



GOING DEEPER

DISCUSSION GUIDE

SEPTEMBER 23, 2018

Discussion Guide

EMOTIONAL INSIGHT

CONNECTING:

45 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A WAY OF CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER SO THAT YOU MIGHT PARTNER IN THE WORK GOD IS DOING IN YOUR LIVES.)

- IN WHAT WAYS DID GOD MOVE IN YOUR LIFE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS DID YOU RESPOND TO HIM?
- WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DID YOU INVITE GOD INTO THIS CHALLENGE?
- HOW HONEST HAVE YOU BEEN WITH US? (GRACIOUSLY THANK GROUP MEMBERS FOR THEIR HONESTY IF THEY STATE THEY HAVE HELD BACK.)

GETTING STARTED:

10 MINUTES

- WHEN YOU EXPERIENCE AN EMOTIONAL RESPONSE, HOW DO YOU TYPICALLY HANDLE YOUR FEELINGS? COULD YOU ELABORATE?

DIVING INTO THE TEXT:

60 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A SIMPLE ROAD MAP THROUGH THE TEXT. FEEL FREE TO USE THESE QUESTIONS IN WAYS THAT BEST FIT YOUR GROUP AND THE DYNAMICS OF YOUR OWN MEETING.)

- USING THE NOTES, DISCUSS THE NATURE AND POINT OF THE BOOK OF JONAH.
- READ JONAH 4 ALOUD. READ THE TEXT ONCE MORE SEEKING TO EXPERIENCE THE TEXT AS JONAH.
- WHAT EMOTIONS DOES JONAH EXPERIENCE? SEEK TO FIND AS MANY AS YOU CAN IN THE TEXT.
- IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DOES GOD INVITE JONAH TO

ENTERTAIN A DIALOGUE BETWEEN WHAT HE KNOWS AND WHAT HE FEELS?

- WHERE MIGHT THIS DIALOGUE LEAD JONAH SHOULD HE ENTERTAIN IT? WHAT POINT MIGHT YOU DRAW FROM THIS CONCERNING THE POINT OF ANY DIALOGUE BETWEEN WHAT WE KNOW AND WHAT WE FEEL? COULD YOU ELABORATE?
- DO YOU THINK MOST PEOPLE USE THEIR EMOTIONS IN THIS MANNER? WHY MIGHT THIS BE THE CASE?
- ANY DIALOGUE BETWEEN WHAT WE KNOW AND WHAT WE FEEL NEEDS A FRAMEWORK. THE FOLLOWING FRAMEWORK WAS PROPOSED ON SUNDAY:

WHAT AM I FEELING?

WHY MIGHT I BE FEELING THIS WAY?

WITH WHAT I KNOW IS TRUE, IS THIS A PROPER EMOTIONAL RESPONSE?

WHAT IS IT IN ME WHICH MIGHT BE CAUSING ME TO RESPOND IN THIS WAY?

WHAT MIGHT GOD BE INVITING ME INTO?

- WHAT, IF ANYTHING, MIGHT YOU ADD TO THIS FRAMEWORK? WHAT, IF ANYTHING, MIGHT YOU TAKE OUT? COULD YOU EXPLAIN?
- WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE TO ENTERTAIN A DIALOGUE BETWEEN WHAT WE KNOW AND WHAT WE FEEL ON A REGULAR BASIS? WHAT MIGHT IT TAKE TO MAKE SPACE FOR THIS IN OUR LIVES?
- CONSIDER CLOSING BY PRAYING FOR GOD'S GRACE TO INTEGRATE OUR EMOTIONS INTO OUR FAITH JOURNEY.

