

Group discussion Each number below includes questions that relate to the scripture. I offer a few answers, but your perspective may be better. The point is to discuss, not to get 100% agreement. Rule of thumb: the fewer questions you ask, the better. Save time for “the big question.”

Read Jonah 3 aloud.

1. What was God’s instruction to Jonah?

How does this resemble Jonah 1:2?

Why did Jonah need God to speak a second time? How do you think Jonah felt on the beach after 3 days inside a whale (besides slimy)?

How was it an act of grace for God to call Jonah a second time?

2. How big was Nineveh?

Took three days to see it. Jonah 4:20 says Nineveh had 120,000 who didn’t know left from right. That could mean 120,000 small children or 120,000 spiritually ignorant people. Either way, a lot of people.

3. What was the content of Jonah’s sermon?

What do you think Jonah’s tone was?

4. What was the response to Jonah’s preaching?

Why did the Ninevites fast? How does eating interact with your spirituality?

Why did the Ninevites put on sackcloth? How does your wardrobe interact with your faith?

Sackcloth was the ancient equivalent of wearing black to a funeral.

5. What made Jonah’s preaching so effective?

6. When do you get opportunities to give someone a second chance?

What might be some reasons you would hesitate to give someone a second chance?

Think about loaning your teenager your car the day after a wreck.

When should we give people a second chance in spite of our hesitations?

How would you know when giving someone a second chance is the wrong thing to do?

Pray. Ask for wisdom from God and from friends. Learn the difference between a second chance and enabling. Consider the risks – wrecking my car is one thing, harming children is altogether different.

7. What do we learn about God from this story?

When were other times God gave people second chances?

Sometimes people contrast God’s nature in the Old & New Testaments, saying he was a God of law in the past but now he is a God of grace. How would the story of second chances in Jonah contradict that misunderstanding?

He has always, always, always been a God of grace. Jonah 4:2 describes his core identity – gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in love (see Ex. 34:6-7, Num. 14:18, Neh. 9:17, Ps. 86:15, 103:8, 145:8, and Joel 2:13). The commands, both Jewish and Christian, are intended to draw us into deeper relationship with God. The message of Jesus was the same as the OT – he just said it in a way that people could not miss it.

† **The million-dollar question** *If you ask only one question, let this be it. Allow at least 20 minutes. Go around the circle and give each person an opportunity to answer. It’s okay if they pass, but at least they get a chance to respond.*

What are some ways you have experienced second chances?

Resources

Bible notes

- Recall that Jonah was going into enemy territory; Nineveh was the capital of Assyria.
- You would not want to center your discussion around this, but did you notice what the Ninevites called God? No use of the name Yahweh (“the LORD” in most translations – see 3:1, 3:3, and 4:2) like good Jewish people. This likely indicates that they knew of God and they knew about sin, but their understanding lagged what Israel experienced as Yahweh’s covenant bearers. God loved all the nations, and he entered into a covenant with Israel so that his blessings might spread from them to the entire planet (see Isaiah 49:6).

Kid-friendly activity. *An activity designed to help kids and adults grow in faith together. Do this first, then dismiss the kids so the adults can talk.*

Build a human pyramid. Let the kids be the architects. (It’s important that they mess up the first time.)

Re-build it until you get it good enough to take a picture. Send it to jgrant@collegehills.org.

Which pyramid was better – the first or the last? How did we improve so much?

What are some other areas of our lives where it helps to get a second chance?

Read Jonah 3 aloud.

How did God give Jonah a second chance?

How did God give the Ninevites a second chance?

How does God give us second chances?

How should we respond when someone gives us a second chance?

When do we get opportunities to give people second chances?



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LIFE Group Guide

Jonah 3 – A God of second chances

By John Grant (jgrant@collegehills.org)

The theme for this meeting: **God gave second chances to Jonah, Nineveh, and us.**

I hope you are enjoying this study of Jonah as much as I am. It is amazing what rich material is recorded in this short book. This week, we look at how God gave people second chances in Jonah 3. Like other OT passages, Jonah 3 contradicts the notion that God was less loving before Jesus came.

Leadership tip:

Dealing with an EGR (extra-grace required) group member: pray for them, avoid making eye contact during discussion, chat with them outside of the meeting – either confronting the problem or inviting them to help (“I appreciate your contributions. How can I get other group members to talk more?”).

Find more at the College Hills LG website, including steps to take with certain kinds of EGR’s.

Relate *Use a few to introduce the theme, check everyone’s spiritual pulse, and “break the ice.” No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage through these questions.*

- ❖ Serving opportunity – our church is offering another financial training class for the community. In August, three LIFE groups had a great time helping serve the meals. Care to sign up?
- ❖ What is your best time of day – early morning, late at night, or whenever you get caffeine?
- ❖ What is your favorite thing about fall?
- ❖ Who gave you a second chance? Why do we need second chances?