over and over—your "if I had a dime for every time I've said..." phrase?

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, prepare our hearts so that we can receive Your word as readily and as eagerly as Ninevah did. Get ego and pride and walls out of the way, so that the second Your word touches our ears, our hearts receive it gladly. Amen.

"Teach us to number our days carefully so that we may develop wisdom in our hearts."
[Psalm 90:12]

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

God works IN Jonah so that He might work THROUGH Jonah.

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. *There are several types of grace in Jonah: rescuing, equipping, saving, and never-excusing grace.* What do you usually think of when you hear the word "grace"?

Have someone read aloud Jonah 3:1-10. Consider having someone else read it aloud again, possibly in a different translation to gain another perspective (i.e. CEB, the Message, Amplified).

2. Why do you think God gave them a deadline warning? Why 40 days? *Deadlines increase urgency. Knowing that Jesus is coming some day doesn't incite panic. Knowing Jesus is coming in 40 days is a very different feeling. 40 happens throughout scripture—and it maybe feels like "it's not too late, but it will be too late soon."*
3. If you knew that God was going to do something about the state of your city in 40 days, what would you do? *The Ninevites stopped everything. Everything ground to a halt. They didn't even let their livestock drink water.*
4. We don't know when God is going to act. Why aren't we doing those things? *This may vary, but it might all boil down to "we don't actually take God seriously. We don't truly believe He will do something SOON."*
5. Has God, in His grace, given you a warning before? Given you guidance? How did He speak? *Answers may vary, but in spaces like this, it's useful if you go first, especially if people in your group are new to following Christ.*
6. How do you usually hear from God? *God speaks through a verse, through a concerned friend, through His voice in our minds. He is creative, so answers may vary on this one.*
7. How do you usually listen for God? *The goal here is to open our ears to hearing from Him. We can ask Him questions, bring Him our fears, spend time in stillness and quiet, go on a hike, read His word, listen to a good sermon or podcast, etc.*
8. Why did God turn back His wrath and change His mind? *This is inviting a little bit of speculation, but draw it back to rereading the verses for the answers. They changed their course, and He changed His. He saw that they heeded the warning. He wanted to save them. He wanted to love them. He didn't want to destroy. He'd planned for mercy all along by sending Jonah.*
9. In the sermon, Matt asked, "Are we serious about knowing, experiencing, and serving, God?" How would you know if you were serious about those things? What would you be prioritizing if that were your number one goal for your day? *There are a lot of ways you can prioritize and be serious about God. A few are universal: prayer, worship, spending time with Him, practicing being in His presence as you do everyday tasks. Some with more experience in this might add that they keep an open channel of prayer going basically all day, that they see the everyday tasks as sacred duties in the temple. Be careful with this one to keep it from becoming a burden—a pile of things I should be doing. It might even be worth having people pick one thing to focus on.*
10. Imagine Jonah showed up in your community with the same message. How can you be ready to hear a message from God in the next 40 days? *This might involve prayer, taking time to be quiet, really listening, fasting, setting aside busyness.*

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.*

In Jonah we see the thoroughness of God's commitment to make us **faithful and fruitful for His glory**.

As you consider your next step, reflect on: 1) How are you spending your next 40 days? 2) How can you prepare yourself to hear gracious warnings from God?

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. Be surprisingly open to God changing your mind this week. Receive His word with gladness.
2. Pick a verse this week to meditate on and receive its words, accepting them wholeheartedly.

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!*

Who Knows?

Nothing we do is a guarantee to "make God" do anything. No prayer, no act, no invocation. God is God, and He chooses how He will respond. Trust doesn't control—but who knows? God may do something amazing. Don't you want to be positioned where you'll get to watch Him? Up close?

- Spend some time every day this week talking to God about the things that are bothering you.
- Ask God what is bothering Him.
- Keep your eyes open to see things from God's perspective as you read His word each day.
- Close your time by reading this prayer together:
 - *"Make us ready to receive Your word like Ninevites. Take this bunch of Jonahs and prepare us to hear, turn back home, and leave our old ways behind in the dust. Amen."*