

# SO GOD *RELENTED*

unit 14 | session 2



## CHRIST CONNECTION

Jonah was a prophet who rejected God's call, ran from his enemies, and eventually obeyed grudgingly. Jesus followed God's call, loved His enemies, and obeyed joyfully (Heb. 12:2). While we were still sinners, Christ willingly died for us.

# **FOR ALL**

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

## **Jonah**

### **GOD IS FORGIVING**

#### **JONAH 3:1-10**

1 Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you." 3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth. 4 Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" 5 And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. 6 The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. 7 And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water, 8 but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. 9 Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish." 10 When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

### **GOD IS PATIENT**

#### **JONAH 4:1-11**

1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. 2 And he prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. 3 Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." 4 And the LORD said, "Do you do well to be angry?" 5 Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city. 6 Now the LORD God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant. 7 But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. 8 When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, "It is better for me to die than to live." 9 But God said to Jonah, "Do you do well to be angry for the plant?" And he said, "Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die." 10 And the LORD said, "You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. 11 And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?"

## MAIN POINT.

No one is outside of God's reach.



## THEOLOGY CONNECTION

### GOD IS GRACIOUS

God's nature is to delight in giving unmerited favor to those who are undeserving (Eph. 2:8-9). His grace toward sinners is found most clearly in the salvation He has provided through Christ. Because of sin, humanity is undeserving of salvation—all of us have turned our backs on God, and as a result, we deserve death (Rom. 6:23). However, instead of leaving people in their sins, God has demonstrated His graciousness by providing atonement and forgiveness for our sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus (2 Cor. 5:21).

# DISCUSSION

## GOD IS FORGIVING

JONAH 3:1-10

- What are some reasons we feel uncomfortable sharing our faith?
- Why must we understand the bad news (Our sin separates us from God forever) before we can truly understand the gospel?
- What does it mean to show someone grace? How do we receive God's grace?

## GOD IS PATIENT

JONAH 4:1-11

- Why was Jonah angry? What do you see about God through His interaction with Jonah?
- What lesson do you think God wanted to teach Jonah (and us)?
- Have you ever assumed that some people aren't able to be forgiven? Why isn't this biblical?



**JONAH'S OBEDIENCE LED TO NINEVEH'S FORGIVENESS. SO, WHAT COULD YOUR DISOBEDIENCE COST OTHERS?**

## CULTURAL CONNECTION

Some of us have unspoken limits when it comes to loving others. Though most of us would agree that God loves everyone, if we're honest, we don't love everyone. We don't even like everyone! So, we place conditions on sharing God's love. We're more willing to share it with people we like being around; we'll talk to people who don't make us too uncomfortable; we'll gravitate toward those who are like us or who don't offend us with their lifestyles. And this conditional attitude couldn't be further from Jesus's example. Not only did He claim with His words that God loves everyone (look no further than John 3:16), but Jesus's actions proved this to be true. Jesus—God in flesh—went to the outcasts, to the sinners, to the tax collectors, to the sick. Though He never condoned their sin, Jesus loved those culture (and religion) called unlovable and unworthy. His love was unconditional. Jesus imitated the Father's great love for us, and He calls us to do the same.



## DAY ONE

### 2 PETER 3:8-9

Have you ever felt like time passed too quickly? Maybe your vacation flew by or the time you spent with a loved one felt too short. Time is weird in that way: It seems to pass either too quickly or too slowly. Most of us hardly ever feel like we had just the right amount of time.

Time is out of our control, but God exists above and beyond it; time's limitations don't apply to Him. Instead, time bends to His will. He is sovereign over it. Peter explained that a thousand years must feel like a single day to God. God has always been; He wasn't created; He has no beginning. These truths can be difficult for us to wrap our minds around, right? But it should bring us comfort. God is so very patient with us. Sometimes, it may feel as if God is slow in keeping His promises, like He is late. But Peter explained that God wants everyone to come to repentance. Because of God's love and compassion, He has delayed the coming of the new heaven and new earth. This week, we studied about Jonah's delayed obedience in going to Nineveh, a major Assyrian city. Although the Ninevites were pagan enemies of Israel, God desired to show them mercy. He postponed their punishment to give them time—time to hear Jonah's message of repentance and time to respond. Throughout the Old Testament, we read story after story of God delaying punishment so that people had an opportunity to turn to Him. Our current time is no different. We don't know when God will return to usher in His kingdom here on earth. But we do know that every day is an opportunity to share the gospel with people. We do know that God desires for everyone to be saved. He isn't slow in keeping His promises; rather, He is patient.

