

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

SUMMARY

Pastor Andrew explores Jonah's prayer from the belly of the fish—a confession wrapped in thanksgiving from the darkest place imaginable. The sermon challenges us to stop fighting our way out of spiritual storms through sheer willpower and instead "sink to the bottom," creating space for divine intervention. Rock bottom becomes holy ground when we encounter God through humble, honest prayer. The fish wasn't Jonah's punishment but God's rescue vehicle. While Jonah's circumstances didn't change inside the fish, his perspective did when he remembered God's presence. Pastor Andrew exposed Jonah's hypocrisy—pointing fingers at pagans who "worship false gods" while Jonah himself acted as a gatekeeper of divine grace, preferring death over showing mercy to his enemies. True salvation is a dynamic process that rescues us not only from difficult circumstances but from the pride, fear, bitterness, and self-sufficiency that keep us from reflecting God's heart to the world.

SHARE

Think about a time when you hit "rock bottom" in some area of your life—spiritually, emotionally, relationally, or financially. What did that experience teach you about yourself? About God?

READ

Read **Jonah 2:1-10** together out loud as a group.

DISCUSS

Feel free to pick/choose what is most helpful for you. Remember, the goal is to have rich, relational, authentic, Jesus-centered discussions.

1. What stood out to you the most about the sermon?

2. In Jonah 2:2-6, Jonah uses vivid language to describe his dire situation: *"the land of the dead," "ocean depths," "heart of the sea," "mighty waters engulfed me," "roots of the mountains," "imprisoned in the earth."* What do these descriptions reveal about Jonah's theological

understanding of his condition? How does his language connect death, separation from God, and divine judgment?

3. Pastor Andrew suggested a counterintuitive strategy for those struggling with discouragement and despair: "Instead of fighting the 'trying moments,' allow yourself to 'sink to the bottom' to create a space for divine intervention and spiritual clarity." How is this different from giving up or losing hope? Can you think of a biblical example (besides Jonah) where someone had to reach the end of themselves before God could work?

4. Read Jonah 2:4 and 2:7 again. Jonah says, *"Yet I will look once more toward your holy Temple"* and *"I remembered the Lord."* His circumstances hadn't changed—he was still inside the fish—but his perspective shifted. What specific practices help you "remember the Lord" and redirect your focus when you're overwhelmed by difficult circumstances? How can we cultivate this kind of perspective shift in our daily lives?

5. Jonah 2:8 says, *"Those who worship false gods turn their backs on all God's mercies."* Pastor Andrew pointed out the irony: Jonah was accusing others while acting as a "gatekeeper of divine grace" himself—wanting God's mercy for himself but judgment for Nineveh. Where do you see this tendency in your own life? Are there "Ninevites"—people or groups you struggle to extend grace and compassion toward? What false gods (cultural identity, political alignment, social status, pride) might be influencing your view of who "deserves" God's mercy?

6. The sermon emphasized that "God was not just interested in changing Jonah's location from the belly of a fish to dry land; He was interested in changing Jonah's character." When you pray "God, save me from this situation," what deeper character transformation might God be more interested in accomplishing? What might He want to save you from within yourself?

7. The sermon's central verse, Jonah 2:9, declares *"salvation belongs to the Lord alone."* Jonah gladly accepted this when it saved his own life, but became furious when God applied it to save the Ninevites. What does it look like in practical terms to truly believe that salvation—and the distribution of mercy—belongs to God alone and not to us?

NEXT STEPS

- **Identify your "Nineveh":** This week, prayerfully ask God to reveal any person, group, or situation where you've been acting as a "gatekeeper of grace." Confess any resentment, judgment, or unwillingness to extend compassion, and ask God to give you His heart for them.
- **Practice remembering:** Choose one spiritual practice that helps you "look toward God's holy Temple" when circumstances feel overwhelming—whether it's Scripture memory, worship music, a prayer walk, journaling God's past faithfulness, or something else. Commit to practicing it this week when you feel discouraged.
- **Pray Jonah's prayer:** Spend time this week slowly praying through Jonah 2:1-9, making it personal. Thank God for specific times He has rescued you, confess areas where you've run from His purposes, and surrender afresh to His transforming work in your character.

PRAY

Take time to pray together as a group:

- Praise God that salvation belongs to Him alone and that His rescue reaches to the absolute depths of our circumstances and the deepest issues of our hearts.
- Confess areas where you've acted as gatekeepers of grace, withholding compassion from others while gladly receiving God's mercy for yourselves.
- Ask God to save you not just from difficult circumstances but from the pride, fear, bitterness, and self-sufficiency that keeps you from reflecting His heart.
- Pray for each other by name, asking God to meet each person in their "depths" and to shift perspectives from overwhelming circumstances to His unchanging presence.

CONNECT

Check **The Hub** for upcoming community **events**, **workshops**, or **service opportunities** where your group can participate in God's mercy-extending mission together. Be on the lookout for ways to practically demonstrate grace and compassion to our neighbours in Markham, Stouffville, and the broader GTA community.

CLOSING

As you go this week, remember: God's saving work reaches beneath your circumstances to transform the deepest issues of your heart. Stop playing gatekeeper of grace. Take the mercy you've received at your rock bottoms and freely share that compassion, love, and forgiveness with everyone in your sphere of influence—your neighbours, co-workers, and yes, even your enemies.