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RELENTLESS GRACE

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# WELCOME

Most people remember the Old Testament book of Jonah as a story about a big fish, but it's really a story about our big God. In just a few short chapters, the book of Jonah demonstrates God's power over all things, His love for all people, and His relentless grace and mercy. Jonah's story shows us a God who will stop at nothing in order to save even those farthest from Him.

This study of Jonah will guide you to:

*Connect* in authentic community as you and your group share the joys and struggles of life - praying together for big things.

*Grow* in biblical truth by searching the scripture and actively applying this truth to your life.

*Engage* joyfully in helping people find and follow Jesus by practicing simple discipleship tools that tune your heart to those who are far from God.

## PERSONAL STUDY

The six lessons in this study each begin with personal study sections designed to walk through the book of Jonah verse by verse. Lesson 1 contains the big picture and background information for the book and Lessons 2-6 focus on studying the passages in detail. In each lesson, you will be learning and using a number of basic Bible study methods. These methods fit under three fundamental skills that are meant to be practiced in order each week.

*Observe - what do I see?*

*Interpret - what does it mean?*

*Apply - how does it work?*

These skills are summarized in the Bible Study Tools Overview and the Engage Toolbox in the Appendix.

## GROUP DISCUSSION

At the end of every lesson, there is a Group Discussion Guide that serves as a balanced plan for the time you spend together as a group - connecting, growing and engaging.



# LESSON 1

SURVEY

# SURVEY

Everyone loves a good story, and God is no exception. Of His revelation to mankind recorded in the Bible, stories comprise a whopping 40% of the Old Testament and 60% of the New, far exceeding all other types of biblical literature (epistles like Paul's, poetry, proverbs, and prophecy). Therefore, for us to understand God's Word, we must learn how to appreciate, study, and apply the stories of Scripture. That begins with understanding their unique power to communicate truth. The purpose of all Scripture is to communicate truth; every type of biblical literature conveys truth. But stories do so in a uniquely powerful way. They engage not only our minds, but also our senses and emotions. Stories invite us to share an experience of God's truth. We enter into the lives of the story's characters; we share their joy and pain, their victories and defeats. And in that experience, God's truth takes hold of our hearts and minds and changes us in the process.

## WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

Surveying a book like Jonah allows you to grasp the big picture and the overall storyline of the book before getting caught up in the details. This survey provides a helpful road map to guide your study during the coming weeks. So begin this crucial first step by taking the next thirty minutes to read straight through Jonah without stopping.

Then, consult the *Bible Knowledge Commentary* or Tom Constable's commentary on Jonah (<http://www.planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/html/ot/jonah/jonah.htm>) in order to answer the questions on the next page.

1. Who is the story about? Who are the central characters? What do we learn about them?

2. What is the story about? What are the big ideas, events, and themes of the story?

3. When does the story take place? What does the author tell you about this time period?

4. Where does this story take place? What does the author tell you about the physical setting?

5. Why did God include this story in the Bible? There are countless ancient stories He did not include; why include this particular one? What key lessons does He mean for us to learn from it?

6. How does this story affect you? What emotions does this story illicit in you? How does it draw you in personally?



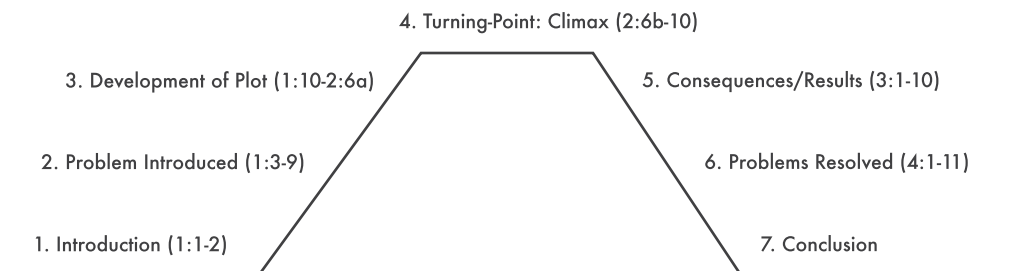
## TRACING THE PLOT

What makes a story “good”? While complex characters, interesting settings, and surprising events all help, nothing is as important to a good story as its plot. A story’s plot is the sequence of events that keep the story moving forward. An engaging plot almost always includes 1. an initial *introduction* of setting and characters, 2. a *conflict* or set of conflicts that build as the story progresses towards, 3. a *climax* where the conflict comes to a head, after which 4. a *resolution* to the conflict emerges and the story ends.

Let’s trace the plot of the book of Jonah. First, read through the book one more time. As you do, identify the main conflict(s) or problem(s) that the story of Jonah revolves around (stories will typically have just one or two main problems/conflicts).

Second, divide the story of Jonah into distinct scenes. Each scene represents continuous action occurring in one place at one time. For each scene, give a brief description of the main event or situation, list the characters present, and note what role the scene plays in the plot (introduction of setting or characters, development of the story, conflict or problem introduced or grown, climax of conflict, resolution of conflict).

Analyzing the individual scenes in a biblical story helps us in two ways. First, since these are biblical stories, we believe that every single word of the story comes from God. No scene is extraneous; every scene is essential for experiencing and applying the lessons of the story. Second, only by analyzing these individual scenes can we get a clear sense of the overall flow of the story. This flow identifies the climax and resolution of the plot which is often where God conveys the primary truths of the story to the reader. For the book of Jonah, the flow of the story can be diagrammed out as shown below.



# GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

## CONNECT

*Pray Big*

1. What are you celebrating from this past week?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What has disappointed you during this last week?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Spend some time praying for the things you are celebrating and for the areas that have been disappointing.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Record your group's prayer requests below...

