

# DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

*Our Mission: Reaching out to leaders who can change the world.*

## JONAH - OBSTINATE OBEDIENCE

April 2017

### LESSON 4 –GROUND HOG DAY

#### INTRODUCTION

What is the largest city you've visited?

#### OBSERVATION/INTERPRETATION

##### Read Jonah 3

1. What was Jonah thinking as he approached Nineveh this time? About God's abilities? About his own safety? About what to say? About the Ninevites' response?

2. How is the city described? vv. 2,3

*Note: A "city of three days' journey" (v. 3) would be seventy-five miles across. Some scholars say that there are no known cities this size, so Jonah's ministry may have been to a larger area of which Nineveh was the center.<sup>1</sup>*

*Archeological excavations show the "imperial city" was about 8 miles around. "Greater" Nineveh which encompassed 4 cities had a circumference of 60 miles (over 120,000 people – 4:11). Others say, "There were nearly a million people in and around Nineveh, and the city itself had great walls and towers. It was the center of the rising empire of Assyria."<sup>2</sup>*

3. What was Jonah's message? Why did they believe him?

*Note: Vs 4 -The word for overthrown in Hebrew is "hafak" which can also mean "changed or converted." The same word for judgement can also mean repentance and salvation. God's prophecy still became true.*

4. This was the God of the nation they had been plundering. What did they do to show that they believed?

5. How did the king react?

6. How do you account for God's "change of heart"? (v. 10)

*Note: Jonah's prophecy was "conditional" not "absolute". Jonah knew this before he gave his message which is one of the reasons why he was hesitant to give it. 4:2*

7. Why was this not a surprise to God? What does this say about God's will? His sovereignty?

8. The Jews heard Jesus' message of forgiveness for three years, reinforced with miracles, yet refused to repent. **Matt 12:38-41** How long did it take the Ninevites to repent after hearing Jonah's harsh message?

9. God did so much with one hesitant person and one message. How are we asked to preach to our enemies?

10. What would it look like for our nation to accept God's message?

#### APPLICATION

- How has God given you a second chance for obedience?
- What (who) is your Nineveh?

*Jonah was not the first servant of the Lord to have been given another chance. He will not be the last. The words of Jesus in Matthew 12:20 that the Lord's anointed servant (i.e. Jesus himself) will not break a bruised reed or snuff out a smoldering wick, indicate that it is God's habit not to discard those who fail him. Wind instrumentalists blow through a reed. If damaged in any way, it leads to a dull hollow sound. For all practical purposes a bruised reed is worthless and easily replaced. So too is flax which, when damp, only billows out smoke and never ignites. In either case the obvious remedy is the easiest—give up and start again. But the Lord refuses to break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax. He does not drop team members who let him, and the rest of the team, down. He did not have to use Jonah but chose to do so. In fact he delights to build up his church with what would otherwise be rejects.<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Paschall, F. H., & Hobbs, H. H. (1972). *The teacher's Bible commentary: A concise, thorough interpretation of the entire Bible designed especially for Sunday School teachers* (557). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

<sup>2</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's expository outlines on the Old Testament* (Jon 3). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>3</sup> Mackrell, P. (2007). *Opening up Jonah* (67–68). Leominster: Day One Publications.