



Sermon-Based Small Group Leader Notes

For the week of January 22, 2012 (week 2 of 10)

Introduction

Topic

Sermon Title: "Living Out of Your Mind"

Sermon Series: *Flow* (week 2 of 7)

Scripture: Romans 8:6

Sermon by: Dr. Tom Harrington

Goals for This Gathering

1. Get to know each other, paying special attention to welcoming newcomers.
2. Discuss logistics of meeting time and frequency, expectations, group roles. ** Discuss Group Covenant for newcomers if you did not last week.**
3. Discuss the homework.
4. Pray together.
5. Encourage members to invite others.

Prayer

1. Take prayer requests and praises.
2. Pray for your group to truly bond with each other.
3. Pray that God will help us to be mindful of who he is and what his will is for our lives.

Getting Started

Note to Leader: The following few weeks of sermon-based small group curriculum will consider the sermon's thematic elements in light of the Old Testament book of Jonah. In order to reduce repetition over the coming weeks, please encourage your group to limit discussion to the chapters and verses in Jonah selected for each particular week.

The questions in this section allow your group to talk about this week's sermon topic, i.e., that Christians can live freely and with peace as the Holy Spirit reigns in our thoughts. This is the second week in a seven-week sermon series.

Question 1 — This opening question allows participants to casually share from their own perspective. There are no right or wrong answers here. Be prepared with some answers of your own.

Into the Bible

In this section, participants will consider the themes of this week's sermon, based on Romans 8:6, from the vantage point of Jonah chapter 2. Read Romans 8:6:

The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace. (NIV1984)

Read Jonah 2:1-10

(For commentary notes on Jonah 2, find after Question 7 notes)

Question 3 — The verbs are in past tense, as if he's already been saved. He is confident in his deliverance, though still in the belly of a fish, and in God's hand in this situation.

Question 4 — Psalm 139 tells us that there is no place that we can go where God's presence isn't found. However, these words of banishment speak to us about how Jonah felt about God. He felt that God was tired of him and didn't want him anymore. He felt banished! At this point he had two options, despair for his life and die or look to God. Jonah chooses to think about God's holy temple and even envisions seeing it again. Remember, he is in the belly of a great fish at the bottom of the ocean. It would appear that his circumstances are, at the minimum, producing some seeds of faith.

Question 5 — His language about calling out from the grave is a clue to how he felt in the belly of the fish. Jonah felt close to death. He felt death was imminent. Jonah does not appear to have confidence that his survival is part of God's plan. It is easy for us, who are familiar with the entire story of Jonah's life, to criticize Jonah for not trusting that God would take care of him. However, in the moment and unable to predict what God had in mind, Jonah spoke honestly about how things appeared from his perspective.

Question 6 — The hard reality of this story is that Jonah chose death over repentance. When the sailors ask him: "What should we do to make the sea calm down?" Jonah responded by telling them to throw him overboard instead of asking them to return to Joppa so that he could go and preach in Nineveh. This is a choice Jonah made, but it is not God's desired response. Never in the Bible do we see God being placated by the death of His servant. God desires obedience and not meaningless sacrifice. In Psalm 51:16-17, the psalmist writes, "*You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise*" (NIV).

It is in this moment that God intervened to rescue Jonah, to bring him to repentance and to restore him as his prophet. When Jonah was literally a dead man — God raised him up and restored him. This is true in our lives as well. The reality of Christianity is that we come to God when we are "*dead in transgressions and sins*" (Eph 2:1 NIV) but God "*made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved*" (Eph 2:5 NIV).

Question 7 — John Calvin once said: “Man’s nature is a perpetual factory of idols.” We continually look to find happiness apart from God — this is true of all people everywhere. Just like Adam and Eve tried to find happiness and fulfillment in a piece of fruit, so we look to replace God as the source of security, comfort, happiness and joy. We can do this with anything. The problem is that idols never ultimately fulfill and fail to deliver what they promise. In the end, they leave us broken-hearted and disappointed. Often times we walk away from them carrying shame, guilt and remorse. However in Christ, we are offered “*grace upon grace*” (John 1:16 ESV). Jesus never leaves us full of guilt, shame and remorse because he does not require our performance. Instead, he asks only for our sin, which he bears upon the cross and exchanges it for his righteousness. He offers unconditional love, unconditional acceptance, and unconditional grace. The simplicity of this reality seems scandalous to those who are without the mind of Christ.

Commentary on Jonah 2

“from inside the fish” (v. 1) — Note the fish is not mentioned in the prayer itself. Much of the prayer has to do with Jonah’s condition just before he is swallowed. However, it is also a prayer of thanksgiving that reflects back on what happened.

“In my distress” (v. 2) — Distress causes him to call out to the Lord. This is the first time Jonah prays to God. (The next time is in 4:2.) The storm itself had not caused him to pray to the Lord but only at his moment of death. It is in this condition that he prays and God listens. This is the summary of Jonah’s prayer: Jonah prayed and God answered. The rest of the psalm contains the details (Baker, 113). “Sheol” — (in the ESV) this term refers to the place of the dead but can also mean the place where the wicked go after death. Considering this later meaning, Jonah would have had good reason to fear going to the place of the wicked where he would be abandoned by God.

