

Word notes Sunday 28/9/08 Helen Parker
Jonah – are you sitting comfortably?

Summary

The story of Jonah is not uncommon in the OT (or even today) – the thing he hears God asking him to do does not fit with his own self-view or theology so he tries to avoid God, runs away and hides. Rather than let him be God pursues him and through the voices of others and some very humbling experiences gets his message through.

Jonah eventually goes to Nineveh, delivers God's message and the people turn back to God – but Jonah is not happy! God was gracious to the people of Nineveh but Jonah wanted Him to be vengeful – he still hasn't understood what God is about.

Are we like Jonah? Many of us have heard the clear and urgent call of God but we are on the run. Like Jonah, we don't appreciate the peril we are in; we've closed our ears to the voice of God. Metaphorically, we're asleep in the middle of a storm, facing God's wrath. Like Jonah, the only escape will be via the path of humble repentance.

Or perhaps we are like the pagan sailors? Conscious of danger and aware of the threat of death. We realise that the circumstances of life are like a violent storm that is raging around us, and feel insecure, scared, hopeless, and helpless. We don't know what to do, but are frantically throwing things overboard and crying out for help. But who should we call upon to rescue us? We might not know but you're willing to try anything.

Application:

Compare the story of Jonah and the prodigal son. In the parable who equates most closely to Jonah and who to Nineveh?

What is it that Jonah (in 4:1) and the elder brother in Mark 15:29 are feeling and what are they missing?

Is there any sense in which anyone in the cell group feels they have run away from God or ignored a call He's given them? Alternatively does anyone feel jealous of the freedom or gifting of other Christians? Ask folk to share honestly and talk & pray with them, allowing them to admit anything that is not good to God and seek forgiveness.

Helen said *"When we are angry we tend to go through the motions with God, we tell him what we think that he wants to hear and hope that he won't notice."* Sometimes we react like this with other people not just God – our spouse, family, friends etc? What was eg King David's way of dealing with his anger or when things went against him? What should we do instead?

Is anyone like the sailors – don't know who can rescue them but willing to try anything? Share a brief gospel message and offer them the chance to be saved.

Witness:

Sept-Oct task:

Organise a social event sometime over the next couple of months that Cell members can invite friends to. Examples might be a Halleluiah party for children (as opposed to Halloween) fireworks parties for families, dinner parties for adults. The aim is to have fun with non-Christians. Think ahead to the end of the year and be ready to organise Christmas or New Year events to follow-up.