**Jonah**

**Lesson 1**

1. **Has there been a moment in this past week when you felt very close to God?**

**(If not, was there a specific passage or lesson from the Book of Jonah that inspires you?**)

1. **Throughout this story what is it that Jonah is running away from?**
2. **What is the difference between the gods of the Gentile sailors and Jonah’s God?**

See Jonah 1:4-10.

 **Jonah 1:4-10** **4**Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. **5**All the sailors were afraid and ***each cried out to his own god***. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep.

**6**The captain went to him and said, “How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! ***Maybe he will take notice*** of us so that we will not perish.”

**7**Then the sailors said to each other, “Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity.” They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. **8**So they asked him, “Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?”

**9**He answered, “I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”

**10**This terrified them and they asked, “What have you done?” (They knew he was running away from the Lord, because he had already told them so.)

1. **Consider the character and concerns of the Gentile sailors.**

**What are they risking by trying to save Jonah?**

1. **At the end of chapter 1, what is the reaction of the sailors to Jonah’s God?** See Jonah 1:11-16 below.

 **1:11-16**  The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, “What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?”

**12**“Pick me up and throw me into the sea,” he replied, “and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you.”

**13**Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before. **14**Then they cried out to the Lord, “Please, Lord, do not let us die for taking this man’s life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, Lord, have done as you pleased.” **15**Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. **16**At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him.

1. In the Beatitudes, Jesus tells us to love our enemies and to pray for them, (Mat 5:44).

**How difficult is this for Jonah in this story?**

**Can you recall a time when you found it extremely difficult to forgive or to pray for the well-being of an enemy or someone who had hurt you?**

1. **How do the Ninevites react to Jonah’s simple, and reluctant prophecy? What do you think the significance of involving *even the animals* of Nineveh is?** See Jonah 3:4-9.

 **Jonah 3:4-9** **4**Jonah began by going a day’s journey into the city, proclaiming, “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” **5**The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

**6**When Jonah’s warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust.**7**This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh:

“By the decree of the king and his nobles:

Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. **8**But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. **9**Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.”

1. Jonah should be happy. He was a successful prophet in Nineveh.

**Why do you think he believed that he would be better off dead than alive?** See Jonah 4:1-3 and 4:8-9

**Jonah** **4:1-3** But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. **2**He prayed to the Lord, “Isn’t this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. **3**Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.”

**Jonah 4:8-9**When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah’s head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, “It would be better for me to die than to live.”

**9**But God said to Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?”

“It is,” he said. “And I’m so angry I wish I were dead.”

1. **In the end, what does this story try to teach to the ancient Jews about God’s relationship to Gentiles or Non-Jews?**

**What does it teach us today about God’s love, mercy and salvation?**