

SALVATION BELONGS TO THE LORD

Study 1:

God acts powerfully in judgement and mercy

Study 2:

A psalm of thanksgiving for unexpected mercy

Study3:

A message of judgement delivered, and the repentant receive mercy

Study 4:

Jonah wants judgement, but God chooses mercy

Study 1: God acts powerfully in judgement and mercy

“The punishment should fit the crime.”

“There, but for the grace of God, go I.”

Is your response to wrongdoing more inclined to judgement or mercy?

Please read Jonah Chapter 1.

1. Do you think Jonah really thought he could run away from God? (See also Psalm 139:7-10). What was he really trying to do?
2. List all the things God does in this chapter?
3. Read Proverbs 16:33 and Psalm 107:23-32. What else is God responsible for?
4. What did the sailors do to try and take control of the situation? Why were they so afraid of God? How does the sailors' attitude towards God change?

5. Why do you think God sent the storm, but then provide the fish?

Making it personal

1. Please read Ephesians 2:1-13. We deserve God's judgement. Instead we receive God's mercy. How is this accomplished?

2. What does it mean for *you* to worship the LORD, the God of heaven who made the sea and the land?

3. The sailors offered sacrifices to God. What is our right response to the mercy we have received? How well are you doing this?

For next week...

Please read Jonah chapter 2.

Is there a song that you feel expresses particularly well your thankfulness to God for having saved you? If you can, bring it to bible study next week.

Study 2: A psalm of thanksgiving for unexpected mercy

Give an example of a time when you've felt really grateful.

Please read Jonah 1:17-2:10

1. A typical thanksgiving psalm has the following structure:
 - a. Introduction
 - b. Description of past distress
 - c. Appeal to God for help
 - d. Reference to rescue provided by God
 - e. Vows of praise &/or testimony

How well does Jonah 2:2-9 fit this pattern?

2. In verses 3-6 what words or phrases suggest that Jonah didn't expect to live?

3. What is the significance of the temple (v4,7)? (See 1 Kings 8:46-51.)

4. Jonah really knew his psalms! Look up the following verses, and note the parallels in Jonah's psalm.

Psalm 18:4-6; 86:13; 88:6-7, 16-17; 42:4-7; 31:22; 69:1-2; 30:2; 11:4; 61:8; 116:17-18; 3:8.

5. We could skip straight from verse 1 to verse 10 and not miss any of the story, so why do you think this psalm has been included? What do we learn about Jonah?

Making it personal

1. Perhaps surprisingly, the New Testament doesn't record many songs. However the book of Revelation has some. What is God praised for in Revelation 5:9-13 and Revelation 15:3-4?

2. Share with your group a verse, prayer or song that has been helpful to you in a time of crisis or great thanksgiving.

For next week...

Please read Jonah chapter 3.

The book of Nahum is a prophesy against Ninevah. Read Nahum 3:1-4 to see what kind of city it was.

Study 3: A message of judgement delivered, and the repentant receive mercy

How obedient would you say you are? When is it hard to obey instructions?

Please read Jonah chapter 3.

1. Why do you think Jonah obeys God the second time?
2. What do we know about Nineveh? (See Jonah 1:2, 3:3 and Nahum 3:1-4.)
3. What did the Ninevites do in response to God's message of judgement?
4. How confident do you think they were of averting disaster?
5. Can you think of previous occasions when God has relented from bringing destruction? (Eg Exodus 32:7-14, Numbers 14:11-20.)
How comfortable are you with the notion that God changes his mind?
How does Jeremiah 18:1-12 help us better understand God's actions?

6. Jesus refers to this event in a word of judgement upon his generation. Please read Mathew 12:38-41. What comparisons does Jesus make between Jonah and himself, and Nineveh and his generation?

Jonah returned effectively from the dead to deliver a word of judgement. What is Jesus' message after his resurrection? (See Luke 24:46-47.)

Making it personal

1. In what ways does the "sign of Jonah" apply to our generation? (See 1 Corinthians 1:22-24)

2. What aspects of God's character have you been reminded of from this chapter? What difference will that make in the week ahead?

For next week...

Please read Jonah chapter 4.

Thinking about the book as a whole, what is your response to the character of Jonah? What attitudes and behaviours can you relate to? What disturbs you?

Study 4: Jonah wants judgement, but God chooses mercy

What's the best way for me to get you to change your mind about something?

Please read Jonah chapter 4.

1. What reason does Jonah give for his earlier attempts to run away?
2. How has Jonah's attitude to life and death changed since he was inside the fish?
3. This chapter describes an emotional roller coaster ride for Jonah. What makes Jonah happy, and what makes him angry?
4. How would you describe Jonah's attitude towards Nineveh? Towards God?
5. Why do you think God provided the vine, but then the worm and the wind?

6. How would you describe God's attitude towards Nineveh? Towards Jonah?

7. God's concern for the lost is beautifully illustrated in three stories Jesus told. Please read Luke 15.

a. What does Jesus tell us about God's response to those who repent?

b. In what ways is Jonah like the older brother in Luke 15:25-32?

Making it personal

1. Does it bother you when God shows mercy or compassion to people you don't like?

2. Do you share God's concern for the great city of Kuala Lumpur? How does that look in your daily life?

