



Week 8 – Group Discussion Questions

JONAH 4:5-11

5 Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. **6** Then the Lord God provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant. **7** But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. **8** 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."

CONTENT OBSERVATIONS

As our study draws to a close, we'll take a look at God's continued education of Jonah. In love, our God is faithful to discipline those He loves. But we will see that God continues to be merciful to Jonah, in spite of Jonah's attitude. Jonah enjoyed his own experience of God's grace, but hated the idea of that same grace being distributed to his enemies. However, this passage shows us that God is faithful not only to save the lost, but also to produce repentance in the lives of those He has called. Jonah has more compassion for his own needs being met temporally than the entire city of Nineveh eternally. We see this right up until the end when God causes a plant to give Jonah shade. Jonah continued to desire and enjoy comfort and convenience over the eternal destination of the Ninevites. The book of Jonah ends with an unanswered question, one that reaches to us today. Do we care more about our temporary comforts, or the eternal needs of those who rub us the wrong way? One way or another, God in His love will interrupt our safe places to confront the areas of our lives that need renewal. Throughout this study, we have seen a number of ways in which the heart of God contrasts with that of humanity. And praise God for that. If it were left up to us, we would never dare extend mercy to our enemies. Yet, Jesus Christ stepped into this world, clothed Himself in our flesh, and laid down His life so that His enemies could be restored to a relationship with God by faith. By saving us, God has called us into His work of reconciling the world to Himself. If we are to bear fruit in this charge, we must learn to lay down our lives for the lost, as Jesus did for us. It is a narrow road, but one that leads to life with our Lord. Remember God's grace to you, surrender your comforts, and follow His ways.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.) Where have you seen God interrupt your comfort or convenience over the last 8 weeks of this series?
- 2.) Do we care more about our temporary comforts, or the eternal needs of those who rub us the wrong way?
What are ways that we can overcome this?
- 3.) Jesus asks us to lay down our lives for others. What are tangible ways that you have seen others lay down their lives for you? Share a story where you have been able to say down your life for another person's life.
- 4.) What is one thing that you would say needs to change in order to walk in greater obedience to Jesus?

The practice of confession and repentance

In this last week of the practice of confession and repentance, we want you to briefly think about your typical day, week, weekend, and month. As you think about what “your typical” looks like, write down possible spaces of time where complacency, comfort, and convenience take over possible times of Kingdom Commitment.

Examples:

- In the morning, I hit the snooze button more than I should.
- Instead of spending my first times of the day with the Lord, I check social media and email first.
- I use the excuse of spending time with my family on the weekends instead of participating in ministry opportunities.
- I tend to view my weekends as “me time” and I deserve some time to myself.
- I’ve raised my own kids—I don’t need to raise anyone else’s.

These are just a few thoughts that some have expressed over the past months. In a guided discussion, talk about the things that may be high-jacking Kingdom commitments in your day. In your week. In your month.

After discussion, read through the following prayer. We encourage you to insert your own thoughts by pausing briefly after each section.

Today, Lord, I once again take up my cross and follow you.

Complacency

Forgive me for choosing daily to be complacent. Happiness has been my god, and I have believed I’m entitled to it. Forgive me for all the excuses I have made for not responding to you immediately, urgently, and sacrificially. Forgive me for complaining about being bored as I sit and do nothing. Forgive me for choosing ways to escape instead of doing the work of the Kingdom.

Comfort

Forgive me for the times I’ve tried to make carrying my cross more comfortable. I have been too concerned with finding things to make it easier; gadgets and toys to make my cross lighter, smaller, and more cushioned. Forgive me for making excuses and not going with you, because I was worried about my health, safety, reputation, loneliness, financial security, cleanliness, or ability to handle difficult circumstances. Please forgive me for focusing on comfort rather than my character.

Convenience

Please forgive me, Lord, for the times I have not followed you, because it wasn’t convenient; when I didn’t want to go out of my way to see the needs around me, because then I would feel guilty for not doing something about them. Please forgive me for not loving my neighbors--I don’t even know their names. Please forgive me for being so busy with my priorities that I forget to meet with you, but then I squeeze a few verses in at the end of my day so that I can check devotions off my to-do list. Please forgive me for trying to pacify my conscience by giving just enough to feel good about myself but not enough to inconvenience my lifestyle.

Kingdom Commitment

Today, Lord, I once again commit to take up my cross and follow you. Shake me of my complacency; I want to live daily with an urgency to radically be the change you call me to be. Strip me of my comforts; may my love for you be the driving force to live with joyful surrender. Scratch out my schedule; I don’t want my circumstances or timeline to influence my dedication and obedience to take up my cross and follow you. Here I am. Send me.

May your Word pour out of me like water to the thirsty, and may my life be full of the fruit of the Spirit. All I am and have, I give back to you with open hands, knowing that you will meet all my needs as I go with you. Today, I take up my cross and commit to follow you.

In Jesus Name I pray, Amen.

Example Schedule for Group Time

10 min.	Welcome time
10 min.	Ice Breaker or Relational time (i.e. Sweets and Sours, a game, etc.)
7 min.	Watch the video
20 min.	Discussion Questions
15 min.	The Practice Repentance

Weekly videos links and PDF available at gracegathering.com/groups