

## I. ME

### A. Welcome

### B. Series

1. What we think we know about God keeps us from discovering God
2. God wants us to know who he is
3. He is for you
4. Sin has separated us
5. Peace with God comes from one single act of trust
6. God is slow to judge... your past does not disqualify you
7. God sees you, knows you, likes you, loves you
8. God's love is not based on our behavior.

### C. Wrap up with one of the strangest stories in the biblical writings

### D. Jonah

1. Skeptics and scholars have argued about it's historicity
2. Impossible story without quite a few miracles happening
3. **Jesus talked about Jonah**... apparently thought he was real.
4. I always side with Jesus on debatable things... he rose from the dead.
5. **HOWEVER**... I'm going to give you an out.
6. If it's too much to swallow... see it as a story with a message.
7. You've had countless fictional stories inspire you and inform your real life... let this be that.
8. B/c this story is not about a guy getting swallowed by a big fish... it's the story of the unbelievable scope of God's love.

## II. WE

- A. See- It's easy to say, "God loves everyone" and easy to say "he loves everyone equally."
  1. But if we dig a bit deeper... few of us actually believe that.
  2. In our true thoughts and hearts (maybe even subconscious)... whether you even believe in a god or not... **Most of us FEEL that some people are more DESERVING of God's love than others.**
  3. Most of the time we put ourselves in the deserving category.
  4. And put those we don't like in the undeserving box
- B. Can be all types of distinctions
  1. Racial / cultural / political / sexual orientation / Income level / etc.
  2. Might be more personal... Neighbors / In-laws / Co-workers / Bosses.
  3. **The root of prejudice is the belief you (and those like you) are more deserving of God's love.**
  4. It's where bigotry, racism, sexism come from.
- C. Jonah had some major prejudices... and we'll see that he actually had good reason for them.
- D. But he misunderstood one very important aspect of God's love...
  1. **God's love is offensively inclusive.**

### III. GOD

#### A. 1:1-2

1. 800-700 BCE about 250 yrs after David
2. **Prophet**- spoke for God. Not really a “The Bible” to turn to.
3. **Nineveh**- outskirts of modern Mosul Iraq
  - a. Capital of the Assyrian Empire
4. **Assyrian Empire**
  - a. 1<sup>st</sup> real empire
  - b. Didn't become that way by loving their neighbors
  - c. Brutal / ruthless
  - d. Perfected torture- skinning alive, impalement, boiling in oil, etc.
  - e. Enemies of Israel
  - f. Conquered and brought other people in -became the Samaritans
5. But this empire was made up of people... people God had created... and people God loved.
6. Sent Jonah to warn them to turn from what they were doing and repent.
7. Much like he probably did with Jericho, etc.
8. **One problem** – Jonah didn't think the Ninevites deserved to be warned.
9. They were evil and deserved to be destroyed.
10. So if they aren't warned, they won't be saved, and they will get what they actually deserve. So...

#### B. 1:3

##### 1. MAP

2. Tries to go as far as possible in the other direction
3. Learns something... Running from God is exhausting.

#### C. 1:4

1. Seasoned Sailors scared... start throwing things overboard
2. Must be some kind of supernatural punishment... cast lots to see who angered their god.
3. Lands on Jonah- Who are you?

#### D. 1:9-10

1. “What do we do?”
2. “Throw me in!”
3. He would rather die than go to Nineveh.
4. **Our prejudices make us stupid.**
5. They throw him in... storm calms... they sail away... and Jonah sinks... ready to die.

#### E. Fish swallows Jonah... in there for three days.

1. Had some thinking time.
2. **2:1-2**... realized **To run from God is to run from love.**
3. Why did God hear Jonah... why didn't he just let him drown and pick someone else?
4. Thought God was punishing him for disobeying by killing him... didn't understand...
5. **God's discipline is not to pay us back but to bring us back.**
6. He loves us unconditionally just the way we are, but he also loves us too much to let us stay that way.
7. God had not given up on Jonah... or Nineveh.

F. Fish spits him out... gross

G. Goes to Nineveh... huge city at the time about 120,000

H. **3:4**- Pretty simple.

1. Not much heart or effort
2. "This is pointless... they are too far gone"... no such thing.

**I. Ninevites believe God**

1. Repented BIG TIME
2. King sackcloth sitting in the dust
3. Decree- everyone fast... even your cows and chickens!
4. Call on God. Give up your violent ways.
5. God forgave and relented.
6. **No one is too far-gone to receive God's love.**

J. Jonah should be elated right?

1. Enemies repented, believed God, might be a change for the entire empire?

**K. 4:1-3**

1. Such a drama queen

**2. God's love isn't fair**

3. He forgives people who don't deserve it
4. He doesn't give people what's coming to them.
5. He loves people who hate you.
6. Jonah knew this... it's why he ran.

L. "But surely the Ninevites are just emotional... this won't last."

1. Sets up camp on a hill overlooking the city so he could watch God destroy it when they screwed up.
2. God makes a big leafy plant grow up and give him shade.
3. Next day God has a worm eat it so it withered

M. AND **4:8-9**

1. So dramatic
2. Then the story ends abruptly... but very interestingly
3. Look at the differences in **CONCERNS**

N. **4:10-11 (Highlight CONCERN)**

1. God says, "You've been concerned about this plant... that you did nothing to help grow.
2. "I am concerned about the people that I created. Who don't know my love."
3. Jonah valued this plant over a city of more than 120,000.
4. God had given Jonah the plant and Jonah was happy about it.
5. God had given Nineveh another chance and Jonah was so furious he wanted to die.
6. Important point: **God's love is often easier to receive than to give.**

O. Jonah's religion was about him. In his mind, God's love was just for HIS people... the Jews.

1. The people who spoke his language, shared his history, followed the right rules, sang the right songs, wore the right clothes...
2. He couldn't fathom that God's love was for everyone
3. He didn't get that no matter who you are or where you come from...
4. **No one deserves God's love but it is offered to everyone.**

#### IV. YOU

- A. No one deserves it... broken the law of love.
- B. Everyone is offered it... **John 3:16**
- C. See Jonah is a picture of the lengths God will go to love and save people we would rather ignore or worse.

#### D. Who are your Ninevites?

- E. Who do you think doesn't deserve God's love and forgiveness?
  - 1. Who do you write off as too far gone...
  - 2. Who do you have a hard time wanting God to save and forgive?
  - 3. To whom do you have a hard time extending God's love?
  - 4. Who do you secretly wish will fail?

- F. **Large groups**- rep's, dem's, black, white, brown, natural born, undocumented, rich corporate elitists, vegan environmentalists, suicide bombers, white supremacists, politicians?

- G. **More personal**- co-workers, bosses, neighbors, in-laws, your ex?

- H. The same death Jesus died for you... he died for them

- I. The people that came to mind are the people who need God's love
  - 1. God just might use you to show them how much he loves them...
  - 2. Is it fair that he loves you unconditionally?

#### J. Plan

- 1. **Be honest with yourself**- write down their initials if you need
- 2. **Pray for the person that is hard to love.**
- 3. It's hard to hate someone when you are asking God to help them.
- 4. What happens after that is between you and God

#### V. WE

- A. Discovering God is not about facts and bible verses
- B. It's not about creeds and theology
- C. Discovering God is about discovering a relationship that transforms you into who you were always meant to be.
  - 1. A relationship that is not based on rules and behavior but forgiveness and love.
- D. Discovering God is discovering a love that you can't earn.
  - 1. That is so unconditional that you could never lose it
- E. Discovering God is discovering that you CAN forgive and love b/c you have been forgiven and loved.

#### F. When you discover God you discover people are the priority