

I. **Ice breaker.** *Getting to know each other questions.* (10 minutes)

Name and describe an area of responsibility that you procrastinate or avoid doing? What do you tend to do instead?

II. **Read today's scriptures** out loud, slowly, either in unison or using a designated reader and move into scripture quiet reflection. (3 minutes)

¹ **The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai:** ² **"Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."** ³ **But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish...** **Jonah 1:1-3a**

Scripture quiet reflection: (5-10 minutes)

This is a time to personally reflect on this week's scripture. Have a paper and pen available.

1. Read. Read through the passage silently.

2. Reflect. Notice any words or phrases that particularly draw your attention and stand out to you. How do these words/phrases speak directly to you and your present situation? Write your insights.

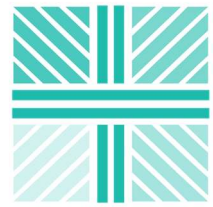
3. Respond. As God has spoken to you in the Scripture, respond back to God in prayer. What do you want to say to God? What else does God want to say to you?

III. **Sermon and Scripture Application Discussion.** (20-30 minutes)

A. As you reflectively engaged the Scriptures, what stood out to you from these passages?

B. Jonah is both relevant and relatable to our life today. As a group read out loud the 10 timely issues that Jonah addresses:

1. Jonah keeps on reminding us that God's love is not just for us, but for all the peoples (& people groups) of the world!
2. Jonah struggles with **political hate** for another group of individuals whose **stupid way of thinking** and **abominable way of living** blows his mind.
3. Jonah helps us to understand that there is a **religious way** and an **irreligious way** to run away from God.
4. Jonah explores the relationship between **biblical justice** and **divine mercy**.
5. Jonah struggles with **nationalistic pride** and **racial superiority**.
6. Jonah struggles to follow God when what God is asking of us does not make sense!
7. Jonah focuses our minds-eye on the group of people we find most difficult to love.
8. Jonah thinks he knows better than God what is best for his life. Out of this, Jonah engages **real anger & true repentance**.
9. Jonah addresses what God thinks of those of us who are recipients of **divine grace** who refuse to extend it to other undeserving souls **based on reasoned principles**. Jonah had a



solid rationale for hating the Ninevites... **solid, religious reasons...** **solid, nationalistic, partisan** reasons!

10. Jonah challenges us to make sure that the God we worship is not just a **mirror image** of our own **ideological prejudices**.

- C. "In verse 2 the Lord told Jonah to GO to the great city of Nineveh. Go uses imperative language with a sense of urgency/immediacy: Arise, Go! It was totally unexpected to be asked to go outside of Israel to preach to a Gentile city. Unparalleled! What was even more alarming about this request was to preach to Nineveh! Nineveh was an ancient Assyrian city in what is today northern Iraq. The Assyrians were the hated enemies of Israel. They were like the Nazis of the 8th century B.C. and were known for extreme brutality toward their enemies." -KF
- Put yourself in Jonah's place and imagine being called to go and preach a word of grace, forgiveness, and mercy to the most reprehensible people you have ever encountered.
 - Who would be your Assyrians?
- D. Jonah knew that God did not need a prophet IF he was going to destroy Nineveh. He knew that God might relent. Jonah thought if *he* could not see a good reason for going to Nineveh and preaching, then there wasn't a good reason.
- Look again at how Jonah responded to God's invitation? Where did he flee and why?
 - We have all walked in Jonah's shoes down the path of questioning God.
 - Where might you be questioning God in your life right now?
- E. Jonah's spiritual indigestion came because God was going to be mysteriously and outrageously merciful to the Ninevites. It is hard to understand Jonah if you have never had a real enemy.
- *"He prayed to the LORD, 'Isn't this what I said, LORD, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.'" Jonah 4:2*
 - What person or group do you have the hardest time loving?