

Life Group Sermon Study

What in the World Would Make God Do This?



Now the LORD provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. (Jonah 1:17)

Getting Started:

I was standing in the kitchen eating a leftover rice dish when my grandson came into the room and said "Leave my people alone."

I asked him where that came from and he said from the *Ten Commandments* movie. His sister corrected him, telling him it was "Let me people go..."

Thus began a conversation about what all of that actually meant, and along with plenty of laughs as the lines, "Let my people go" and "Moses, Moses, Moses," were repeated over and over we still had ourselves a solid conversation about God.

As we discussed the Biblical version of the story and how God hardened Pharaoh's heart, the question that was openly spoken by the two of them was *Why did God do that?*

Their young minds struggled to completely grasp why God would harden Pharaoh's heart and then do things against him. I thought that a good question.

Study:

So let's try to start at the beginning of today's message:

As the crowds increased, Jesus said, "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah." (Luke 11:29-30).

Q) What was the sign of Jonah?

Q) What is the message Jesus is trying to get across?

Q) Does this apply to us today, and if so, how?

-For God so loved the world...

Read Jonah 1:17, 2:1-6. From inside the fish Jonah begins to pray what really sounds like a prayer of thanksgiving. From lost to found.

Q) How does this prayer fit into Jesus' warning and mission in Luke?

Why would God go to such extremes to send someone to warn of His coming judgment when we know he hates sin? Why would He go to such extremes to offer a way "out" of judgement?

Q) Do you see Jesus time on earth as God's warnings of what is to come, or more God's mercy for those who would believe?

Q) In Jonah's case, why wouldn't God just let him run away?

Q) Are there any parallels in how God does things when we run away from Him?

Q) Staying away from the why do good things happen to bad people, etc... Why does God operate this way? Why not just let us go our way? Or does He?

Q) Why, while I was still a sinner did Christ die for me?

Apply:

When I first began to work through this I found myself wrapped into the overall thought- *What would make God do this?* Not just swallow Jonah up inside a fish, but also do the things He does. On one hand, he talks of justice, yet everything about Him says Mercy. And I believe we see the mercy side of Him displayed so much that the justice side of Him often times seems like it's not real.

I have always thought that open sessions, where people can just ask questions or share experiences are a wonderful way to share aspects of the Christian life... In a room of Christians, there are bound to be some interesting personal stories about how God did something in your life. Not about how he saved you, or even healed someone, but about how something that seemed so unbelievable to anyone but a fellow Christian took place.

Share some of those moments. I think many non-Christians and many Christians alike sometimes wonder why God would do what He does. Or what we as Christians claim he does to the unbelieving world.