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*Hey leaders! We are in week 4 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.*

*Next week we begin our Christmas series, “**Baggage**”! We all carry things that weigh us down that shape how we walk through life. This series will invite us to face what we’ve been carrying, name what holds us back, and discover the freedom Jesus offers when we release those weights. This season, let’s make room for Jesus by setting down the baggage that keeps us from knowing, trusting, and following Him fully.*

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

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“We think that we do well to be angry with the rebellious, and so we prove ourselves to be more like Jonah than Jesus.”
[Charles Spurgeon]

LEADER RESOURCES || Leader Note *We do our best to equip, empower, and encourage you to shepherd your group well.*

- **Passage Summary**
 - The contrast between God’s response and Jonah’s response to Ninevah’s repentance could not be more stark. Jonah “relapses” into running (anger is the symptom) and thus shows his need for more transforming grace. God is relentless in His pursuit of Jonah and seeks to change Jonah as the “word” of God comes to Jonah a third time. God continues to send things Jonah’s way that have His purposes behind them. Jonah’s nationalism, self-righteousness, pride/ego, and desire for a god like himself are exposed. Then the story ends.

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.*

Jonah ends on a massive cliffhanger. Do you love cliffhangers, or do they annoy you?

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, show us how we are like Jonah. Bring us to repentance, then make us less like Jonah and more like Jesus Christ. Amen.

“The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at Jonah’s preaching; and look—something greater than Jonah is here.”
[Matthew 12:41]

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

Transformation and purpose happen when we are born again, committed to prayer, trusting God's process, and advancing the kingdom of God!

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, "*Anger is our 'soul' gauge.*" What did Jonah's anger say about the things that really mattered to him at the soul level? *The sermon mentions his nationalism, self-righteousness, and ego. He thinks he knows better than God and wants Ninevah destroyed, himself to be comfortable, and his sin to be overlooked rather than dealt with.*

Have someone read aloud Jonah 4:1-11. Consider having someone else read it aloud again, possibly in a different translation to gain another perspective (i.e. CEB, the Message, Amplified).

2. What things get you really angry? What does that say about where your soul is? *Please pray quietly for your group as they answer this question, that God would reveal things in their hearts, that they would gladly confess them, and that their eyes would be open to what is going on in their soul.*
3. When is it easier to be excited that God is on the throne? When is it less exciting? *There is room here for both things to exist. We can be thankful for God's patience and mercy... while also being so tired of waiting on Him to act. We can be glad for God to be the one handling things too difficult for us to parse... and still be fantasizing about what we would do with godlike power. This is a space to confess that.*
4. How committed is God to Jonah's happiness? His comfort? His transformation? *God definitely provides comfort for Jonah AND takes it away. Jonah would have less opportunity for that anger to be rooted out if he hadn't experienced the happiness of the vine God provided. Happiness that is rooted in temporary things is fleeting, but happiness that comes from rejoicing in God's salvation is steadfast, and sometimes our comfort needs to go away for us to be offered healing that leads to real joy.*
5. Has God "blessed by reduction" or taken something away, and it was a good thing He did? *This is an opportunity for people to share their own stories of God's goodness that we sometimes overlook. "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." Even when He takes away, it is good. It is often mercy.*
6. Can you tell where God is transforming you right now? Is He asking particular questions or pointing out particular wounds or thought patterns or sins? *This may be a good question for you to go first in answering. Take some time to think about it and look for patterns in what scriptures have been jumping out at you lately, at what has bothered you lately. You can lead your group in answering and in praying for each person, that they will surrender gladly to the kindness of God in transforming them. The process isn't pleasant, but it's so worth it!*
7. When did Jesus become real to you? Was there a moment you can point to and say "I was born again" that day? *There may be some who aren't yet following Christ in your group. It will be important for you to welcome them where they are and let them know that you hope they*

encounter Jesus as they spend time getting to know who God is. For the rest, there is something incredibly bonding about sharing our Jesus stories.

8. How important is prayer to you? What is your favorite time and place for prayer? *Prayer is very personal, but for many, it is also very awkward and difficult. This may be a good time to encourage the people in your group to set aside a space for prayer every day, to just spend quiet time with God. No agenda, and words are optional. He loves you and wants to spend time with you.*
9. When you look back on your faith journey, what are the steps in the process where you can see where God has brought you? *This is, again, personal. Part of being a disciple is that we aren't the same as where we started. Newer believers or those curious about God aren't going to have a history marked with multiple steps. This question is where those who have walked a long way with the Lord may have some encouragement for the new believers.*
10. Where is your Ninevah? Would you go there? Are you already there? *Living Sent is one of our core values, but we don't always come out of baptism full of understanding where we're to go and tell the good news. Be willing to explore this question with the members of your group, but it may come down to praying together, "God, send us with Your word, and show us where You want us to go."*

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.*

What becomes of Jonah... *and what becomes of us?*

As you consider your next step, reflect on: 1) How can you cultivate your relationship with God this week? 2) How can you invest in the kingdom of God this week?

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. Practice the presence of God through even the boring parts of your day—talk to Him in your mind all day long.
2. Reflect on what message God has sent you with and where He wants You to tell it.

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!*

People who Take Grace to Nineveh

We can become people who practice God's presence, are generous for God's kingdom, and who go to the Ninevehs around us with a message of mercy.

- Commit to prayer
- Embrace God's process and timing
- Answer His call and advance His kingdom
- Close your time by reading this prayer together:

- *Lord, as we finish our time in the book of Jonah, let these lessons linger. We want to be agents of Your mercy, so we must receive Your mercy. Work in us all week long and let us come back next time with stories of Your goodness and faithfulness. Amen.*