

# JONAH

## WEEKLY STUDY SHEET

Chapter two in the book of Jonah gives us a lot to think about, both in terms of practice and theology. Most Bibles provide a title such as “Jonah’s Prayer” to this section and the chapter begins with a comment about Jonah praying from the belly of the fish. Yet, as we read through verses 2-9, it becomes apparent that Jonah’s words likely came after he was vomited back onto land. It would be strange for Jonah to say, “Yet you brought up my life from the pit” if he were still inside the fish. Therefore, according to many scholars, we should read this section more as a Psalm of Thanksgiving that was prayed after Jonah’s release from the fish.

In fact, many theologians believe that parts of Jonah’s Psalm of Thanksgiving were taken directly from some of the Biblical Psalms (due to many similarities). Consider the following:

- Psalm 88:6-7, 17; Psalm 69:1, 2, 14, 15; Psalm 93:3-4; Psalm 42:7

This week, we will be focusing primarily on two distinct themes – one practical, and one theological. The practical theme is related to times in our lives where we have cried out to God in our distress. Most of us have all prayed something like, “God, if you would just get me out of this mess, I will follow you all the days of my life (or I’ll read my Bible or pray more)!“ What happens when we find ourselves on the other side of the difficult situation or circumstance? Do we keep the promise we cried out in the midst of despair?

The theological theme for this week revolves around the reality that we are all sinners by nature and desperately need a God who can rescue us. We like to believe that if we only work hard enough, we can earn our way into relationship with God, yet that is not a Biblical perspective on the relationship between God and humanity. Every single one of us in need of being rescued!

Consider the following questions to guide your discussion this week:

1. Have you ever cried out for God to rescue you and included a promise if he would just do as you ask? If so, are you willing to share that story with the group and the end result?
2. Read several of the Psalms listed above. What similarities or differences do you see between them and the Psalm of Thanksgiving we see in Jonah 2?
3. There is a significant interplay between Jonah’s free will and God’s sovereignty throughout the book of Jonah (think Jonah’s free will to disobey vs. God’s decision to hurl the storm). Where do you stand on the theological discussion on free will and God’s sovereignty? What verses or Scripture might you use to support your perspective?
4. Have you ever struggled with the idea that you are a sinner in need of rescue? What is your response to the Biblical idea that God reaches down and saves those who call upon his name (Psalm 18:16, Acts 2:21, Romans 10:13)?
5. At the end of Jonah’s Psalm of Thanksgiving, he uttered the phrase, “what I have vowed I will pay.” What do you think he means by this? What could have occurred in the belly of the fish that would lead him to state such a phrase?