- **WHEN HAVE YOU FELT LIKE GOD WAS TOO SLOW IN KEEPING HIS PROMISES?**
- **HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE CHANGE YOUR UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE PASSING OF TIME?**

## PRAY

GOD, I STRUGGLE WITH PATIENCE. I SOMETIMES FEEL  
LIKE YOU'RE SLOW IN KEEPING YOUR PROMISES.  
I COMMIT TO TRUSTING YOUR TIMING AND TO  
SHARING THE GOSPEL WITH OTHERS.





## DAY TWO

# 2 CHRONICLES 7:12-14

Think of a situation in which you might need to make a good argument to change someone's mind. For example, let's say that your parents make the decision to move to a new area. You don't want to move and change schools, so you beg them to stay. You make a good argument for why moving would be a bad idea. You plead with them to reconsider.

In today's passage, we read a message from God to Solomon. Solomon had just finished building and dedicating the Lord's temple. God explained that He had heard Solomon's prayers. He explained that one day, even if He punished Israel by sending a drought, an infestation, or sickness, His heart could still be moved. What would move God's heart to show mercy to sinful Israel? Israel would need to humble themselves, pray and seek the Lord, and turn from their evil ways. If they did these things, God would forgive them and heal their land. Sometimes, we may struggle with wondering if God hears us; we may struggle with wondering whether or not our prayers matter or if we can ask God for another outcome. This passage shows us God's character; He is a merciful Father, poised and ready to forgive us when we humble ourselves, when we pray and seek Him, and when we repent of our sin. As we saw this week with the people of Nineveh, God hears us. We don't have to convince Him with a well-planned argument. Instead, God responds to humble, repentant hearts.

- **HAVE YOU EVER FELT LIKE YOU NEEDED TO PRESENT YOUR CASE TO GOD?**
- **WHAT DOES IT REVEAL ABOUT GOD THAT HE IS MOVED BY OUR HUMBLE REPENTANCE AND NOT OUR PERFECTION?**

## PRAY

**GOD, I KNOW YOU HEAR ME. I KNOW YOU DESIRE HUMILITY AND REPENTANCE. THANK YOU FOR YOUR WILLINGNESS TO FORGIVE ME AND HEAL ME FROM MY SIN.**



## DAY THREE

# LUKE 11:29-32

Sometimes we refuse to see our own faults. Even when someone confronts us about something we did that was wrong, we lean toward arguing our innocence. We may struggle to face the truth. In the lesson this week, the people in Nineveh seemed ready to admit their sin! They didn't argue for their innocence or ignore Jonah's warnings. They didn't ask for a sign that God was the one true God. They immediately confessed and repented.

In today's passage, Jesus pointed out the people's resistance to truth. They had heard rumors about Jesus, and many of them had witnessed His works, like healings and the feeding of five thousand (Luke 9:10-17). But they wanted more miracles and signs; they wanted proof that Jesus was the Messiah because they struggled with believing in faith. Jesus contrasted their stubborn refusal to repent with Nineveh's willingness to repent. The Ninevites, who were evil enemies of Israel, responded immediately to Jonah's message; they repented without asking for signs and miracles. But the people listening to Jesus couldn't see that One greater than Jonah stood before them—that Truth stood before them (John 14:6). How do you respond to truth, especially when it sheds light on your sin? It may be your habit to ignore it, to point to someone else's faults, or to argue your own innocence. But God forgives you when you respond in faith with repentance, and you won't stand condemned with those who reject truth. You'll find freedom in confession.