## GROW

### *Discuss Passage*

Survey | Focus on Questions 1-6

Tracing the Plot | Compare each person's Flow of the Story  
Jonah graph

## ENGAGE

### *Tool Box*

Look through the Engage Toolbox beginning on pg. 55 in the Appendix. Each week your group will be challenged to learn and practice one of these tools. They are a simple means of partnering with each other and with God in helping people to find and follow Jesus. The Engage Toolbox includes:

*Live, Work, Play Map*

*Every Neighbor Prayer*

*Interest Creating Story*

*Simple Gospel*



# LESSON 2

JONAH 1:1-9

## PRAY BIG

Throughout this week, pray daily for the people in your group...

## MEMORIZE THE WORD

Since this week's passage reminds us of the universality of sin, you are encouraged you to memorize **Isaiah 53:6**.



## OBSERVE | WHAT DO I SEE?

### JONAH 1:1-9

*Record your observations in the margin as you read the passage.*

<sup>1</sup> The word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying,

<sup>2</sup> “Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.”

<sup>3</sup> But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

<sup>4</sup> The LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up.

<sup>5</sup> Then the sailors became afraid and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down and fallen sound asleep.

<sup>6</sup> So the captain approached him and said, “How is it that you are sleeping? Get up, call on your god. Perhaps your god will be concerned about us

so that we will not perish.”

<sup>7</sup> Each man said to his mate, “Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity has struck us.” So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.

<sup>8</sup> Then they said to him, “Tell us, now! On whose account has this calamity struck us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?”

<sup>9</sup> He said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land.”

1. Referring to “Observation Task 3: Circle All Character Descriptions” in the Appendix on pg. 52, circle each key character and any description of them within this passage. Then fill out the following chart below.

CHARACTER NAME	CHARACTER TYPE

2. Underline any words or phrases that reference location, movement, or direction in this passage.



## INTERPRET | *WHAT DOES IT MEAN?*

1. What is the role of the prophet in the Old Testament (cf. Exodus 7:1-2 and Jeremiah 1:4-7)? How does God's call to Jonah compare with the call of other prophets (cf. Isaiah 20:2-3 and Ezekiel 4:1-8)?

2. Considering the historical context of both Israel and Assyria, why was Jonah so unwilling to go to Nineveh?

4. What does the sovereignty (i.e. authority and control) of God over the storms in our lives reveal about both His character and His purposes (cf. Hebrews 12:6, Proverbs 10:27 and Proverbs 19:16)?



## APPLY | HOW DOES IT WORK?

1. When have you resisted the clear desire of God in your own life? Is there an area in your life right now that you sense resistance to God?

2. How can the confession of truth and one's own sin provide the first step towards turning from sin and back to the Lord? What steps could you take this week to turn back to the Lord?

3. Prayerfully determine the main biblical truth or principle that God revealed to you during your study. A principle is a fact stated or implied in a passage that is relevant to our lives and not specific to a particular person or time. A few questions to ask are:

*Is there a promise for me to claim?*

*Is there a truth for me to believe?*

*Is there a command for me to obey?*

4. Determine how this truth or principle impacts the relationships in your life (i.e. God, family, friends, coworkers, neighbors, etc.).

*Create a personal application statement that expresses how you will apply this truth in your life.*



## GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### CONNECT

#### *Pray Big*

1. What was the highlight from your week?
2. What has discouraged you during this last week?
3. Spend some time praying for the things have been highlights and for the areas that have been discouraging.
4. Record your group's prayer requests below...

## GROW

### *Memorize the Word*

With your group, practice reciting this week's memory verse.

### *Discuss Passage*

Observe | Focus on Questions 1 and 2

Interpret | Focus on Questions 2 and 3

## ENGAGE

### *Live the Word*

Apply | Focus on Questions 1 and 2

As a group, take some time to share one another's personal application statement.

### *Tool Box | Live, Work, Play Map*

For many of us, we lack compassion for those who do not know Jesus simply because we don't take the time to really know our neighbors, coworkers, and others in our daily lives. The Live, Work, Play Map will help you identify the people already in your sphere of influence.

Read over the description in the Appendix on p. 55 to learn about this tool.

Spend some time in the coming week drawing your own map. Be ready to share it when your group meets next time.





# LESSON 3

JONAH 1:10-16

## PRAY BIG

Throughout this week, pray daily for the people in your group...

## LIVE THE WORD

Looking back at your personal application statement from last week, what steps will you take to follow through on it?

## MEMORIZE THE WORD

Since this week's passage reminds us of the need for compassion for those who are far from God, you are encouraged to memorize **Matthew 9:36-38**.



## OBSERVE | WHAT DO I SEE?

## JONAH 1:10-16

*Record your observations in the margin as you read the passage.*

<sup>10</sup> This terrified them and they asked, “What have you done?” (They knew he was running away from the LORD, because he had already told them so.)

<sup>11</sup> The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, “What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?”

<sup>12</sup> “Pick me up and throw me into the sea,” he replied, “and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you.”