“For you cast me” (v. 3) or **“You hurled me into the deep”** — It was of course the pagan sailors that threw him overboard at Jonah’s own wish. But here Jonah acknowledges God’s absolute sovereignty in all things — the ultimate responsibility for Jonah being thrown into the sea was God’s. The rest of this verse has a very vivid description of what it was like to be thrown into the sea. Note throughout this psalm the many Hebrew parallelisms where the same idea is repeated twice with the second time being more detailed.

“I have been banished from your sight” (v. 4) — In this verse Jonah believes that he has been completely rejected by God for his disobedience. He thinks his destiny is Sheol. However, in the next sentence there is hope. It may be that finding himself in the fish produced hope that he will once again see God’s “holy temple.” Or, perhaps Jonah looked back later and acknowledged that there had been hope. Note the two halves of the verse: in the first half, all hope is gone if God does not see Jonah and in the second, hope is restored if Jonah sees God (“your holy temple”). Jonah’s fate seems inevitable and death is imminent.

“roots of the mountain (v .6)” — It is unclear what this phrase might mean (this is the only place this phrase appears in the Old Testament). It may mean that the roots of the mountains on land go all the way to the bottom of the sea. **“the earth beneath barred me in forever”** — Jonah sees the bottom of the sea as a gate which locks in its prisoners. That is, there is no escape. **“But”** or **“Yet”** again introduces a contrast between the inevitable death by drowning and the rescue by God. Jonah’s long downward spiral into the bottom of the sea is stopped and he is **“brought up.”** **“pit”** is a synonym for grave and often is a parallel to Sheol (Baker, 116).

Just at the moment of death Jonah remembers the Lord (v .7). And in his remembering he prays. Jonah had deliberately tried to forget God as he was on the run from God’s will. But like the prodigal son, at the moment of his most dire need, he remembers. Jonah’s prayer demonstrated his willingness to come under God’s sovereignty. When he did so, the Lord provided for his rescue. See Hebrews 4:16.

The first part of this verse is straightforward (v .8). It is referring to those people who practice idolatry. The second part of the verse contains only two Hebrew words and can either mean that such people have forfeited God’s grace (**“steadfast love”**) that was theirs (NIV) or such people have abandoned their faithfulness to God (NASB). Of course, either meaning is true.

“Salvation comes from the Lord to the LORD” (v. 9) — No other words could summarize better Jonah’s appreciation of all that God has done for him; however, it is exactly this truth that Jonah was running from and which causes Jonah such intense anger later on (Baker, 119).

“vomited” (v. 10) — No doubt the fish was quite relieved to get rid of Jonah. Again God’s sovereignty is evident in that it is God who commands (speaks to) the fish. Jonah is then very unceremoniously and without dignity deposited onto dry land.

Digging Deeper

Question 8 — We see later in the book of Jonah that the prophet fails to be thankful and to sing songs of thanksgiving, once again, looking at life and others from an unrighteous perspective. Jonah’s spiritual life, far from allowing the Holy Spirit to flow like living water within him, leaves him in a state of depression. We will see next week, as we study Jonah chapter 4, that he once again says, “it is better for me to die than to live.”

God calls us to live lives of thankfulness and thanksgiving. Because we live in a world that is broken and full of sin and sinners, there will always be pain, there will always be wrong, there will always be something negative on which to focus. As those who have been rescued by God, however, we are instructed to live grateful lives full of thankfulness and joy. We do this, not by focusing on all that is wrong in our lives but by remembering the grace and blessings that have been given to us in Jesus Christ.

Question 9 – We are prone to turn to anyone or anything as a source of salvation. When things go wrong, we turn to money, shopping, hobbies, people, etc, etc, etc.... However, as Jonah states in verse 9, “Salvation comes from the LORD.” This means that our salvation should come from God alone, and, though God may use people and things to influence us, he ultimately desires to be the one to provide us with comfort.

Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer

Close with prayer, praying for each other and for God’s wisdom and power in allowing God his proper role as Lord over every part of our lives.

Group Roles Description

- **Prayer Coordinator** – Responsible to take notes during group prayer time and email them, if possible, to group members.
- **Snack Coordinator** – Creates and passes around a snack signup sheet, then reminds people when it is their week to provide snacks.
- **Service Coordinator** – Helps group find a project, securing a day and time for the group to serve in the community together. Will pass along ideas from Community Ministries Team.

Group Covenant

Find the Sample Group Covenant on the table in the foyer or at northwestbaptist.com under the SBSG Additional Resources section.

Bibliography

Allen, Leslie C. *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976. New International Commentary on the Old Testament.

Baker, David W., T. Desmond Alexander, and Bruce K. Waltke. *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah: An Introduction & Commentary*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries.

Stuart, Douglas. *Hosea-Jonah – Word Biblical Commentary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987.