CONTEXT, BACKGROUND, AND COMMENTARY

JONAH

THE BOOK OF JONAH OUTLINES A SEASON OF SPIRITUAL WRESTLING AND MINISTRY EXPERIENCE OF A RELUCTANT PROPHET BY THE NAME OF JONAH. THE PROPHET JONAH LIVED AND PROPHESED DURING THE 8TH CENTURY B.C. (2 KINGS 14.25). BECAUSE ASSYRIA DESTROYED THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL IN 721 B.C., THE BOOK LIKELY DESCRIBES EVENTS WHICH TOOK PLACE EARLY IN THE 8TH CENTURY DURING A TIME OF ASSYRIAN POLITICAL WEAKNESS BEFORE THE CROWNING OF TIGLATH-PILESER III (745-727 B.C.).

UNTIL THE 19TH CENTURY, LITTLE DOUBT WAS HAD CONCERNING THE HISTORICITY OF JONAH. HOWEVER, RECENT SCHOLARSHIP HAS CAST DOUBT ON ITS HISTORICAL ACCURACY, ARGUING THAT THE BOOK IS A POST-EXILIC WRITING MEANT TO COMBAT RISING NATIONALISM AND EXCLUSIVISM IN ISRAEL; THAT IS, THE BOOK IS A WORK OF LITERARY RESISTANCE TO THE LEADERSHIP OF NEHEMIAH AND EZRA. WHILE THE BOOK CERTAINLY DOES CARRY A STRONG REBUKE TO NATIONALISTIC FERVOR, NO EVIDENCE HAS BEEN PROVIDED WHICH SAYS THE EVENTS PORTRAYED DID NOT HAPPEN, NOR IS IT NECESSARY THAT JONAH HIMSELF WROTE THIS BOOK. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE STORY OF JONAH WAS PASSED DOWN IN ORAL FORM OR EVEN IN AN EARLY LITERARY FORM WHICH WAS LATER REWORKED INTO THE PRESENT FORM OF THE BOOK. WHAT IS KNOWN IS THAT THE EVENTS PORTRAYED WERE NEVER QUESTIONED BY THE JEWS, JESUS, OR THE EARLY CHURCH, BUT ALL ACCEPTED THE BOOK AS SCRIPTURE.

IN ITS PRESENT FORM, THE BOOK OF JONAH EXISTS AS SOMETHING AKIN TO DIDACTIC HISTORY; THAT IS, THE BOOK IS WRITTEN AS HISTORY, BUT THE STORY RECORDED SERVES TO TEACH THE READER TRUTHS WHICH TRANSCEND THE RECORDED EVENTS. ASSYRIA AND ITS CAPITAL CITY OF NINEVEH (MODERN MOSUL) WAS THE GREAT ENEMY OF ANCIENT ISRAEL, ULTIMATELY CONQUERING THE NORTHERN KINGDOM AND LEADING THE JEWS INTO AN EXILE FROM WHICH THEY WOULD NEVER RETURN. THE RISE OF ASSYRIA AS A POWER BEGAN ABOUT THE SAME TIME ISRAEL CAME INTO EXISTENCE AS A NATION (CA. 1000 B.C.). THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES OF THE FIRST MILLENNIUM B.C. WERE MARKED BY GROWING STRENGTH AND NATIONALISTIC ASPIRATIONS IN ASSYRIA. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE NOT TO SEE AND EXPERIENCE THE POLITICAL

ripples of the rising threat that was Assyria. By the 8th Century B.C., it was apparent to many in Israel that it was only a matter of time before Assyria was successful in extending its empire to the southwest to include Israel. This alone was enough to cause great animosity among the Jewish people for the Assyrian people. At this time of heightened political strife between Assyria and Israel, God instructed Jonah to go to the Assyrian capital of Nineveh to preach against it. Jonah was reluctant to heed God's call, but God redirected Jonah and Nineveh repented in response to Jonah's preaching. It is at this point that the reader discovers that the repentance and salvation of Nineveh is the very thing Jonah sought to prevent. However, in a dialogue between God and the prophet, Jonah's lack of concern for the Assyrian people is called into question by God.

