

Session 2: Jonah 1:4–16

Read Jonah 1:4–16.

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in David Platt’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

While the ship’s crew members were crying out to their gods, where was Jonah?

How did the sailors respond when they learned that Jonah’s God “made the sea and the dry land”? Instead of repenting of his sin, how did Jonah suggest that they resolve their predicament?

Show Session 2: *Jonah 1:4–16* (11 minutes).

Discuss

David opened this session by pointing out that, at this point in the story, we see Jonah giving up on God. But God hadn’t given up on Jonah. God could have sent plenty of other prophets to Nineveh; he could have let Jonah go. But he didn’t. In what ways do you find it encouraging that God refused to give up on Jonah? Do you believe God will never give up on you? Why, or why not?

Beginning in verse 4, the story takes a foreboding turn. Jonah was running away, but God didn’t let Jonah get far before he intervened in a dramatic way. Has God ever intervened in your own life in a dramatic way? What was your life like when God intervened? In what ways did God’s intervention change your life?

God “threw a great wind onto the sea,” halting Jonah’s progress and frightening all those aboard the ship. It was such a violent storm that it threatened to rend the ship in two. The sailors were so frightened that they began crying out to their gods. What does this passage show us about God’s power? Did these sailors respond to God’s exercise of power in the right way? To what degree are you conditioned to respond to the power of God like these men?

In contrast with the ship’s crew, Jonah had descended into the bowels of the ship and fallen into an apathetic slumber. He was hiding from God and, in effect, plugging his ears to the voice of God. In your life, to what lengths have you gone to hide from God and shut out his voice? Who or what did God use to break through to you? What does it say about God’s love for you that he engaged you even as you were avoiding him?

As David pointed out, the irony of verse 6 is that Jonah, the prophet from Israel, was running from God while the pagan ship captain and his crew did anything they could to seek God. What’s more, they implored Jonah to snap out of his slumber and seek God too. What is Jonah doing wrong? What did the captain and his crew get right? What stands out to you about the difference in Jonah’s and the sailors’ reactions?

Eventually, the mariners convened and cast lots to determine who was responsible for their plight. Jonah was found out, and when they confronted him, he answered them in verse 9: “I’m a Hebrew. I worship the Lord, the God of the heavens, who made the sea and the dry land.” Jonah could have saved everyone a lot of trouble by taking responsibility much sooner. Why do you think Jonah was so slow to take responsibility for the ship’s current situation? How do you tend to respond when you’re confronted for wrongdoing? Do you confess honestly, or do you try and circumvent the charges?

Read Jonah 1:10–16.

Learning that Jonah had sinned against the God who made the sea, the men on the ship “were seized by a great fear” (v. 10). They began urgently seeking for a way to appease Jonah’s God. They were learning the hard way that sin and a lack of repentance have dire consequences. To what degree do you feel an urgency to repent when you’ve sinned? How could you condition your heart to view sin as seriously as these men did?

In this exchange, we see God using Jonah to spread his Word to the nations. Even in Jonah’s reluctance, these sailors witnessed the power of his God. At the same time, God was working on Jonah’s heart as well. And that’s one of the beauties emerging from this story already: God is concerned both about the redemption of whole people groups and the hearts of his people individually. How can we recognize God’s plan of redemption

and the individual care he gives his people—both in this story and in our lives? What happens if we emphasize one over the other?

As the sailors were questioning Jonah, searching for an escape from danger, Jonah proposed a solution in verse 12: “Pick me up and throw me into the sea.” David suggested a number of other solutions Jonah could have proposed, repentance being one of them. Instead, as David said, “Jonah would rather die than obey God” at this point in the story. How do you think Jonah could prefer death over obedience? Does obeying God’s will ever feel more frightening to you than the consequences of your disobedience? Why?

In verse 14, the sailors were at the height of their desperation. On one hand, they faced certain death because of the storm. On the other hand, Jonah was arguing that the storm would calm if they just threw him overboard, presumably to his death. So, in their desperation, they cried out to God—they prayed. What is it about desperate circumstances that compel us to cry out to God? Have you ever found yourself in a desperate situation? Did you respond more like Jonah or like these sailors? How did God attend to you in your desperation?

In their prayer, these men cried out for mercy—something Jonah had yet to do. Then they cast Jonah overboard. David said that while Jonah thought he was running to a distant, exotic land, he was running to his death. And this is where sin leads. It disorients us, deceives us, and leads us to places we don’t want to go. Jonah is showing us, David said, that “rebellion against God never ends in our good.” When have you experienced the bitter effects of sin? What did it take for you to recognize that your sin was leading you down a road you didn’t want to go?

David said one of Jonah’s problems was that his faith in God didn’t carry with it the fear or reverence of God. There are a lot of ways to describe what it means to fear God—reverence, awe, respect, or even dread. In your own words, how would you define the fear of God? How can we cultivate a healthy fear of God? How can a healthy fear of God lead us to submit to him and his Word?

When the ship’s crew threw Jonah overboard, and he landed in the sea, the storm stopped. The men were once again “seized by great fear” (v. 16). They offered sacrifices and made vows to the Lord. In these acts of worship, the sailors identified as followers of God. So, even as Jonah disobeyed God’s command to go to a foreign nation, God used him to lead sailors from foreign nations to himself. What does this story communicate about God’s willingness and ability to save people, even despite our own feeble attempts or refusal to share his Word? How can this story remove some of the pressure we might feel to perform perfectly when we talk about God?

David closed this session by reiterating two thoughts. First, God is intent on accomplishing his purpose of spreading his salvation to all nations. But, second, he’s also intent on transforming and caring for the hearts of his people—we see it in Jonah’s narrative, and we can see it in our own lives as well. In what ways is God currently at work in your heart? What means is he using to shape your heart? To what degree are you submitted to God and the work he’s doing in you?

In what ways is God’s work in your heart preparing you for deeper involvement in spreading his Word to others? What opportunities do you have right now to share the gospel?