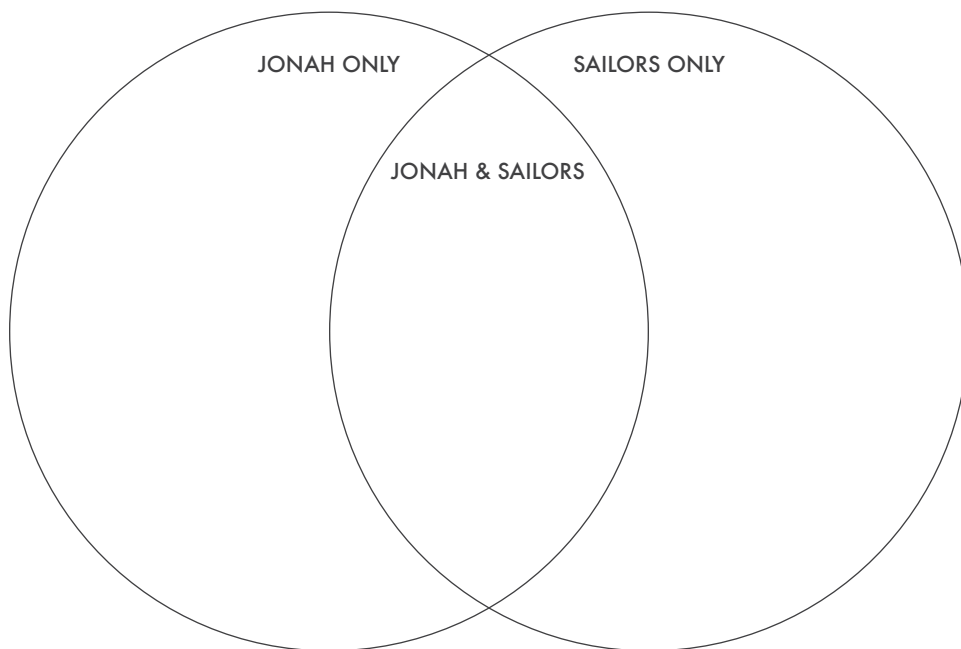
<sup>13</sup> Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before.

<sup>14</sup> Then they cried to the LORD, “O LORD, please do not let us die for taking this man’s life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, O LORD, have done as you pleased.”

<sup>15</sup> Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm.

<sup>16</sup> At this the men greatly feared the LORD, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows to him.

1. Compare and contrast the actions and attitudes of Jonah and the sailors in this passage.



2. Referring to “Observation Task 5D: Identify All Irony” in the Appendix on pg. 53, highlight every instance of literary irony as seen within passage.



## INTERPRET | *WHAT DOES IT MEAN?*

1. After becoming “afraid” of the storm in verse 4, what caused the sailors to become “extremely frightened” in verse 10?

2. When the sailors asked, “What should we do to you so that the sea may become calm for us?,” what does Jonah’s answer reveal about his character at this point in the story?

3. Why are the sailors’ actions and attitudes in verses 13-14 so surprising?

4. In 1:1-16, we see significant spiritual change in the lives of the sailors due to their run in with a disobedient prophet. Specifically, how did they grow in their understanding of the Lord? And what do we learn from the fact that God used the disobedience of His prophet to lead others closer to Him?



## APPLY | HOW DOES IT WORK?

1. Have you experienced a time when God still accomplished His sovereign purposes despite your own disobedience?

2. It is striking that the pagan sailors had more compassion upon Jonah than the prophet had for the people of Nineveh. Can you identify a few factors that may hinder your compassion for those who may not know Jesus? How can you practically begin to resolve those factors this week?

*Create a personal application statement that expresses how you will apply this truth in your life.*



## GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### CONNECT

#### *Pray Big*

1. Share a way that God blessed you through another person this week.

2. What burdens are you carrying that we can pray for?

3. Spend some time praying for the blessings you received and the burden(s) you are carrying.

4. Record your group's prayer requests below...

## GROW

### *Memorize the Word*

With your group, practice reciting this week's memory verse.

### *Discuss Passage*

Observe | Focus on Questions 1 and 2

Interpret | Focus on Questions 3 and 4

## ENGAGE

### *Live the Word*

Apply | Focus on Question 2

As a group, take some time to share one another's personal application statement.

### *Tool Box*

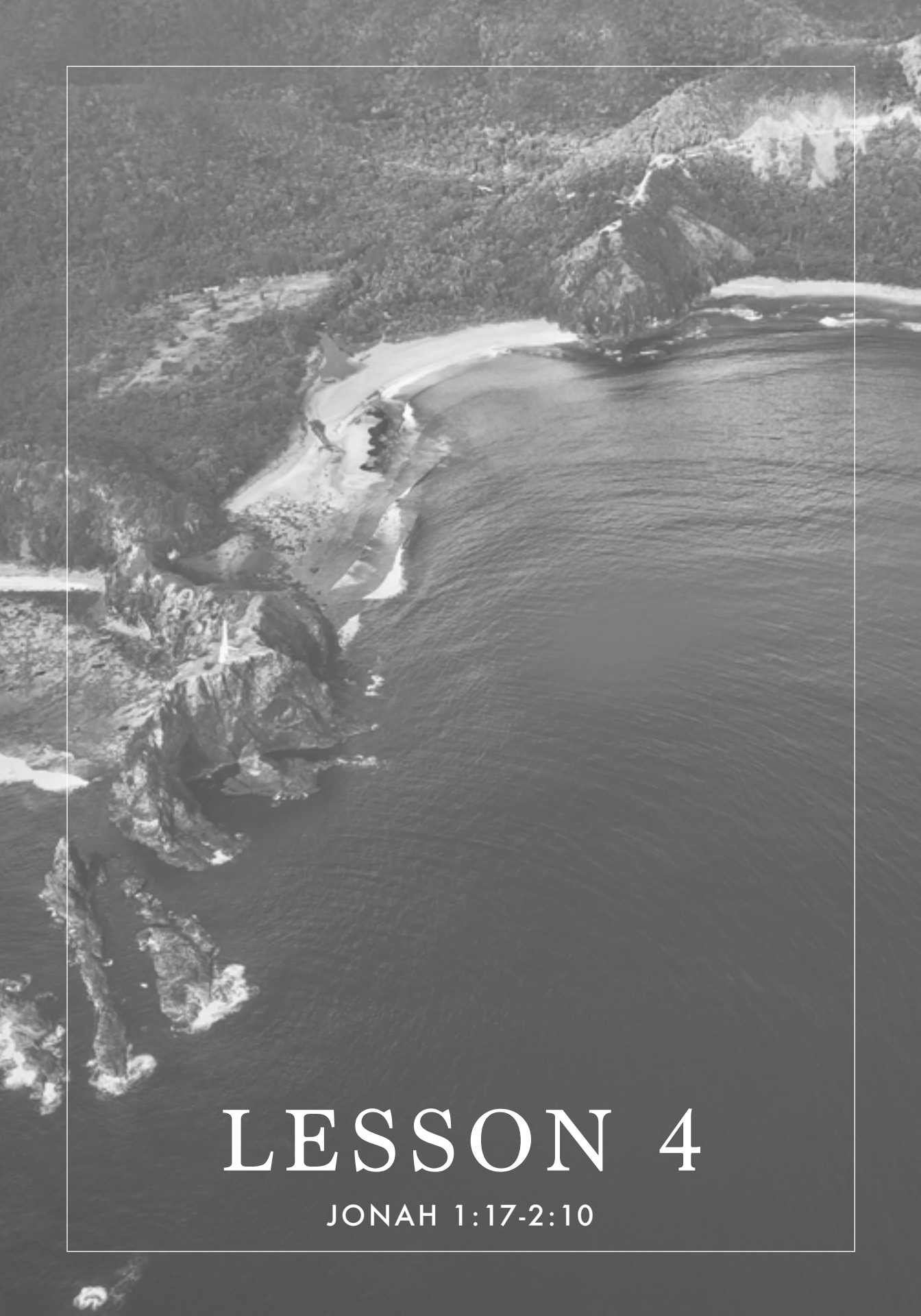
Live, Work, Play Map | Spend some time sharing your experiences creating your Live, Work, Play maps.