AS AN HISTORICAL WORK, THE BOOK OUTLINES THE GRACIOUS DEALINGS OF GOD WITH HIS RELUCTANT PROPHET. HOWEVER, AS DIDACTIC HISTORY, THE BOOK CHALLENGES THE IDEA THAT GOD'S LOVE WAS LIMITED TO ISRAEL. A CENTRAL VERSE TO THE BOOK IS THE RECITATION OF GOD'S CHARACTER IN JONAH 4.2. THIS RECITATION OF GOD'S CHARACTER IS A QUOTE FROM EXODUS 34.6-7, A PASSAGE WHICH IS ECHOED THROUGHOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT (NUMBERS 14.18; NEHEMIAH 9.17; PSALM 86.15; 103.8; 145.8; JOEL 2.13). WITHIN THIS CLIMACTIC LAST CHAPTER, THIS VERSE SERVES TO RAISE THE QUESTION OF WHETHER A GOD WHOSE CHARACTER WAS SUCH COULD NOT EXTEND HIS LOVE TO A PEOPLE SUCH AS THE ASSYRIANS. IN SO DOING, THE BOOK INVITES GOD'S PEOPLE TO FOLLOW THE LEAD OF GOD IN EXTENDING THE SAME LOVE TO ALL, EVEN THOSE THEY RECKONED AS THEIR ENEMY. THE BOOK SERVES AS A CONSTANT REMINDER TO GOD'S PEOPLE IN BOTH ANCIENT AND MODERN TIMES TO QUESTION FEELINGS OF NATIONALISM AND EXCLUSIVISM WHILE ENCOURAGING FEELINGS OF LOVE, MERCY, AND GRACE.

THE TEXT

JONAH 4: DIALOGING BETWEEN THOUGHT AND FEELING

THE FINAL CHAPTER OF JONAH IS THE CLIMACTIC CHAPTER OF THE BOOK, RAISING KEY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EXTENT TO WHICH GOD COULD RIGHTFULLY EXTEND HIS LOVE AND SALVATION. THE CHAPTER BEGINS WITH JONAH REACTING TO GOD'S CHOICE TO SPARE THE CITY OF NINEVEH (JONAH 3.10). THE TEXT READS

THAT JONAH VIEWED THIS ACTION AS EVIL, A GREAT EVIL. IN RESPONSE, JONAH BECAME ANGRY. WHAT EXACTLY ANGERED JONAH IS UNSPOKEN. SOME HAVE SUGGESTED JONAH FELT IT WAS WRONG TO SAVE THE CITY BECAUSE IT MADE HIM LOOK TO BE A FALSE PROPHET (DEUTERONOMY 18.21-22). OTHERS HAVE SUGGESTED JONAH SAW THE POLITICAL HANDWRITING ON THE WALL AND FELT THAT IN SPARING THE NINEVITES, GOD WAS FORSAKING HIS PEOPLE ISRAEL. BOTH ARE LIKELY PART OF THE MANY THOUGHTS RUNNING THROUGH JONAH'S MIND WHEN HE REALIZED GOD WAS NOT GOING TO DESTROY NINEVEH. THESE THOUGHTS WOULD HAVE LED TO FEELINGS OF SHAME, DISGRACE, DISAPPOINTMENT, AND EVEN DESPAIR. HOWEVER, ALL OF THESE FEELINGS COALESCED INTO THE OVERRIDING EMOTION OF ANGER DIRECTED TOWARD GOD.

JONAH ADDRESSES GOD, STATING HIS ATTEMPT TO FLEE TO TARSHISH HAD BEEN MEANT TO FORESTALL THE SALVATION OF NINEVEH. JONAH KNEW GOD'S CHARACTER CONSISTED OF GRACE, COMPASSION, LOVE, AND MERCY. THEREFORE, IT WAS HIGHLY LIKELY GOD WOULD RELENT IN PUNISHING NINEVEH, SOMETHING JONAH DID NOT WANT. THEREFORE, JONAH HAD TRIED TO ALLOW THE NINEVITES TO PERISH IN IGNORANCE, SOMETHING GOD HAD NOT ALLOWED BY REDIRECTING JONAH WITH A STORM AND A LARGE FISH (JONAH 1-2).

