

“The Great Rescue”

This guide is a tool to help you lead your group into spiritual transformation. Use it as a resource to train your group into potential disciple-makers and lead your group in discovering, owning, and applying the truths of God’s Word. There may be aspects you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on an aspect of their relationship with God. Your role is to help facilitate this encounter with God in His Word with His Body, not just to complete the guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid group task list.

Relate . . .

Begin your group time by engaging in relational conversations and prayer that may include the following elements:

Welcome—a simple, brief time to greet one another (especially new friends), enjoy refreshments, and make announcements.

Review—a time to review the truths discussed last week and report on how members have had success or frustrations in applying those truths during the week. (The leader will want to provide encouragement and shepherding during this time.) Periodically, the leader will also want to review the gospel and allow members to share reports about opportunities they’ve had to share the gospel. Occasionally, the leader will want to review the vision for the group and discuss ways to accomplish that vision better.

Prayer—a time of general prayer with the whole group praying for struggles regarding the application of truths, for those with whom the group is sharing the gospel, and for understanding of today’s truths.

Reflect . . .

Use the following summary and questions to review this week’s message and reflect on its implications for our lives. (As a training tool, leaders might want to have various members summarize the teachings in their own words each week sharing how they think the Scripture applied to the original hearers and how the principles apply to us today.)

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Message Outline

THE GREAT RESCUE

Jonah 1:17-2:10

Remembering your rescue should never get old because God...

1. Hears. (v. 2)
2. Answers. (v. 2)
3. Corrects. (vs. 3-6a)
4. Rescues. (v. 6b)
5. Receives. (vs. 7-8)
6. Sends. (vs. 9-10)

Message Summary

Last week we began a series that looks into the life of Jonah, an 8th Century B.C. prophet of God, who was commanded by God to go and preach against the evils of the great city called Nineveh. We learned that Jonah ran from God because something other than the face of God captured his attention. Yet, God relentlessly pursued this rebel on the run. Through Jonah’s experience we discovered how easily it is to displace God as first priority in our lives and we learned the beauty of God and the joys of serving Him.

As a result of Jonah’s disobedience and God’s relentless pursuit of Jonah, this week’s text recounts how God rescued Jonah from drowning in his own pride. The LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah and deliver him back to shore. However, in the three days and nights Jonah wallowed in the belly of the fish, God did a work in his heart. Chapter 2, in the form of a thanksgiving psalm, is Jonah’s recounting of all that was going on in his heart and life as he turned in repentance back toward the LORD. As one author stated, “Repentance and faith are not motions of the hand or feet; they are motions of the heart.”¹

Many times Christians fail to remember the depths of despair from which God rescued them. Sometimes they see the Gospel as the entry point to Christianity rather than seeing the Gospel as the fuel of their faith. Therefore, the purpose of this message was to help you see that remembering your own rescue should never get old and it will strengthen your willingness to obey Christ. As you walk through this thanksgiving psalm from Jonah’s experience you can see important truths about God and the Gospel that will help you remember your own rescue and turn your heart in repentance toward God if you are currently “living in the belly of the fish.”

As you prepare to meet with your community group examine how much time during the week you focus on the rescue Jesus accomplished for you. Are you like Jonah? Has something else other than Jesus Christ taken priority in your life? Is it possible that the struggles you are currently facing are not matters of “circumstances” but rather tools in the hand of God used for the purpose of bringing you back to Him? You might be living in the belly of the fish right now. If that’s the case, consider R. T. Kendall’s words, “The belly of the fish is not a happy place to live, but it is a good place to learn.”²

¹ J. D. Greear, “The Moment of Crisis,” Jonah 2:1-10.

² R. T. Kendall, *Jonah: An Exposition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 101; Keil and Delitzsch, “Jonah,” COT, 10:398.

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Group Discussion

Use the following questions to help make application of God’s Word to your Head (What God wants me to know), to your Heart (What God wants me to desire/value), and to your Hands (What God wants me to do).

1. What was your life like before you became a follower of Jesus Christ? What led you to follow Him? What has changed in your life since following Jesus?
2. What was Jonah admitting in verse 9 when he said, “*Salvation belongs to the LORD!*”? How does your daily life reflect this truth? How do others see this statement lived out in your life?
3. The fish, the sea, the waves, and the weeds were all tools God used to bring Jonah back to Him. They were not instruments of harm but rather instruments of rescue. What has God used in your life to rescue you?
4. What does Ezekiel 14:1-6 indicate about idols? What kind of idols have you setup in your heart? It was said that Jonah 2:7-8 are the very center of the entire book. What seems to be the point of these verses? How do they relate to your understanding of the entire book? How do they relate to believers and unbelievers today?
5. How does remembering your own rescue fuel your willingness to seek the rescue of others?
6. How has time “in the belly of the fish” affected your obedience to Christ? What have you learned from these experiences?
7. How does remembering your own rescue by Christ affect your daily repentance and relationship with Jesus? How does it affect your relationship with others?
8. If someone close to you were asked if the Gospel is changing you, what would they say? What do you think about more; your own need for the Gospel or how much others need the Gospel?
9. It was said last week that Jonah hoped the Ninevites would get judgment from God rather than grace. Is there any group or person that you have felt the same way about? What does this indicate about your need to remember your own rescue? How might this affect the way you feel about this person/people?

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Respond . . .

- What are some of the main truths that God wants you to know from this study?
- How do your thoughts need to adjust to align with these truths?
- According to the truths from this study, what does God want you to desire/value?
- How do your values need to change to align with His values?
- What actions does God want you to take according to the truths of this study?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?
- What is going to be the most difficult aspect of this study to personally apply?

Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength to apply these truths, for personal needs, for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel, and for our weekly prayer focus as a church...

Weekly Prayer Focus

- **Church:**
Annual Meeting on December 7, 2014.
 - Elders as they prepare 2015 budget.
 - Celebrating all God did in 2014.
 - Wisdom & excitement as we look to 2015.
- **Local:**
Farm Day; November 1, 2014 so *that the world may know!*
 - Volunteers.
 - Floating volunteers
 - Bible & Tract booth (also making Story Bracelets with children)
 - Steve Boyd (sharing the Gospel during round pen demonstration).
 - Gospel conversations.
- **Global:**
Bob & Georgette Kornegay, missionaries for Servants Hearts Ministries in Guatemala.
 - Purchase of property for SHM Headquarters (~\$35,000).
 - Storage building on new property (~\$10,000).
 - Future mission house.
 - Future mission trip.