Every Neighbor Prayer | Read through the ideas behind Every Neighbor Prayer tool in the Appendix on pg. 56.

Together as a group, create a board that will serve as a physical reminder for your group to pray for the people in each other's lives. Reaching people with the message of Jesus is done best on the foundation of prayer and with each other!

Pray together for the names on the board.





# LESSON 4

JONAH 1:17-2:10

## PRAY BIG

Throughout this week, pray daily for the people in your group...

## LIVE THE WORD

Looking back at your personal application statement from last week, what steps will you take to follow through on it?

## MEMORIZE THE WORD

Since this week's passage reminds us of God's salvation, you are encouraged to memorize **Psalm 27:1**.



## OBSERVE | WHAT DO I SEE?

### JONAH 1:17-2:10

*Record your observations in the margin as you read the passage.*

<sup>1:17</sup> And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.

<sup>2:1</sup> Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish,

<sup>2</sup> And he said, “I called out of my distress to the LORD, and He answered me. I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; You heard my voice.

<sup>3</sup> “For You had cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the current engulfed me. All Your breakers and billows passed over me.

<sup>4</sup> “So I said, ‘I have been expelled from Your sight. Nevertheless I will look again toward Your holy temple.’

<sup>5</sup> “Water encompassed me to the point of death. The great deep engulfed me, weeds were wrapped around my head.

<sup>6</sup> “I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever, but You have

brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God.

<sup>7</sup> “While I was fainting away, I remembered the LORD,  
And my prayer came to You, into Your holy temple.

<sup>8</sup> “Those who regard vain idols forsake their  
faithfulness,

<sup>9</sup> But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of  
thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay.  
Salvation is from the LORD.”

<sup>10</sup> Then the LORD commanded the fish, and it  
vomited Jonah up onto the dry land.

1. Referring to “Observation Task 2: Box Connecting Words” in the Appendix on pg. 52, place a box around each connecting word in the passage.

2. Underline all setting details in this passage.



## INTERPRET | WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

1. How does Jonah's attitude and perspective about death change from his experience in the storm of chapter 1 to his experience within the whale here in chapter 2?

2. Should verse 8 be regarded as a personal confession on Jonah's part? Why or why not?

3. What kind of spiritual change do we see in Jonah within this passage? What might still be lacking within Jonah even as this chapter ends though (*Hint: read chapter 4*)?

4. What is the significance of Jonah being in the whale for "three days and three nights"? Specifically, how does Jonah's rescue foreshadow humanity's greater rescue from sin (cf. Matthew 12:39-41)?



## APPLY | HOW DOES IT WORK?

1. What does your prayer life reveal about your spiritual dependency on the Lord? Specifically, do you only pray when you are in the midst of great difficulty?

2. How have you experienced God's rescue from sin and death in your life?

3. What steps can you take this week to deepen your prayer life in the following areas?

*Your personal relationship with the Lord*

*Your spiritual community*

*Those far from God*

*Create a personal application statement that expresses how you will apply this truth in your life.*



## GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### CONNECT

*Pray Big*

1. What are you thankful for this week?

2. What are you asking God for this week?

3. Spend some time giving thanks for the ways God has blessed you and pray for each other's needs.

4. Record your group's prayer requests below...

## GROW

### *Memorize the Word*

With your group, practice reciting this week's memory verse.

### *Discuss Passage*

Observe | Focus on Question 2

Interpret | Focus on Questions 1, 3 and 4

## ENGAGE

### *Live the Word*

Apply | Focus on Questions 1 and 2

As a group, take some time to share one another's personal application statement.

### *Tool Box*

Interest Creating Story | Read through this tool on pg. 56 in the Appendix. Spend some time this week thinking about and practicing "marking yourself as spiritual" in conversations with family and friends. Pray for opportunities to share with people all around you!

Every Neighbor Prayer | As a group, spend time praying for those on your group's board, adding names as led.



A black and white photograph of a desert landscape. In the foreground, there are rolling sand dunes with some faint tracks or patterns on their surface. The sky is a uniform, light gray, and a thin crescent moon is visible in the upper left quadrant. The overall mood is serene and quiet.

# LESSON 5

JONAH 3:1-10

## PRAY BIG

Throughout this week, pray daily for the people in your group...

