

Jonah is a familiar book of the Bible with a very familiar story line. It operates a bit differently from other prophets, reading more like a historical narrative, yet contains a particular structure with a Psalm-like moment in the middle. Gathering a fresh perspective from a very familiar story can prove to be a challenge.

Jonah 1:1-6

Fleeing the Presence of God

I. COMPARING OUR STORIES

MY EXPERIENCE...

YOUR EXPERIENCE...

In our experience with God we can sometimes feel like our lives are out of control. Other times we can come upon situations where He is clearly and purposefully, without a question, placing our steps and circumstances toward His outcomes. There are also seasons of passivity, when we are unwilling to engage with His mission, and then there are times when we may even remember deliberately running from Him in rebellion, longing to do our own thing for our own gain.

II. CONSIDERING OUR STRUGGLES

WHAT comes to mind when you consider the Presence of God?

HOW have you experienced His presence in your life?

CAN you recall a time when God's Presence in your life brought hope, joy, or pleasure?

HAVE you ever experienced God's Presence in your life when it brought discomfort or frustration?

Jonah 1:1-6

Fleeing the Presence of God

Read Jonah 1:1-6

OBSERVATION

What word did the Lord deliver to Jonah in vs. 1?

How is the city of Nineveh described and what can you observe from the text regarding the “attitude” of it?

How does Jonah respond to the Lord’s direction in vs. 3?

How does the Lord respond to Jonah’s disobedience in vs. 4?

What do you observe about the mariners’ response to the tempest (vs. 4-5)?

What suggestion does the captain give Jonah in vs. 6?

INTERPRETATION

Why was Nineveh considered a “great city”?

Where was Nineveh located? Where was Jonah living, and where is Tarshis? What can you infer from the direction given Jonah (where he was commanded to go) and the direction he chose to go, as well as the distance he’s willing to travel?

Why does Jonah refuse to obey the Lord’s command to go to Nineveh? Consider what we know from 4:2.

What has Jonah already experienced regarding God’s character and ministry? See 2 Kings 14:23-26 and Psalm 145:8-9 for insight. How might these details have influenced Jonah’s decision to go to Tarshis?

Where do you see irony in the captain’s plea to Jonah in vs. 6?

Read Psalm 139 and contrast the truth of God’s presence in our lives with the desire Jonah has to flee it.

APPLICATION

What tempts you to flee the presence of the LORD?

Where do you go when tempted to “flee” the presence of the LORD? Do you run to His Word, a friend, prayer OR do you look to seclusion, a vice, or something else?

How has God worked in your life specifically, to keep you in His presence, in the way everlasting? Recall his favor/direction and consider how you might learn from it.