

Life Application Notes: Jonah Week 3 – Guy Miller

“What are you holding on to?”

Introduction

You may be familiar with the term ‘minimalist’ to describe a lifestyle choice to clear out mental or physical things in a sort of mass ‘tidy-up’. Some of us like clearing out our possessions regularly and some of us like to keep items for far too long!

What things/items/memories do you have a particular fondness of? What do you find hardest to get rid of? (LEADERS – try and think of a light-hearted example to start the discussion – such as family photos (fondness), or old clothes (hard to get rid of))

Digging In

Guy spoke to us on Sunday about making sure we are holding onto the right things.

Read Jonah Chapters 1 and 2 together as a group. Keep Ch 2:7-10 open in front of you.

Jonah chapter 2 ends with key moment in Jonah’s story. **Facing certain death in the belly of a fish, Jonah prays.** In verse 8 Jonah speaks of ‘those who cling to worthless idols’ who turn away from God’s love. In Jonah’s disobedience he held onto idols which led him away from God’s call.

In his talk Guy unpacked four things that Jonah held onto (*try to remember/pick these out from Jonah’s response and behaviour in Chapter 1*) and **discuss the ways in which we easily fall into these traps/idols too, using the prompts below**):

- **Human Reason** – *Jonah reasons against God. The thinking the ‘Jonah knows best’*
 - *How do we misplace our reason? In what ways do we put our reason above God’s reason?*
- **Ego** – *‘All about Jonah’ – the thinking of how God somehow fits into Jonah’s will.*
 - *In what ways do we slip into a mindset that focusses on us rather than God? In our name, fame, or reputation?*
- **Nationalism** – *Jonah is proud of Israel and believes that Nineveh deserves judgement and destruction rather than salvation.*
 - *We are all sinful and human and, consciously or unconsciously, behave/think in ways which are not inclusive and lead to division. How can better focus our thoughts/actions on God’s view of people rather than our own?*
- **Comfort** – *Jonah became comfortable (below deck on the ship, under the plant in Ch4).*
 - *The storm shakes us out of our comfort zone – how does the desire for comfort hold us back?*

In the belly of the fish Jonah recognises these things and looks to God. It is all too easy to fall into the traps of our own reason and will, our misplaced desire for justice and expectation of comfort. Jonah’s prayer reminds us of three things that we should be holding onto in whatever storms we face.

- **God’s Glory (Ch 2 verse 7)** – *‘...your holy temple’.*
 - *The most important thing is that the heavens declare the glory of the lord. God’s glory is the centre – we need to be orbiting God, not the other way around.*
- **Worship (Ch 2 verse 9)** – *‘...with shouts of grateful praise’.*
 - *In the midst of difficulty – the call is to turn to worship. It does us good to declare truth.*
 - *Guy challenged us to ‘be a worshipper’. How can we make this a daily reality? (could be through encouragement, music playlists, reading our bibles together)*
- **Obedience (Ch 2 verse 9)** – *‘What I have vowed I will make good’.*
 - *God wants a harvest – we need to be bold and obedient to the call. We are called to GO.*

As we face the unknown of the ongoing global pandemic, it is easy to be frightened. Just like the sailors in Jonah, the world is calling out for help in the storms around us today. In this, it is vital for us (as Christians) to hold onto the right things. God has called us to be a part of his mission to those in our city and our communities – our colleagues, friends, and neighbours. It is time to ‘lower the lifeboats’ and share the love of Jesus Christ to those around us.

What can you be doing to reach those around you?

What can we be doing as a community to reach those around us?

What can we do to bring testimony and truth to the lives of those who need it the most?

Rounding Off

Jonah ended up in a place of crisis before being recommissioned for his task. As we face our own storms ahead Guy reminded and encouraged us that greater things are yet to come - the city of Southampton matters to God!

So let us pray together:

- **Praising and glorifying God.**
- **Praying for help in setting aside the idols that we hold onto and clinging to the right things.**
- **Praying for the mission as a church and as individuals in Southampton/where you live, to bring people into the knowledge and love of God.**
- **Praying for the things discussed earlier that we can be doing to reach those around us.**
- **Praying for boldness in sharing the transforming gospel of Christ!**