## LIVE THE WORD

Looking back at your personal application statement from last week, what steps will you take to follow through on it?

## MEMORIZE THE WORD

Since this week's passage reminds us of our responsibility to declare God's message of reconciliation to the world, you are encouraged to memorize **Acts 1:8**.



## OBSERVE | WHAT DO I SEE?

## JONAH 3:1-10

*Record your observations in the margin as you read the passage.*

<sup>1</sup> Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying,

<sup>2</sup> “Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you.”

<sup>3</sup> So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three days’ walk.

<sup>4</sup> Then Jonah began to go through the city one day’s walk; and he cried out and said, “Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.”

<sup>5</sup> Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them.

<sup>6</sup> When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered himself with sackcloth and sat on the ashes.

<sup>7</sup> He issued a proclamation and it said, “In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let

man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water.

<sup>8</sup> But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands.

<sup>9</sup> Who knows, God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish.”

<sup>10</sup> When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.

1. Use different color highlighters to identify dialogue from different characters in this passage.

2. Circle any key description of the Ninevites and Nineveh in this passage.



## INTERPRET | WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

1. In verses 3-4, why does the story include details that Nineveh was “a three days’ walk” and that Jonah had only gone through the city “one day’s walk”? Referring to “Observation Task 5B: Determine Point of View”, on pg. 53 of the Appendix, how do these specific details shape your point of view of the story?
2. How would you characterize Jonah’s message to the Ninevites? What historical events preceded Jonah’s arrival in Nineveh that may have prepared them to respond (*Hint: refer back to the Setting section of Lesson 1*)?
3. What did fasting and sackcloth signify as the Ninevites responded to Jonah’s message (cf. Isaiah. 15:3; 58:5; Daniel 9:3)?
4. How do verses 9-10 reveal both the justice and the compassion of God?



## APPLY | HOW DOES IT WORK?

1. Which spiritual disciplines (i.e. prayer, worship, fasting, evangelism, reading the Word, giving, etc) are easiest for you to practice? Which ones are more difficult?

How do they shape and reflect the condition of your heart?

2. How would most cities and college campuses today have responded to Jonah's message?

What can we learn from both Jonah's failure and from his faithfulness as we also obey God's call to help people find and follow Jesus?

What steps can you take this week to begin spiritual conversations with the people God has placed in your life?

*Create a personal application statement that expresses how you will apply this truth in your life.*



# GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

## CONNECT

### *Pray Big*

1. What are you thankful for this week?

2. What are you asking God for this week?

3. Spend some time giving thanks for the ways God has blessed you and pray for each other's needs.

4. Record your group's prayer requests below...

## GROW

*Memorize the Word*

With your group, practice reciting this week's memory verse.

*Discuss Passage*

Observe | Focus on Questions 1 and 2

Interpret | Focus on Questions 2, 3, and 4

## ENGAGE

*Live the Word*

Apply | Focus on Question 2

As a group, take some time to share one another's personal application statement.

*Tool Box*

Simple Gospel | We believe that outside of God's grace, all people face an eternity separated from God. This motivates us to share the good news of Jesus with anyone that does not have a personal relationship with Him.

Who can you share the gospel with this week? How does it make you feel thinking about this conversation?

Sharing the Gospel:

- God loves you and created you to know Him personally (1 John 4:9; John 17:13).
- We are separated from God by our sin, so we cannot know Him or experience His love (Romans 3:23, 6:23).
- Jesus is our only solution for our sin. Only through Him can we know God and receive His love and forgiveness (Colossians 1:15, John 3:16).
- We must each respond to Jesus by placing our trust in Him as our Savior and Lord. Only then can we know God personally (John 1:12, Ephesians 2:8-9).
- Practice sharing these simple truths with a partner.
- Look for opportunities to share this week!

Every Neighbor Prayer | As a group, spend time praying for those on your group's board, adding names as led.





# LESSON 6

JONAH 4:1-11

## PRAY BIG

Throughout this week, pray daily for the people in your group...

## LIVE THE WORD

Looking back at your personal application statement from last week, what steps will you take to follow through on it?

## MEMORIZE THE WORD

Since this week's of God's compassionate love for all people, you are encouraged to memorize **Ephesians 2:17-18**.



## OBSERVE | WHAT DO I SEE?

### JONAH 4:1-11

*Record your observations in the margin as you read the passage.*

<sup>4:1</sup> But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry.

<sup>2</sup> He prayed to the LORD and said, “Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.

<sup>3</sup> Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life.”

<sup>4</sup> The LORD said, “Do you have good reason to be angry?”

<sup>5</sup> Then Jonah went out from the city and sat east of it. There he made a shelter for himself and sat under it in the shade until he could see what would happen in the city.

<sup>6</sup> So the LORD God appointed a plant and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort. And Jonah was extremely happy about the plant.

<sup>7</sup> But God appointed a worm when dawn came the next day and it attacked the plant and it withered.

<sup>8</sup> When the sun came up God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he became faint and begged with all his soul to die, saying, "Death is better to me than life."

<sup>9</sup> Then God said to Jonah, "Do you have good reason to be angry about the plant?" And he said, "I have good reason to be angry, even to death."

<sup>10</sup> Then the LORD said, "You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work and which you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight.

<sup>11</sup> Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?"

1. Circle every repeated word within this passage.

2. Highlight any word that demonstrates the emotions of characters within this passage.



## INTERPRET | WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

1. What factors could possibly explain Jonah’s extreme response to God’s compassion towards the Ninevites? In other words, why was he so angry at God (*Hint: refer back to Lesson 1 to consider the history of both the Israelites and the Assyrians*)?

2. In verses 5-11, what does God expose in Jonah’s heart and attitude through the use of a plant, worm, and wind? What is the lesson God wants Jonah to grasp?

