
Main Point: Religion

Idolatry and ignorance create enmity between us and God.

Supplemental Scripture: Hebrews 3:12-14

Study Introduction

The Gospel is how Christ has saved us from our sin. Coming to be obedient to all that the Father has commanded, dying in our place, and then being raised from the dead to new life. However, the Gospel is something that God had in mind from the very beginning. Scholars call Genesis 3:15 the “protoevangelium,” that is greek for the first Gospel. It is where God made clear his intent to redeem sinful humans for his glory and their good. Aspects of this story can be seen through all of the Old Testament. Over the next six studies we will look deeper into Jonah, while at the same time looking at other stories from Scripture either comparing to our contrasting with Jonah and his tale of disobedience to and exasperation with God, and how we see ourselves in that same position with the Lord of all.

Study Questions

Pre-study:

1. Share about a time when you felt like God didn't respond to a situation the way you wanted or asked Him to. How did you feel at the time? How do you feel now?
2. Share about a time when you found yourself after the fact saying, “If I'd only known . . .” We will look at the first half of the fourth and final chapter in the Book of Jonah. Here we will see how Jonah's idolatry and his ignorance created enmity between him and God. Again we will see God's patience and grace at work.

Read: Jonah 4:1-11

3. What resonated with you from the chapter?
4. What's the difference between the gospel and religion?
5. What eventually happens when we merely change our behavior to avoid consequences?
6. How was Jonah's sin worse than Nineveh's? Did this convict you in any way personally?
Discuss.
7. How does the statement, “See yourself as sinner first, second sinned against,” change your approach to your relationships?

When you see yourself as a recipient of great grace, then God's compassion becomes His most precious attribute to you, and you want to be like Him. The people who understand God's grace in their lives are continually amazed by how much of it they have in their lives. A spirit of unforgiveness and a lack of generosity is the indication you are out of touch with the grace of God in your own life.

Parallels in Hebrews 3:12-14

Jonah, representing Israel, had forgotten the true grace of the God he served. The result was a hardening of his heart toward God and His purposes. The same predicament awaits anyone who allows the sins of pride, idolatry, and the like to reign in their heart and mind. As we study this

brief passage in Hebrews, consider how we can keep from walking the same path Jonah, Israel, and so many others have walked in the past.

Read: Hebrews 3:12-14

8. Verse 12 warns against departing from the living God. How does one “fall away” (ESV) from God?
9. Verse 13 says to exhort one another daily. What are we exhorting one another with?
10. Why might we need exhortation daily? How does Jonah validate this?

In Hebrews 3:12-14, the author is writing to the Hebrew community urging them to not “fall away” (ESV) from God. The author is remembering the hard-heartedness of Israel when they refused to believe in God’s love and trust in His power when they were called by God to take Canaan in Numbers 14. Instead of taking the land, the very people God had led out of Egypt by way of some amazing supernatural activity did not believe God would give them victory.

11. How does a community of people help us deal with our propensity toward ignorance of God’s grace?
12. What could this look like in our small group?
13. What role does confession of sin play in the church? What about in your life?
14. For Jonah, his anger toward God by the end of Jonah 4 revealed what he really cared about. What are the weighty rocks you care about right now in your life?

For Jonah, his ignorance of God’s grace in his own life resulted in anger toward God and His purposes. For Israel at the border of Canaan, their ignorance of God’s grace resulted in flat-out disobedience to His command. For both Israel and Jonah, the previous experience of God’s grace in their own lives was not sustaining them in the present.

Application

1. Do you have a spirit of unforgiveness? Have you considered how much God has forgiven you?
2. Do you struggle with generosity? What might that say about the condition of your heart?
3. What is one achievable action step you can take this week in response to what we’ve discussed in this group?

Prayer

- Thank God for His grace and forgiveness toward those in your group.
- Praise God for the message of the gospel and pray that it would change the way each person approaches life—that the gospel would make them more forgiving, more compassionate, and more generous.