KINGDOM of HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Community Group Material

Matthew 12:38-50

Week of 29th of October to 4th of November

The Sign of Jonah

Leader Preparation



Read through the passage so that you are familiar with it. Read through the material on pages 34-36 of the CG leader manual. Look carefully through the notes and questions - it will not be possible to discuss all the questions! Focus on those most relevant to your group in the discussion time.

The passage this week we look at:

- How does Jonah compare with Jesus?
- Who are the true followers of Jesus? What signs have they received to convince them of who God is? What kind of people does Jesus regard as his family?

Spend some time praying for the members of your group, and asking God to guide you as you lead your time together.

Group time:

Community group often comes at the end of a long day, when people have rushed away from work and family to be there. Take some time to allow people to leave behind the busyness of daily life and to give this time to God. You may want to play a worship song or give some time for silence and then read:

It's been a long day Lord.
I wanted to walk next to you the whole way,
But somewhere on today's journey I took a turn.
So many things to do,
Such worrying issues on my mind,
Different people all needing time and care.
Even now, I'm thinking through the list of tasks for tomorrow, wondering what I might have forgotten.
Quiet my heart Lord.
Remind me that the world will keep turning without me.
Help me to slow my steps to walk next to you, to listen to you, to take my pace from you, to find my Sabbath rest in you.
Kindle in my heart a thirst for your word and your presence – and transform me as I encounter you there.

Take a few minutes to share:

- A time recently when I felt alone and far from God.
- A time recently when I was made aware of God's wonderful presence with me.

Exploring the Passage

READ Matthew 12:38-50

- Spend some time thinking about the similarities and differences between Jonah and Jesus (see the table with questions and references below)
- What do you think the "sign of Jonah" is that would be given to the Jewish authorities who asked?

	JONAH	JESUS
His calling to preach	Jonah 3:1	Matthew 4:17
His submission to God's will	Jonah 1:3	Luke 22:42
His 3 days of ???	Matthew 12:40	
Who was saved by the depths he went to?	Jonah 1:14-15	
Did he seek God's presence?	Jonah 1:3	Matthew 14:23
Did he rejoice in God's compassion?	Jonah 4:2	Luke 15:7

How to spot a true believer

Think through the comparison between each of the following groups.

- What compelling evidence did each receive to convince them to believe Jesus?
- What was their response?
- Would they have thought that they belonged in the kingdom of God?

The Jewish authorities	vs	The Ninevites *Jonah 3:3-9*
The Jewish authorities	vs	The Queen of Sheba *1 Kings 10:1-9*
Jesus' mother and brothers	vs	???? who is the automatic choice for Jesus? *Matthew 12:50,* *Matthew 7:24* *John 14:21*

CREATIVE SUGGESTION

Instead of discussing this as a group, how about doing some interviews? Ask someone in the group to act as the interviewer. Get a couple of people to read through the descriptions of the characters in the table. Then ask them to answer the questions from that character's point of view.

The Pharisees spent a lot of effort keeping themselves (their "house") spiritually clean. What were they still lacking according to Jesus' parable about the demons?

How about you?

- What compelling evidence have you received about Jesus?
- What is your response?
- Are there things you do that make you think that you belong in God's kingdom that don't meet his criteria?
- Are you ever guilty of the same kind of self-righteousness as the Pharisees, wrongly assuming that on the day of judgment, you will be safe, and others will be at risk?

Prayer

Jesus has won the victory for us, and he asks us to put our trust in him.

- Spend some time asking God to reveal to you any hardness of heart that prevents you from trusting him fully.
- Ask God if there are any areas of your life where you continue to resist his commands. Ask him to help you to bring them under his authority.
- Pray for God to give you the same compassionate heart for people that do not know him. Ask him to give you opportunities to share his message of repentance and redemption with someone this week.