RATHER THAN REBUKING JONAH, GOD RESPONDS BY ASKING JONAH TO CONSIDER HIS FEELING OF ANGER. HE DOES NOT TELL HIM NOT TO FEEL ANGRY BUT ENCOURAGES HIM TO CONSIDER THE RIGHTNESS OF HIS ANGER. IN SO DOING, GOD IS ASKING JONAH TO ENTERTAIN A DIALOGUE BETWEEN HIS EMOTIONS AND HIS BELIEFS ABOUT GOD (RATIONAL THOUGHT). GOD DOES NOT SAY WHAT HE INTENDS JONAH TO DISCOVER, BUT IT IS FAIRLY APPARENT TO THE READER THAT GOD SEES SOMETHING JONAH DOES NOT. GOD INTENDS THAT JONAH DISCOVER WHAT HE SEES THROUGH THIS DIALOGUE. THE READER CAN ASSUME WHAT JONAH NEEDS TO DISCOVER LIES IN HIS HEART BECAUSE HIS ANGER IS NOT IN KEEPING WITH GOD'S CHARACTER. HOWEVER, JONAH CAN ONLY DISCOVER WHAT THIS IS IF HE IS WILLING TO ENTERTAIN THIS DIALOGUE BETWEEN WHAT HE KNOWS ABOUT GOD AND WHAT HE FEELS.

RATHER THAN ANSWERING GOD AND ASKING QUESTIONS OF HIS EMOTIONS, JONAH BUILDS A SHELTER AND WAITS TO SEE WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO NINEVEH. IT IS TRADITIONALLY ASSUMED JONAH IS WAITING FOR GOD TO DESTROY NINEVEH, BUT IT IS MORE LIKELY JONAH IS WAITING FOR SOME DIVINE ACTION

WHICH WILL EXPLAIN GOD'S CHOICE TO SAVE THE CITY. THE TEXT STATES THAT JONAH SITS UNDER THE SHADE OF A LEAN-TO WHICH HE BUILT. GOD CAUSES A LEAFY PLANT TO GROW OVER THE LEAN-TO, ADDING ADDITIONAL SHADE AND LIFE TO THE OTHERWISE ARID SETTING. THEN, GOD KILLS THE PLANT SO THAT IT WITHERS OVERNIGHT AND SENDS A SIROCCO WIND WHICH NOT ONLY BRINGS HEAT BUT IS IONICALLY CHARGED SO AS TO CAUSE SEVERE SUFFERING ON THE PART OF THOSE WHO EXPERIENCE THEM. JONAH IS OVERWHELMED AND ONCE AGAIN STATES HE WISHES TO DIE. HERE, JONAH EXPERIENCES FEELINGS OF DESPAIR, SORROW, EXASPERATION, AND MORE. BUT, ONCE MORE, THESE COALESCED INTO ANGER. ONCE AGAIN, GOD DOES NOT REBUKE JONAH'S FEELING BUT ASKS HIM TO CONSIDER IT, TO ENTERTAIN A DIALOGUE BETWEEN HIS FEELINGS AND HIS RATIONAL THOUGHT. THIS TIME, JONAH ENGAGES AND NOTES THAT HIS FEELING IS RIGHT. IT IS THE PROPER RESPONSE TO LOSING THE PLANT IN WHICH HE DELIGHTED. HIS FEELING DEMONSTRATES HIS DEEP AFFECTION AND SENSE OF LOSS AT SOMETHING WHICH WAS GOOD AND BENEFICIAL.

GOD RESPONDS BY URGING JONAH TO CONSIDER THAT A SIMILAR RESPONSE LAY BEHIND THE SALVATION OF NINEVEH. GOD CARED FOR AND DELIGHTED IN NINEVEH. THEREFORE, TO LOSE IT WOULD HAVE CAUSED HIM NO SMALL AMOUNT OF PAIN. AT THIS POINT, THE READER CAN SEE THAT BY INVITING JONAH TO CONSIDER HIS FEELING OF ANGER HE WAS IN FACT INVITING HIM TO DISCOVER THE HEART OF GOD. THIS WAS THE THING WHICH JONAH WAS MISSING, THE VERY HEART HE DID NOT HAVE.

