



## Not THAT! | Stories of a Reluctant Faith | Week 1 | November 4, 2018

**Jonah 1: 1-17, Matt 16:1-5, John 13:34-35**

**Look Back:** We have been talking for a couple months about how we do “the Other Six”. Have you noticed any change in life at work/home/school/community? Talk about what’s different for you.

**Opening:** Pastor Dan Meyer and Pastor Tracey Bianchi speak this week on Jonah’s call to Nineveh. The background reveals that Nineveh was not a safe place for an Israelite prophet. The people of Nineveh were an “unpalatable people”. Jonah, by his action, said “Not THAT!”.

**Context:** We’ve been talking about relationships with people we know and how we, as “image bearers”, can live into those relationships. The background assumption has been these are people we like to be with. But what about the hard people; the ones we don’t want to be with, the ones we are afraid of, the ones who are entirely different from us.....

**The Call:** Read the first three verses of Jonah 1. What strikes you about this passage?

Jonah was not a rookie. He was a prophet to his Hebrew people. He had heard God’s call before (2 Kings 14:23-25). But it was unusual for God to send a prophet to the Gentiles.

**The Response:** Pastor Bianchi tries to paint a picture of the impossibility of the call. “Like preaching to the Taliban against terror” she said. We can only judge Jonah’s hopelessness by his response— “sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord”.

Have you ever had a situation that pushed you that far, that looked hopelessly impossible? Something that scared you so much or made you so despairing that you were as irrational as “a prophet fleeing the Lord”?

Who is Jonah trusting at this point? As he “flees the Lord” who has he joined?

**God Pursues:** God had no trouble getting the sailors attention, they knew how much trouble the storm was for them. But what of Jonah? Who woke him up? What do you think this picture means: Jonah the rookie seaman fast asleep below decks and expert sailors above decks fighting the storm and praying to their gods?

**Jonah is called out:** The pagan sailors knew something was very wrong. They were men of the sea and this was abnormal. They began looking for an abnormal explanation for the intensity of the storm. Read vs. 8-10.



Have you ever found yourself in a similar situation? Running away from God and realizing in the midst of it who He is?

**The Pagans figure it out:** Whatever faith these men had, whatever they had faith in, they knew they had to appease Jonah's God because He was mighty and powerful.

What might Jonah be feeling as he saw the response of the pagan sailors toward God?

Have you ever been surprised by a response of spiritual insight and simple faith from what you had deemed an "unlikely source", a person you would never expect to be spiritual?

**The Lord provided:** We are constantly reminded in the Old Testament of the Mighty Power of God and what He has done for His people Israel. We also get the prophetic images of what He will do for humankind—such is the picture in vs. 17.

What has the Lord provided for you this week? Have you been running from Him or to Him?

**Practice of the Week: Ask God to show you the need for Grace around you**

God wants us to see the "sailors in the storm" around us every day. They may be desperate enough to pray but they don't know to whom to pray. It could be, like Jonah's "call" to speak into those very different from us for an "abnormal" conversation. It could be the chance to encourage and celebrate spiritual awakening from an unlikely place. Seeing things as God **providing opportunities to give grace** versus interruptions to our "plans" can be exciting. Live with that this week.

**Family Formation: The Sailors were Scared**

Tell the story of Jonah's storm from the eyes of the veteran sailors. The sailors got so scared they started to pray, but they didn't know to whom they should pray. Once they learned of "the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land" they prayed to Him because they saw His power. Ask each child what they want to pray for. Pray a simple prayer and write it down. Come back to it.

**Additional Resources:** *"Fish Out of Water"* By Ravi Zacharias

We'd love to hear from you!

If you have thoughts questions, comments, ideas on how to make these study guides more meaningful for you and your group, please let us know.

We also enjoy hearing how God is using these scriptures and study guides in your lives.

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