

Life Group Topic #4 February 1, 2009

Jonah 1: Are We Jonah?

WELCOME: (15 minutes)

Can you recall a time when you felt forced to go on a trip that you really didn't want to go on?

WORSHIP: (15 minutes)

Use whatever means possible to turn the group's attention to the wonder and majesty of our God- including music, prayer, meditation on the Psalms, and other art forms.

WORD APPLICATION: (45 minutes)

Briefly read or paraphrase the following sermon summary before moving to the heart of this section: the discussion around the application questions.

A shared vision is not an idea. It is not even an important idea. It is, rather, a force in people's hearts, a force of impressive power. It may be inspired by an idea, but once it goes further—if it is compelling enough to acquire the support of more than one person—then it is no longer an abstraction. People begin to see it as if it exists. Few, if any, forces in human affairs are as powerful as shared vision.

What is our shared vision? Our vision must begin in the plan and heart of God...

1. The Come See Mission began with Abraham as Israel was presented as a showpiece to the nations. Come and see what God does for a people who love and obey Him. Israel failed but God did not give up.
2. The Go To Mission began with Jonah as God shifted from the *come see* strategy of a showpiece and said *go to* the world

Our vision must be based in and driven by a **go to strategy**...let Jonah open our eyes.

- **THE COMMAND...Jonah 1:1-2**

God was commanding Jonah to go to Nineveh, the capital of this evil empire...500 miles across desert like territory...to preach against it, because its wickedness had come up before God. Jonah would have delighted with this message of judgment but His challenge was that He knew the character of God...

1. To a people unworthy of mercy, God is merciful
...God never provides salvation for the goodness of man—salvation is provided for the sin of man. Anyone can work out a plan to save good people but only God has a plan to save sinners.
2. When we are gripped with ethnocentricity God is not.
...ethnocentricity is the subtle belief that God is really only interested in my particular culture

- **THE RESPONSE...Jonah 1:3-17**

Jonah immediately heads west when he has called to go east. God had greater difficulty getting His servant to do His will than He did in transforming a whole city of pagans. Future verses make clear that God brought a whole city to its knees by sending one man walking through the streets preaching doom and damnation. His greatest challenge was getting the man to go.

1. Out of his lack of love for the people of Ninevah he would not go.
2. Out of his knowledge of God he would not go

So what do you do when favorable circumstances confuse the will of God?

1. The ship was ready to sail to Tarshish so God must have changed His plan. God's servants usually encounter difficulties and problems as they follow God.
2. Jonah falls asleep in the ship during the storm so surely that peace indicates that He is in the will of God. There is no apparent attack of conscience, no backward look, no vain attempts to sleep Yet His God lacked the right to command his life. He actually chose death rather than do the will of God.

Word Application Questions:

Please keep in mind that these questions are meant as catalysts designed to get the group talking about life application.

1. In the Jewish synagogues, on the Day of Atonement, the book of Jonah is read. After it is all done the people respond, "we are Jonah!" My question is: Are we Jonah?
2. Do you believe that to a people unworthy of mercy, God is merciful?
3. Are there people that your ethnocentricity has excluded?
4. Have we unknowingly returned to a *come see* approach to our vision when God has called us to a *go to* vision?
5. Our upcoming **REACHING OUR CITY** weekends will be our concerted attempt to reveal to you centers of community that we are called to and places that God has already given you an affinity for:

REACHING OUR CITY THEMES...

February 28-March 1...Reaching the NEIGHBORHOODS of our city

March 28-29...Reaching the POOR of our city

April 25-26...Reaching the INDO-CANADIANS of our city

May 30-31...Reaching the MARGINALIZED of our city

June 27-28...Reaching the WORKPLACES of our city

September 26-27...Reaching the STUDENTS of our city

October 24-25...Reaching the PRISONS of our city.

What is your affinity?

WITNESS: (15 minutes)

This section is a vision-casting time designed to get the group strategizing and making concrete plans towards reaching outward to a lost world. Relational outreach always has the goal of ultimately enfoldng those we reach into the Life Group.