

DISCUSSION GUIDE

JONAH

OPENING UP



What is one thing that you are afraid of? Has that fear ever helped you in life?

TEXT



Who's Afraid? | Jonah 1:1-17

¹Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ²“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.” ³But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.

⁴But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. ⁵Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. ⁶So the captain came and said to him, “What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.”

⁷And they said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. ⁸Then they said to him, “Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?” ⁹And he said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” ¹⁰Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, “What is this that you have done!” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

(turn to the ESV Bible to continue reading v. 11-17)

MESSAGE OUTLINE



Big Idea: Reverent fear is a healthy part of submissive faith.

Key Question: Who fears the Lord?

1. People who seek God with their questions. (vv. 1-8)
2. People who call out to God in their struggle. (vv. 9-14)
3. People who respond to God with submissive worship. (vv. 15-17)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



- What do you think is the difference between healthy fear and unhealthy fear? Consider looking up the definition of fear to help with the distinction.
- When was there a time in your life when you turned to God with questions to seek understanding even if you were afraid or confused, like the sailors did (v. 5)? Why did you turn to God? Discuss why going to God with our questions demonstrates a heart that fears Him.
- Like the sailors did in v. 14, we will only cry out to God in our distress when we believe that he is powerful enough to help us. Discuss as a group how sovereign and powerful God is. Share specific examples of what God can do and has done. [Optional: Pause and praise God in prayer for who He is.]
- Though defiant and running from God's calling, Jonah was thrown off the ship, which saved the shipmates. This is very unlike Jesus, who submitted himself to the Lord unto death. In what ways do Jonah and Jesus give us examples of what it means to submit to God's calling in reverent fear? How can our response to Jesus's sacrificial death and resurrection demonstrate reverent fear?
- How can we move towards a healthy fear of God and move away from an unhealthy fear of Him?

LIFE CHALLENGE



The sailors in the story show greater responsiveness to God than Jonah did—and their submission to him saved their lives and the lives of the Ninevites.

Do you see people around you who are lost but who are also asking the kinds of questions that might show God is leading them to himself? Who are those people? What would it look like to bring their questions to the Lord with them?

CLOSING PRAYER



Lord, help us to live in reverent fear of you this week. Help us to turn to you with our questions instead of thinking we have all the answers; help us to call out for your help in our struggles instead of remaining self-reliant; help us to worship you by obeying your ways. And please give us courage to enter into the questions of those who don't know you yet, gently assuring them that you can answer their questions and help them. Amen.