

UNLIKELY HEROES



Opening Prayer

God of Unlikely Heroes,
You are our living and loving God who longs to be known as Savior and Lord to every person. You long for relationships that are open and free. Your grace extends to all, even those we are reluctant to embrace. Lord, like Jonah we are fearful to follow. We ignore our discipleship. In Christ, help us to learn from Jonah how to engage in intentional authentic evangelism. Help us show Your mercy. For this we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen

Scripture: Jonah 1:1-17 and Jonah 4:1-11

- *Have someone read scripture passages aloud.*
- *Allow time for silence to read on your own.*
- *Highlight key words, phrases, images that speak to you.*
- *Take a few moments to share those with a partner or with the entire group.*

Background

Jonah (Jo'nah)

Unlike most other Old Testament prophetic books, Jonah gives an account of a single incident in the life of the prophet. The story is briefly told in some 40 verses. His prayer consumes the remaining eight verses. Jews accepted this book as reflecting the experience of the actual prophet Jonah. However, some regard this book as an imaginative tale, allegory or parable, teaching God's universal love. Jonah's missionary message finds later parallels in the message of Peter (Acts 10:1-11) and Paul (Romans, Chapters 9-11). Jesus also referred to Jonah in Matthew 12:38-41.

Jonah's preaching to Israel's enemy (the hated Ninevites) was likely criticized by those who would limit God's love to more deserving people.



Skyline Presbyterian Church Zoom Meeting

Unlikely Heroes Bible Study

Thursdays | 6:00 PM Pacific Time

Meeting ID: 850 6452 1664 | Password: 796162

BY PHONE: Dial by your location

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

“As, therefore, Jonah passed from the ship to the belly of the whale, so Christ passed from the cross to the sepulcher, or into the abyss of death. And as Jonah suffered this for the sake of those who were endangered by the storm, so Christ suffered for the sake of those who are tossed on the waves of this world.” Augustine credits his allegorical interpretation to the interpretation of Christ himself (Matt. 12:39,40), and he allows for other interpretations as long as they are in line with Christ’s.

*—Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo
North Roman Africa 4th Century CE*

Reflect

- *Take a few moments to respond to the questions below. Share with one another as partners or the whole group.*

Digging into Jonah 1:1-17

1. What seems both fitting and surprising about God’s command in chapter one, verse 2? Why?
2. What seems both fitting and surprising about Jonah’s evasive effort?
3. Why do you think Jonah disobeyed?
4. What effect did God stirring and stilling the storm have on the sailors?
5. In what sense are they saved (compare verse 5 and 16 of chapter one)?
6. Likewise, how is Jonah saved?

Applying the Word to our Discipleship

1. God’s pursuit of Jonah is quite revealing. What does it reveal about (a) The justice and mercy of God? (b) The call of God? (c) God’s claim to judge the earth?
2. Where have you run away from God—refusing to do something you know God’s telling you to do?
3. What “storms” then and now, bring you back?

Digging into Jonah 4:1-11

1. What’s Jonah’s emotional state after preaching to non-Jewish Ninevah?
2. What do you imagine to be the real reason behind his anger?
3. How did Jonah witness the Lord as a “gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love”?
4. How does God deal with a pouting prophet?

Applying the Word to our Discipleship

1. Do you have a pouting place? Has God ever made you that uncomfortable? How so?
2. Historically, where have national enemies been portrayed as God’s enemies?
3. When have you tried limiting God’s mercy to others?
4. When have you tried limiting God’s mercy to yourself?
5. To whom is God wanting you to show mercy?