3. The book of Jonah ends abruptly and without the typical resolution of the plot. What’s the purpose of this ending to the book? Specifically, what questions are left unanswered for the reader?

4. Looking back on the entire book, create summary sentences for each section with its corresponding icon...





## APPLY | HOW DOES IT WORK?

1. Do you lack compassion and/or remain distant from the following groups?

*Those that have wronged you*

*Those that are different than you (i.e. ethnically, politically, economically, etc.)*

*Those that are geographically distant from you*

*Those that don't know Jesus*

If so, why is this the case? And what steps this week could you take to see these groups as God sees them?

Who can you move towards in compassion and love? What steps will you take this week?

*Create a personal application statement that expresses how you will apply this truth in your life.*



## GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### CONNECT

#### *Pray Big*

1. What are you thankful for, and what has stressed you out this week?

2. Did you see an answered prayer this week?

3. Spend some time giving thanks for the ways you have seen God's goodness and pray for each other's needs.

4. Record your group's prayer requests below...

## GROW

### *Memorize the Word*

With your group, practice reciting this week's memory verse.

### *Discuss Passage*

Observe | Focus on Questions 2, 3, and 4

Interpret | Focus on Questions 1, 2, and 5

## ENGAGE

### *Live the Word*

Apply | Focus on Question 1

As a group, take some time to share one another's personal application statement.

### *Tool Box*

#### Review Engage Tools

Spend some time discussing your group's experience in learning and practicing the Engage Tools.

How did your group see God move in your lives and in the lives of the people for whom you are praying?



# APPENDIX

## OBSERVE | WHAT DO I SEE?

Every time we study the Bible, the first thing to ask is, “What do I see?” This is the crucial skill of observation, which lays the groundwork for the rest of our study. Here are four tasks involved in observation which should be performed in the order below:

### OBSERVATION TASK 1

#### UNDERLINE ALL SETTING DETAILS

Identify the people, places, time periods, and events of a story (like “go to Nineveh... but Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish in Jonah 1:2-3). These details not only provide significant background to understand the action within a story, but they also invite the reader into the story as an engaged participant.

### OBSERVATION TASK 2

#### BOX CONNECTING WORDS

These important words indicate the logical connection between words, phrases, and clauses. Here are eight types of common connecting words to look for:

1. Comparison either points out similarities between two or more related ideas or simply joins like ideas. Comparison words include: and, like, as, just as, also, so also, even so.
2. Contrast points out dissimilarities between ideas. Contrast words include: but, rather, yet, however.
3. Purpose indicates the intended goal of an idea or action, whether or not it was realized. Purpose words include: that, so that, in order that.
4. Result is similar to “purpose,” but indicates the actual consequence, whether or not it was intended. Result words include: that, so that, as a result, with the result that.
5. Cause expresses the basis or cause of an action. Cause words include: because, since, and sometimes for.
6. Explanation is what follows and further explains the previous idea, giving reasons why it is true, why it occurred, or simply adding additional information. Look for the key word “for.”
7. Inference provides a logical consequence, conclusion, or summary to the previous discussion. Inference words include: therefore, for this reason.
8. Condition presents a condition that must occur before a certain action or conclusion can take place. The statement may or may not reflect reality (i.e., it could be hypothetical). Key word is “if.”

### OBSERVATION TASK 3

#### CIRCLE ALL CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

Characters come in all different types as seen in the list below:

*Protagonist* | character who overcomes conflict and serves as the hero often drawing audience’s sympathy (such as David in the story of David and Goliath).

*Antagonist* | character who creates the conflict or problem in the story (such as Goliath)

*Round* | character who has many strengths and weaknesses (such as Jonah - as he’s admirable at times and deplorable at others)

*Flat* | character who appears one-dimensional (both Goliath and King Saul in the story of David and Goliath - there’s little depth or development for either character in this story)

*Agent* | character who appears only to help move the plot along as he performs a simple action (such as the messenger in 1 Samuel 4 who brings Eli the disastrous news of Israel’s defeat - we don’t even learn his name because he’s merely an agent in the story)

*Foil* | character who acts as a mirror to compare or contrast the main character or main events of a story (such as the pagan sailors in Jonah who proved more reverent of God than Jonah did, the prophet).

Despite their variety, no character is extraneous to the story as each character fulfills a specific purpose.

Often the narrator or other characters will directly describe a character. Yet, usually an audience learns about a character through his or her own words, thoughts, and actions in a story. Use every relevant detail available in a story to get to know the characters as well as possible especially as they develop and change throughout a story.

## OBSERVATION TASK 4

### *CHART THE PLOT DEVELOPMENT*

Examine the story's arrangement of all events, also known as the plot. A story's overall plot almost always involves an initial introduction of setting and characters, followed quickly by a conflict or set of conflicts that build toward a critical climax after which a resolution finally emerges in the end. Hence, each story has a certain flow or structure to it, and each scene within the story uniquely contributes to the development of the plot. Take note of the mood of each scene and the growth of each character as the story unfolds.

## OBSERVATION TASK 5

### *MARK UP THE PASSAGE VISUALLY BY IDENTIFYING SPECIFIC LITERARY TOOLS*

**A** | Highlight character dialogue within the story. Dialogue within a story not only demonstrates the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the characters, but it also reveals events that move a story's plot forward.

**B** | Determine point of view within the story. This refers to the perspectives within a narrative, whether those of each character or even the narrator who controls the overall point of view of the story itself. A story's author uses a narrator to control what the reader sees, how he sees it, and when he sees it. Such selectivity and arrangement of details create a lens through which the reader interacts with a story and each of its characters. In this way, the narrator's point of view guides the reader to the story's lessons by the end (e.g. Jonah displays more compassion for a plant than he does those in Nineveh who were facing the judgment of God).

