



Session 1

Belief Minus Trust Equals...

WARM-UP

1. If there are new people in your group, introduce yourselves by answering these questions:
 - What is your name?
 - How long have you been coming to our church?
 - Have you been a part of a small group before?
 - When you're not working, what is your favorite thing to do?
2. What chore are you most likely to try to avoid?

SMALL GROUP GUIDELINES

Having shared expectations will ensure a positive experience for everyone and it help in avoiding conflicts caused by unmet or misunderstood expectations. Turn to the back page and review the small group guidelines. Then, go through the study so everyone can see what the small group experience will be like. At the end, review the guidelines again to see if you are prepared to commit to them.

BACKGROUND

According to 2 Kings 14:25, Jonah was a prophet during the reign of Jeroboam II who was king over the northern kingdom of Israel. This would date the events in the book of Jonah somewhere between 800-750 B.C.

Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. Assyria had been a powerful kingdom known for its merciless brutality in battle. In the past, they had been a feared enemy of Israel. However, during Jonah's ministry, Assyria had been weakened. As a result, Israel was able to regain its territory and enjoy a time of prosperity.

Unfortunately, Israel's prosperity further weakened their relationship with God. Prophets like Hosea and Amos sounded the alarm that God would punish Israel if they did not repent, but the repentance never came. Within a century, Assyria would become a powerful empire that would conquer Israel and deport the survivors.

Nineveh was 400 miles northeast of Israel while Tarshish is believed to have been 2,000 miles in the opposite direction on the coast of Spain.

BIBLE STUDY

Read Jonah chapter 1

1. After reading this chapter what is your first impression? What caught your attention?
2. What do you suppose were the reasons for Jonah's actions?
3. Read through the chapter again and as you do make a list of all the contrasts between Jonah and the ship's crew.
4. Review the list. What stands out to you? Who was acting in a more "godly" way?
5. What were the results of the storm? Is there a lesson that can be learned from these results that can apply to your life?
6. What can you learn about the character of God from Jonah chapter 1?

APPLICATION

1. Have you ever tried running away from, or resisting God? Describe the circumstances to your group and share what happened.
2. Is there a "Nineveh" in your life? Something you feel God wants you to do, but you don't want to do it? Will you trust your group and share this struggle with them?
3. Can you share a story of how God has used a "storm" in your life to get you back on track?
4. Why do you suppose God would use storms to accomplish His purposes rather than a method that would be easier on us? Does this suggest that God is not always good towards us? Explain.
5. How might the events of this chapter be speaking to the things going on in your life right now? What lesson(s) will you take home from your study of Jonah chapter 1? What actions do you need to take?

PRAYER

Why is it that the times we are most likely to pray are the times when we are the most desperate? Is it possible that we would not have as much desperate need if we prayed more?

The prayer time may be the most important and powerful thing you do as a group. In prayer you minister to each other by bringing each other before God and directing God's power towards one another.

This prayer time is voluntary. If you choose, you can pray silently as others pray out loud. However, we encourage you to pray out loud because your prayers will be an encouragement and inspiration to those being lifted up in prayer.

Take time to share your prayer needs. Consider the "Nineveh's" or storms in your life and ask for prayer for those issues. Once requests are made, take time to pray for one another.

Your prayer does not need to be an oratory masterpiece. "Perfect" prayers are not the ones that are eloquent, they are the ones that are authentic and come from your heart.

PERSONAL GROWTH

These daily devotions will help you dig deeper into Jonah and allow God's living word to speak to you in life-building ways. Use the "4 C" questions to help you study and apply the scripture as you read. Be sure to finish your study with a time of prayer.

The 4 C Questions

CELEBRATE: What can you praise God for from this passage?

CONFESS: Does this passage convict you of something you need to confess to God?

COMMIT: What commitment does this passage challenge you to make?

COMMUNICATE: What did you learn that you could share with someone else?

Day 1: Read Jonah 1:1-3 and Psalm 139:1-12. In what ways do you try to run away from God? What is your reason for running? How aware are you that God is always present? Even now, God is with you, speaking to you as you read this. Would a greater awareness of God's presence have a positive or negative influence on your life? What practical things can you do this week to increase your awareness of God's presence in your life? What is God saying to you? Use the 4C questions to apply what you have learned.

Day 2: Read Jonah 1:4-6 and 2 Chronicles 7:14. What is ironic about the verses in Jonah? At a time like this, why wouldn't Jonah be praying? What keeps you from praying? What causes you to distance yourself from God? What is God saying to you? Use the 4C questions to apply what you have learned.

Day 3: Read Jonah 1:7-10 and Isaiah 40:12-31. In the verses from Jonah, who seems to have the most respect for God and God's power? What about you, how much respect do you show to God's greatness? How is that respect shown in your lifestyle, boldness for God, worship, and service? What is God saying to you? Use the 4C questions to apply what you have learned.

Day 4: Read Jonah 1:11-12. What did Jonah realize at this point in the story? Do you notice a change in him? Do you think Jonah is expecting God to rescue him at this point, or is he resigning himself to God's punishment? Do you realize that your own sins will harm more than just you? Are you willing to completely surrender yourself to God simply because He is God or do you want some kind of guarantee of a good life first? What is God saying to you? Use the 4C questions to apply what you have learned.

Day 5: Read Jonah 1:13-17 and Proverbs 3:5-12. Have you ever tried to "row" against God's plans even though your plans seem good? What ended up happening? Does the fish represent God's grace, God's punishment, or God's training? What is God saying to you? Use the 4C questions to apply what you have learned.

Day 6: Read Jonah chapter 1 again. As you read, ask yourself, “Who am I most like in this story?” Why do you relate to the person(s)? What did they learn about God and what are you learning? What is the big lesson from chapter 1 that you are learning? What is God saying to you? Use the 4C questions to apply what you have learned.

Group Guidelines & Agreement

It's a good idea for every group to put words to their shared values, expectations, and commitments. Such guidelines will help you avoid unspoken agendas and unmet expectations. We recommend you discuss your group guidelines during Session One in order to lay the foundation for a healthy group experience. Feel free to modify anything that does not work for your group.

WE AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING VALUES:

Prayer	To pray daily
Group Attendance	To give priority to the group meeting (call if I am absent or late)
Safe Environment	To create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved (no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes)
Be Confidential	To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential
Spiritual Health	To give group members permission to help me live a healthy, balanced spiritual life that is pleasing to God
Welcome Newcomers	To invite our friends who might benefit from this study and warmly welcome newcomers
Building Relationships	To get to know the other members of the group and pray for them regularly
Other	
