

## DISCUSSION GUIDE



### OPENING UP



The word “Discipline” can hold a variety of meanings, depending on the context. How does the change in context (for example: discipline in sports, discipline in family, etc.) change the meaning of the word?

### TEXT

**THE KINDNESS OF SEVERE MERCY** | Jonah 1:17–2:10 (ESV)

**1:17** And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

**2:1** Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish, **2** saying, “*I called out to the Lord, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. 3 For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me. 4 Then I said, ‘I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.’ 5 The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head 6 at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit, O Lord my God. 7 When my life was fainting away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. 8 Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. 9 But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the Lord!*”

**10** And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.

## MESSAGE OUTLINE

**BIG IDEA: GOD'S SEVERE MERCY IS TERRIBLY HELPFUL.**

**Key Question: Why is God's correction and discipline necessary in our lives?**

1. God employs severe mercy to pursue us. (1:17)
2. God employs severe mercy to awaken us. (2:1-6a)
3. God employs severe mercy to save us. (2:6b-10)

## DISCUSSION



- As a group, recap the story of Jonah up to this point. When Jonah sank into the water, what do you think he expected would happen next?
- The text reads that the Lord [*had*] appointed the fish for Jonah. How does God's charge (and direction) of this giant fish show God's intention to show mercy to Jonah and the people of Nineveh?
- Slowly read through Jonah's song, in Jonah 2:1–10. How does Jonah describe his distress? And how does he describe God's response to his troubles? (Where possible, don't summarize with your own words—use the Bible's own language.)
- Perhaps you've felt this far from God's great mercy and love. What happened? Did you cry out to the Lord? Or did the distress you faced cause you to think God was wholly absent?
- Jonah's last lyric is "Salvation belongs to the Lord!" By saying this, he's declaring that only God can save him—and only God has the right to *not* save him. If "Salvation belongs to the Lord," why do we so often run away from God when we are in trouble? How does the story of Jonah challenge us to see God's kindness, even as he disciplines our lives?

## LIFE CHALLENGE



Though it might be hard to believe in the moment, the Lord's hand to heal, care, and *even to discipline* is the greatest mercy we can receive. God is showing us *more love* when he brings us through valleys that reprove and correct us. Have you been running from God, *not* trusting him so that you're now in a time of discipline and correction? How might Jonah's own story call your heart to God, who loves you too much to let you wander?

## CLOSING PRAYER



Oh Lord, open our eyes to see that you can be trusted with the discipline in our lives. We are frail and broken people, and if not for your help, even your loving hand is something we fear. Forgive us, when we run from you. Help us to see you and to trust you with all that we are. Amen!