

WEEKLY REFLECTION

When we think of Jonah's story, Jonah and the big fish—which, despite popular opinion, was not necessarily a whale—jumps to mind. But Jonah and his story of disobedience to God is so much more than that. At the heart of Jonah's story is a man who loved his country too much and trusted His God too little. After hearing God's summon for him to go to Nineveh and to call the nation to repentance, Jonah chose instead to "flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord" by boarding a ship at Joppa (Jnh 1:3). Sadly, the consequences are disastrous. The Lord hurls a great storm upon the sea, such a great one that the ship Jonah is on threatens to break apart (v.4).

How many of us truly desire to hear from God? How many of us are prepared to hear the things on His heart, and not ours? How many of us will respond the way that Jonah did, doing what we think is best for ourselves instead of choosing to submit to God in obedience, no matter how strange and confusing or how difficult the things that He asks of us are?

For Jonah, it was a matter of life and death—if the Assyrians in Nineveh survived God's wrath against their sin, they would come for the nation of Israel. Simply put, Jonah did not trust God. For many of us, it might be fighting against our sinful desires, to do it our way instead of God's way. But the root heart problem remains: do we trust in ourselves more than we trust in God?

There will be storms if we choose our own way. Not all storms are of our own doing, but the consequences of choosing our own way over God's way will always lead to storms. The final question is—how many of us will choose to struggle and save ourselves, instead of realizing that these storms can be used to point us to the only One who saves? How many of us will choose to be Jonahs, insisting on our own way?

QUESTIONS

QUESTION ONE:

Was there a time when God asked something of you that you were unwilling to submit to? What was your reaction like? Was it similar to Jonah's in any way?

We will see more of the motives behind Jonah's actions as we continue to dig further into the book of Jonah, but can you discern some of the true heart motives behind your actions?

QUESTION TWO:

For the mariners, their way of coping and of dealing with the storm was to cry out, each to their own god, and to hurl the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten its load.

When you find yourself in trouble, what is your first instinct? What coping mechanisms do you find yourself jumping or running to? Do you find yourself looking for God's help, or do you try and solve your problems yourself?

QUESTION THREE:

In light of the sermon and what was shared, take some time now to be still and to pray into the things on God's heart. Ask for Him to show you if there is anything that you are running away from, like Jonah, or if there is mistrust in your heart towards Him. Ask Him how you might address these things, and what are some action steps that you can take.

Break up into smaller groups to share with one another afterwards, and end the session by praying for one another and what you have shared.