- **DOES STUBBORNLY REFUSING TO REPENT BENEFIT US? WHY DO WE DO THIS?**
- **WHY DOES GOD WANT US TO HAVE FAITH RATHER THAN ASKING FOR SIGNS AND MIRACLES?**

## PRAY

**GOD, I WANT TO HAVE A HEART THAT RESPONDS  
TO TRUTH WITH CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE.  
I KNOW THAT CONFESSION LEADS TO FREEDOM.  
THANK YOU FOR SHEDDING LIGHT ON MY SIN.**



## DAY FOUR

# EPHESIANS 6:19-20

What is boldness? Is it never being scared or always having courage? Is it always having the right words to say? You may not think of yourself as a bold person. You may think that boldness describes only people who can stand in front of large groups and speak with confidence. But bold people still experience fear; they don't always know what to say. So then, boldness is sometimes more like having a willingness to speak, stand, or act even in the absence of confidence. This means any of us can be bold.

Paul asked the believers in Ephesus to pray for him. Paul—a man who was well-known, respected, and at one point, feared by many—asked believers to pray for him to have boldness in sharing the gospel. He needed prayers to speak correctly about the mystery of the gospel. Paul explained that he was chained to this call; in other words, as someone who represented Jesus, Paul felt obligated to share the gospel with others. Like Paul, we know the hope of the gospel. We've experienced salvation because of Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection. But unlike Paul, many of us don't feel compelled to share this hope with other people; we don't feel chained to the call. More like Jonah, we often run from God's command to tell others. We'd rather be disobedient than risk others making fun of us. We care about what people think of us; we fear not fitting in. And sometimes we blame our refusal to share the gospel on not being bold. But boldness is simply a willingness. Paul prayed for boldness, but he was chained to sharing the gospel regardless. It wasn't optional for him, and it can't be optional for us.

- **DO YOU FEEL LIKE “AN AMBASSADOR IN CHAINS” WHEN IT COMES TO SHARING THE GOSPEL? WHY OR WHY NOT?**
- **HOW DOES IT ENCOURAGE YOU TO KNOW THAT BOLDNESS IS OFTEN JUST HAVING THE WILLINGNESS TO DO SOMETHING?**

## PRAY

**GOD, I PRAY FOR BOLDNESS IN SHARING THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL WITH OTHERS. I WANT TO BE WILLING TO SPEAK EVEN WHEN I'M FEARFUL. I WANT TO BE CHRIST'S AMBASSADOR.**





## DAY FIVE

# 1 CORINTHIANS 1:30-31

This week, we read about Jonah's initial refusal to go to Nineveh. At the heart of Jonah's disobedience was his hatred and distrust of the Ninevites. Jonah didn't think they were worthy enough to hear a message of repentance because they were enemies of God's chosen people—of Israel. Because he knew the Lord's character, Jonah realized God would forgive the Ninevites if they repented (Jonah 4:1-2). And Jonah didn't want that.

How often do we look at people in the same way Jonah looked at the Ninevites? We hear about their reputation, and we make judgments about them without even knowing them. We determine their worth based on their actions, and we don't stop to consider why they do what they do—that their behavior likely stems from not knowing Christ. We don't stop and consider that, like the 120,000 people in Nineveh, they desperately need God, and that because we know Jesus, we know the way to the Father. Instead of being willing to share the hope of salvation with as many people as possible, we reserve it for people we are comfortable with, for people we like. We somehow adopt a mindset that we have a right to decide who is worthy of God's forgiveness. But really, none of us have anything to boast in but in Christ. None of us were worthy of the gospel—of the free gift of salvation. We didn't earn it. And like the Ninevites, we were once enemies of God when we were dead in our sin (Rom. 5:10-11). May we represent Christ to other people and share the message of hope we know to be true. May we remember that Christ bled for the world because He loved the world (John 3:16). These are the truths we boast in!

- **WHY DO YOU THINK GOD OFFERED SALVATION AS A GIFT RATHER THAN AS SOMETHING WE CAN EARN ON OUR OWN?**
- **WHO ARE YOU STRUGGLING TO SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH BECAUSE OF A JUDGMENTAL MINDSET? WHY DOESN'T THIS REFLECT THE HEART OF CHRIST?**

## PRAY

**LORD, FORGIVE ME FOR BELIEVING ONLY CERTAIN PEOPLE ARE WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL. HELP ME TO REMEMBER IT IS A GIFT YOU FREELY OFFER TO EVERYONE. HELP ME TO LOVE OTHERS LIKE YOU LOVE THEM.**