REAL LIFE WITH BLAKE:

IF MY FEELINGS ARE IMPORTANT ON THE JOURNEY OF FAITH, HOW DO I USE THEM? MY FEELINGS ARE POWERFUL AND RAW, AND I STRUGGLE TO CORRAL THEM. THEY WANT TO BREAK FORTH AND LEAD ME WHEREVER THEY MIGHT RUN. I AM DISCOVERING THIS IS ACTUALLY NOT A BAD THING. THE QUESTION CONCERNS WHERE I ALLOW THEM TO LEAD ME. TYPICALLY, I ALLOW MY EMOTIONS TO LEAD ME OUTWARD; THAT IS, MY EMOTIONS LEAD ME TO LOOK FOR SOMETHING/SOMEONE TO BLAME, SOMETHING IN WHICH TO FIND SOLACE, SOMEWHERE TO HIDE, ETC. MOST OF THESE RESPONSES ARE DESTRUCTIVE TO ME AND OTHERS. HOWEVER, MY EMOTIONS CAN LEAD ME TO ANOTHER PLACE. THEY CAN LEAD ME INWARD. WHEN I ALLOW THEM TO LEAD ME INWARD, TO A JOURNEY INTO MYSELF, THEY HELP ME DISCOVER PARTS OF ME I NEVER KNEW EXISTED. SOME OF THESE ARE GOOD. SOME ARE NOT SO GOOD.

THE GOOD PARTS I DISCOVER NEED TO BE NURTURED. THE NOT SO GOOD, GIVEN TO GOD FOR SOME DIVINE WEED-PULLING. WHATEVER RESPONSE IS NEEDED, THE POINT IS THAT MY EMOTIONS CAN LEAD ME TO DISCOVER DEPTHS WITHIN ME WHICH EXIST OR NEED TO EXIST ON THE JOURNEY OF FAITH. THEY CAN LEAD ME THERE WHEN I COUPLE THEM WITH MY RATIONAL MIND. I KNOW IT SOUNDS MORE COMPLICATED THAN IT IS, BUT IT REALLY IS PRETTY SIMPLE. COUPLING OUR RATIONAL MIND WITH OUR EMOTIONS IS AS SIMPLE AS ASKING A QUESTION. FOR ME, THIS BEGINS BY RECOGNIZING WHAT I AM FEELING. I PAUSE AND RECOGNIZE I AM SAD, OR HAPPY, OR ANGRY. RATHER THAN REACTING, I JUST WATCH MY FEELING. I WELCOME IT AS SOMETHING GOOD, GIVEN TO ME BY GOD. I AM BEGINNING TO VIEW MY EMOTIONS AS INVITATIONS FROM GOD, SO I WANT TO PAY CAREFUL ATTENTION. THEN, I ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTION. WHY MIGHT I FEEL THIS WAY? I LOOK HARD AND FEEL DEEPLY AND SEE IF I CAN FIND THE ANSWER. WHEN I FIND THE ANSWER, I ASK ANOTHER QUESTION. WITH WHAT I KNOW IS TRUE, IS THIS THE PROPER EMOTIONAL RESPONSE? I LOOK HARD AND FEEL DEEPLY AND SEE IF I CAN FIND THE ANSWER. WHEN I CAN ANSWER THIS QUESTION, I ASK ANOTHER. I ASK, WHAT IS IT IN ME THAT IS CAUSING ME TO RESPOND IN THIS WAY? I LOOK HARD AND FEEL DEEPLY. WHEN I FIND THE ANSWER, I ASK ONE FINAL QUESTION. WHAT IS GOD INVITING ME INTO? WITH THESE QUESTIONS, I LOOK INWARD, DIALOGUING WITH MY EMOTION. MY EMOTIONS ARE NOT GOOD OR BAD. THEY ARE SIMPLY THERE, GIFTS FROM GOD TO BE EXPLORED IF I AM WILLING. THE MORE I AM WILLING, THE MORE I AM REALIZING I HAVE MUCH IN ME WHICH NEEDS TO GROW, AND MUCH IN ME WHICH GOD AFFIRMS. ALONG THE WAY, I LEARN A THING OR TWO ABOUT GOD, HIS LOVE, AND WHAT HE IS DOING IN THE WORLD. AS FOR, WHAT IS OUTSIDE ME. . . I AM LEARNING THAT I AM MUCH TOO BUSY WITH WHAT GOD IS DOING IN ME TO HAVE TIME TO WORRY MUCH ABOUT THAT WHICH HAS PROVIDED NO SMALL AMOUNT OF RELEASE. NOT HAVING TO BLAME, CONTROL, OR CORRECT OTHERS RELEASES AN INCREDIBLE AMOUNT OF PRESSURE WE FEEL. I CAN'T SAY I CAN DO THIS IN THE HEAT OF THE MOMENT, BUT MORE AND MORE I AM LEARNING TO PAUSE AND PROCESS. AS I DO, I SEE AND EXPERIENCE GOD AT WORK IN ME.