**C** | Box all foils within the story. A foil usually is a minor character who sets apart or highlights a major character by some contrast or less frequently by some parallel (e.g. the pagan sailors in Jonah who proved more reverent of God than did Jonah, the prophet). While foils are usually characters, sometimes an event or thread of action can serve as a foil to the main plot as well (e.g. the seemingly odd story of Judah and Tamar in the middle of the story of Joseph serves to highlight Joseph's integrity and contrast it with the failings of the rest of Jacob's family).

**D** | Identify all irony within the story. Irony is a rhetorical device that an author uses intentionally but subtly in several ways:

Irony is present when the narrator states one thing but intends for the reader to understand something different.

Irony occurs with dramatic reversal of a situation. Hence, it can involve poetic justice when good people are rewarded and bad people are punished.

Irony is present when the least likely person does an expected action or when the least expected thing happens in a story (e.g. when the pagan sailors and pagan king of Nineveh prove far more responsive to God than Jonah, God's prophet). We especially find irony in the Bible as God's thoughts and actions are so often unexpected and unseen from man's natural and limited point of view.

# INTERPRET | WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

## PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

**PRINCIPLE 1** | Your goal is to discern the author’s intended meaning to the original audience. Unfortunately, most people begin their Bible study by asking, “what does this passage mean to me?” While there may be multiple possible applications to my life, there is only one meaning - the author’s intended meaning; and we must first seek this out. This involves three important steps.

1. Always start your study with prayer, asking the same God who composed Scripture through these ancient authors to give insight to understand His intended meaning.
2. Be very careful to avoid reading your 21st century circumstances and theological issues into the text as they skew your understanding.
3. Work diligently to see the text from the point of view of the original readers. To do this (a.) dig into the historical and cultural background using Bible dictionaries and commentaries, and (b.) spend a few moments thinking about the original audience’s religious understanding by asking, “what books of the Bible did they have access to? What did they know about God? About Jesus? About salvation? Etc.”

**PRINCIPLE 2** | Assume a “normal” use of language. The Bible was given to us because God desired to communicate with us, not to hide Himself from us. Therefore, we should not be looking for “hidden” meanings as we study. Instead, we should use the “normal” techniques we would use to understand any piece of literature:

1. Study the grammar. Yes, most of us hated grammar in junior high, but it really is helpful for understanding Scripture! Pay attention to nouns, verbs, adjectives, and prepositions. Think through figures of speech. Observe how phrases and clauses are connected into sentences and how sentences are linked together into paragraphs.
2. Remember that chapter divisions came later. When Paul wrote Corinthians or Luke wrote the book of Acts, they wrote single, unified stories without verse or chapter divisions. These books were meant to be read just like you would read a letter or a novel. Always keep the overall story in mind as you study each passage.

**PRINCIPLE 3** | Let Scripture interpret Scripture. Since God is unchangingly truthful and always consistent (John 17:17; Hebrews 3:6; James 1:17), we can, and should, expect the same of His Word. This has two practical applications:

1. Check your conclusions. Always compare your conclusions with the teachings of Scripture as a whole. If you find that your interpretation of a passage contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture elsewhere, you probably need to revise your conclusions.
2. Allow clear passages to illuminate ambiguous passages. Whenever you encounter a passage that is confusing or open to multiple possible interpretations, use clearer passages of Scripture to guide you to the correct interpretation.

One last caution: Remember that God revealed Scripture progressively, not all at once. Therefore, we should not be surprised by differences between how people related to and understood God at different times in the history of Scripture. For example, while Abraham needed only believe that God was faithful in order to be justified (Genesis 15:6), in the New Testament era, we must believe in Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection to be saved (1 Corinthians 15:1-7).

## APPLY | HOW DOES IT WORK?

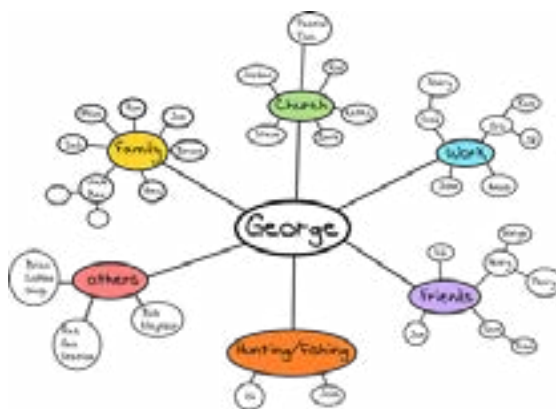
See pg. 17 for basic principles on applying Scripture.

## ENGAGE TOOLBOX

### LIVE, WORK, PLAY MAP

The word “oikos” is a Greek word that means family. In Jesus’s time, a family would include workers, extended family, and people residing in their home. Basically, this was their greatest circle of influence. For us, this can also include not only our family, but our friends, coworkers, and acquaintances. It can include the guy at the gas station that you see at each fill up, or the barista that serves you that mocha latte each morning. It is anyone that we commonly encounter on a regular basis, giving you the ability to have influence in their lives.

So what does this have to do with us, and how does it help us spread the gospel? “Oikos” is used around 120 times in the New Testament. Often when Jesus or his disciples found people that were open to the gospel, He would eventually share the message with the entire network, their oikos and their communities. Jesus met the woman at the well (John 4), and after revealing His message and who He was as Messiah, she was amazed and told her oikos, her whole town, AND many believed! We want to see the same happen. Every Day and Every Neighbor means that we are participants in a Greater Story of God’s plan of salvation and we can be ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5) wherever and with whomever we find ourselves.



Draw your own network: Think about the people in your spheres in influence. With whom do you live, work, and play? Be as exhaustive as possible and brainstorm away! Also, think about people that are just beyond your normal spheres. People that are that next step out- perhaps an acquaintance that you don’t know well, a neighbor who is different from you ethnically or social-economically, a community member that the Holy Spirit has put in your path but is more a stranger than friend? Be creative and think outside the box on this one!



