



All Christians' Fellowship International

INTERACTIVE SUNDAY SCHOOL OUTLINE

TOPIC: God's Attack on Racism

TEXT: Jonah Chapters 1-4

Instructions - *Let the above passages be read each time you come together to study this topic so that everyone could participate fully. The teacher should provide additional background information on the topic and come up with follow-up questions. Participants should be brief in their responses and use relevant Bible references to illustrate their points. They should be careful not to dominate the discussion to allow everyone to have an equal opportunity to participate.*

Introduction: Most people associate Jonah with fear. God called him to preach to the people of Nineveh, his violent and hated neighbors, but Jonah ran the other way. It wasn't Jonah's fear of the Ninevites that made him run. He feared that God might have mercy on people he wanted condemned. Jonah's extreme nationalism (in Jonah's day, each nation was a different race) kept him from wanting to give others a chance to respond to God.

We know Jonah because of his rebellion against God and the three-day excursion in the belly of a great fish (although we hear of "Jonah and the whale," the Bible refers only to a great fish (1:17). Called to Nineveh, Jonah runs (chap. 1), repents in the belly of the fish (chap. 2), obeys God, and preaches in Nineveh (chap. 3), and then resents God's mercy (chap. 4).

Discussion Questions:

In the past years, what conflicts or civil wars around the world do you see that are based on peoples' long-term hatred of each other? What causes such long-term hostility? Discuss.

2. Think of your own ethnic heritage. Are there any people or nations that you have learned to think of in a negative light? How do you think the Christian message of reconciliation could change these circumstances?
3. Tarshish is the opposite direction of Nineveh—where God was calling Jonah. Why do people often feel tempted to run from God's call to their lives or try to avoid responsibility in their local church?
4. Contrast Jonah's reaction to the storm with the sailors' reaction. In what ways are these similar to the way people react when confronted about sin and their spiritual lukewarmness? (Jonah 1:1-15).
5. How does God use Jonah—even in his rebellion—to direct non-Jews to worship the God of Israel? Is Jonah an example for us today? Why do you think God spared the life of Jonah?
6. Read Jonah Chapter 2. From the belly of the fish, Jonah prays. What does Jonah vow to do if God delivers him? What aspects of God's character become very real to Jonah in this crisis?

7. Read Jonah Chapter 3. Some think that God "puts us on the shelf" and doesn't use us to serve Him if we disobey Him. What does Jonah teach us about God's mercy toward those He called but trying to ignore His call?

8. Describe Jonah's ministry as summarized in 3:1-4. How do the king and the people of Nineveh respond to Jonah (3:5-9)?

9. Contrast God's first call (1:2), Jonah's sermon (3:4) and God's response to the people of Nineveh (3:10). What happened?

10. Read Chapter 4 of Jonah. The chapter begins with Jonah's unhappiness. What do we learn about the real reason Jonah ran away in chapter 1?

11. What is God's purpose in giving Jonah the experience of the vine, the worm, and the wind? Let's think of ourselves as Jonah(s). Who are the common Ninevites in most Christian's life today?

13. What are the implications of the book of Jonah for our call to go across cultures and ethnicities to proclaim the love of God through Jesus Christ to our world?

14. Read John 4:1-26. Compare Jesus' responses to the culturally alienated Samaritan woman with Jonah's outreach to the Ninevites. Discuss your observations.