

## Reluctant: The First Aquatic Rescue Vehicle

Jonah 1.17-2:10

### Small Group Discussion

**Opening question** (this question is designed to get everyone involved in discussion)

- This week's passage features the famous incident of Jonah being swallowed by a giant sea creature, and living to tell about it. How do you feel about this incident? Is it believable? Why or why not?

**Read Jonah 1:17-2:10, then discuss the following.**

- What evidence do you see in this passage that God is interested in teaching Jonah, rather than just having Jonah perform a task?
- What was Jonah's fate going to be if the fish had not swallowed him? Did he have any hope of survival?
- In what way was the "rescue" greater than just a rescue from drowning?
- What is meant by the term, a "severe mercy<sup>1</sup>?" In what way is Jonah's experience in the whale a severe mercy?
- This week's sermon majored on the idea that "Grace becomes most real in the experiences we least want." Spend some time talking about this idea.
  - To what degree would you say that God's grace is a heartfelt reality to you? In other words, do you feel moved by God's grace, or is it more of an abstraction?
  - How do you see grace start to become real to Jonah in this passage?
  - \*\*Have you ever had some unwanted experience that God used to make his grace more real to your heart and life? How did this process play out? (Leaders: Linger here—try to give everyone an opportunity to answer this question.)
- Pastor Josh described three things that we must discover if God's grace is going to become a life-changing reality for us. Discuss as described below.
  - We must see our **sinfulness**.
    - How do you see Jonah acknowledging this aspect, in chapter 2?
    - Michael Ramsden describes our sinfulness as "the power that we cannot seem to break." Does this description resonate with you? Why or why not?
  - We must see that we are **powerless** to do anything about it.
    - How does Jonah begin to see this reality?
    - How does this statement strike you? Do you have trouble believing that you are powerless to fix your sin problem?
  - We must see how **costly** God's rescue of us was.
    - In what way was God's rescue of us, in Christ, costly?
    - To what degree does this fact move you?
- Josh suggested doing the following if you are in the midst of a "severe mercy" experience. Discuss as suggested below.
  - Prayerfully reflect. How can doing this be helpful to you?
  - Confess the idols of your heart. What light does Jonah's statement in v. 8 shed on this practice? How do difficult life experiences enable us to recognize these idols and relinquish them?

### Share and Pray

- Some of your group members may be in the midst of one of these severe testing experiences. Allow them time to share about it, and pray for God's grace to become real to them in this situation.
- Share other needs and pray for one another.

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<sup>1</sup> This term was coined by C.S. Lewis, in correspondence with Sheldon van Auken. Van Auken went on to write a book about the loss of his wife, called *A Severe Mercy*.