REAL LIFE WITH YOU:

OUR EMOTIONS ARE IMPORTANT ON THE JOURNEY OF FAITH, BUT MOST OF US DON'T KNOW HOW TO USE THEM. TYPICALLY, WE USE OUR EMOTIONS TO TURN OURSELVES OUTWARD SO WE MIGHT ENGAGE IN ACTIVITIES OF BLAMING, SHAMING, CONTROLLING, AND CORRECTING. HOWEVER, OUR EMOTIONS ARE BEST USED TO GUIDE US INWARD, TO DISCOVER WHAT GOD LONGS TO DO INSIDE US RATHER THAN LEADING US TO ATTEMPT TO DO THINGS WITH OTHERS. TO USE OUR EMOTIONS TO GUIDE US ON THIS JOURNEY, WE MUST CREATE SPACE IN OUR LIVES TO ENTERTAIN A DIALOGUE BETWEEN OUR MIND AND OUR EMOTIONS. THIS TAKES PAYING ATTENTION TO OUR EMOTIONS AND THEN PAUSING TO ASK AND ANSWER A SERIES OF QUESTIONS:

- WHAT AM I FEELING?
- WHY MIGHT I BE FEELING THIS WAY?
- WITH WHAT I KNOW IS TRUE, IS THIS A PROPER EMOTIONAL RESPONSE?
- WHAT IS IT IN ME WHICH MIGHT BE CAUSING ME TO RESPOND IN THIS WAY?
- WHAT MIGHT GOD BE INVITING ME INTO?

WHEN WE PAUSE AND ASK THESE QUESTIONS, WE DISCOVER MUCH IN US GOD LONGS TO AFFIRM AND MUCH HE LONGS TO DEVELOP. WE ALSO RELEASE OURSELVES FROM THE ENDLESS DESTRUCTIVE CYCLE OF BLAMING AND SHAMING. THIS WEEK, YOU MIGHT CONSIDER PRACTICING ASKING THESE QUESTIONS OF YOUR OWN EMOTIONS. IT IS GENERALLY BEST TO SET ASIDE TIME TO BE ALONE IN A QUITE SPACE. SOME PEOPLE CAN ENTERTAIN THIS DIALOGUE IN THEIR HEADS, BUT IT CAN ALSO BE HELPFUL TO JOURNAL THIS DIALOGUE TO BETTER PAY ATTENTION TO THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN MIND AND HEART. WHEN YOU DISCOVER GOD'S INVITATION, PONDER HOW YOU MIGHT RESPOND. YOU MIGHT DISCUSS WHAT THIS IS LIKE WITH A SPIRITUAL FRIEND OR COMPANION ON THE JOURNEY OF FAITH.



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