## EVERY NEIGHBOR PRAYER

At the heart of Every Neighbor, there is a desire to be observant, expectant, and involved in who God is putting into our paths where we Live, Work, and Play. He wants us to pray- that many will know Him as Father and as Savior, as He draws them to himself and His Kingdom (John 6:44). As well, Jesus modeled prayer for those who were like “sheep without a shepherd (Mark 6:32-34).” Jesus’s own ministry of compassion (Matthew 14:14, 15:32) to those who were on the fringes of society, those who had no status or reputation, was a beautiful example of who we are to be praying for and seeking to include in our daily lives- those who are outside our comfort zones, but fully loved and wanted by our God.

Each week, we gather to pray for these people. Who did God impress upon you when you drew out your Live, Work, and Play network? Who are the people who might be seeking His Kingdom, who are asking hard questions, who are far from Christ and need a better Hope? Using your Live, Work, and Play network, who do you need to purposively add to the Every Neighbor Prayer board? On this board, collect the names of those you are hoping to bless with the gospel through service, acts of love, conversation, and/or Bible study. Pray boldly for God to reveal Himself to them and open their eyes to His power and freedom.

You may meet someone new this week or renew an old relationship from the past- is this someone God is asking you to put on the Every Neighbor Prayer board, to actively pray big for their salvation? Add them to the board. Each week, take time to update your group, and let’s see what God will do!

## INTEREST CREATING STORY

### *How to Start a Spiritual Conversation*

The parables that Jesus told created an interest in His Kingdom- the characteristics, the hopes, and the realities of the gospel. Sometimes, Jesus wouldn’t even mention that He was Messiah; sometimes He did pointedly. Jesus made the gospel accessible to those who would hear and didn’t apologize for who He was. Sadly, we have become conditioned to put on a filter and not speak of Jesus- because we imagine that it is awkward, pushy, or politically incorrect. We need to take off this filter and grow in boldness and love as we share stories about who He is and what He is about. There was no doubt that He was marking himself as special, as a spiritual being, and often, much more than that!

Likewise, “marking ourselves as spiritual” can help us gauge whether others are interested in God and His message. Some people will “lean in” as you speak about such topics, asking additional questions, sharing their own beliefs, telling about their own journey. Some will not; they will “lean back” and change the topic, become silent, or shut down altogether. Allow the Holy Spirit to prompt you as you initiate and let Him do the work of speaking to a person’s soul.

Practice talking with your spouse, children, or friend about two or three of the following “interest creating” topics:

*Recently, God/Jesus has been teaching me that...*

*I am realizing more and more that God has blessed me by...*

*I use to struggle with (insert fear, stronghold, idolatry) but now I see God wants me to believe...*

*I decided to follow Jesus because...*

Think of common topics that come up as you meet people - for example: career, living situation, family history, educational background. Pick one of these and tell how God changed your path in the past, or how He is guiding you in the present.

As you practice talking about these things, try to end with a learning question such as, “Have you ever considered God in this way before?” OR “Do you think God is teaching/blessing/asking you to believe anything right now?” Your questions are to gauge a response and to allow space for them to interact with your story. Now, be prayerful and alert as to who God wants you to share with this week!

### *Prayer Stories*

Another way to create interest is prayer stories. Most people in today’s world still value prayer. Think of someone in your Live, Work, and Play network has expressed a need, struggle, or unmet desire. Can you do one of the following this week?

Share how God has answered a prayer in your life, something specific and real and transforming.



Make a point to tell them that you are praying to God in Jesus's name for their need. Check back with them with the expectation that God will move!

Pray face-to-face with your friend. Again, check back and see what God has done!

#### *Simple Gospel*

We believe that outside of God's grace, all people face an eternity separated from God. This motivates us to share the good news of Jesus with anyone that does not have a personal relationship with Him.

Who can you share the gospel with this week? How does it make you feel thinking about this conversation?

#### *Sharing the Gospel*

God loves you and created you to know Him personally (1 Jn. 4:9; Jn. 17:13)

We are separated from God by our sin, so we cannot know Him or experience His love (Rom. 3:23, 6:23)

Jesus is our only solution for our sin. Only through Him can we know God and receive His love and forgiveness (Col. 1:15, John 3:16)

We must each respond to Jesus by placing our trust in Him as our Savior and Lord. Only then can we know God personally (Jn. 1:12; Eph. 2:8-9)

Practice sharing these simple truths with a partner. Look for opportunities to share this week!

## ADDITIONAL STUDY RESOURCES

### ONLINE RESOURCES

biblestudytools.com | online word studies

blueletterbible.org | online word studies

soniclight.com | online commentary

bestcommentaries.com | online commentary database

### DISCIPLESHIP/BIBLE STUDY RESOURCES

*Living By the Book* by Howard Hendricks and Charles Swindoll

A more in-depth book on how to study the Bible using the tools discussed in this packet.

*The Master Plan of Evangelism* by Robert Coleman

A highly motivational analysis of Jesus' own principles of evangelism and discipleship.

*The Lost Art of Disciple Making* by Leroy Eims

This practical resource will give you a detailed structure to follow and great content to cover as you begin to disciple a new believer.

*A Survey of Bible Doctrine* by Charles Ryrie

An easy-to-read, relatively short systematic theology primer that you can walk a new believer through to ground them in the faith.

*Essentials of the Faith* by Grace Bible Church, College Station, TX

This small group Bible study packet walks a new believer through the fundamental trusts and practices of the Christian faith in ten self-paced lessons.

*\*Note: Grace Bible Church does not always agree with the views of these commentaries. These are good tools to help understand hard passages, but the particular theological views reflect the author, of the commentary and not those of Grace Bible Church.*

WE HELP PEOPLE FIND & FOLLOW JESUS

