



STUDY GUIDE

WEEK 2: 10.15.2017 “REALIZE”

[set up]

Take a minute for each person to share one insight from last week’s UNLEASH message or Personal Study from week one.

Fall is here! In your group, share your favorite experience, traditions, or changes about the fall. Spend some time discussing how you could leverage those things for an opportunity to be a LifeHouse.

Have one person in the group take 3-5 minutes to share their personal testimony of a time when God brought them from resistance to His calling to obedience through love in Christ. When was the moment in their story that they realized they were off-course and felt a course correction to what God was wanting?

[digging deeper]

Read Jonah 1. Jonah decided to disobey God, even though he heard the word of the Lord very clearly. We think if we were Jonah, we would have done the right thing. Who would hear the word of the Lord and disobey? But we hear the Word of the Lord all the time. Jonah didn’t have the entire Bible as we do. When we read the Bible, we are hearing the Word of the Lord. We should use Jonah as a mirror into our own hearts, lives, and attitudes.

In the book of Jonah, God’s prophet is not the hero of the story. He’s more like the villain. In fact, the nonbelieving pagan sailors responded more spiritually than rebellious Jonah did to the situation and the storm. Why is it so personally distressing when we see other Christians acting more like villains in the Gospel narrative than like heroes? Give an example of this. In 2 Corinthians 5:20, God gives us a role, a job, and a message. What is the role called? What is the job? What is the message? In light of that, what should be our response to when we realize we are in sin and rebellion?

Read Jonah 1:7-10. Jonah shares with the pagan sailors the right facts about God though Jonah is disobeying God’s command. Jonah knows about God (theology) but is not living according to that knowledge (ethics). There is a disconnect between his head and heart. Jonah still wants to be identified as a religious person, but he is not living a right life. We do the same! Why do we sometimes know what we should do but fail to do it? How does God help you realize when there is a disconnect between your head and your heart? What is the next best step to take once God helps us realize that we not only know *what* to do, but then to actually *do* it?

Some people say that Jonah being swallowed by the fish isn’t real. Maybe it’s a fictional story or a parable. Some people do not believe that God is or can be involved in His creation to change its normal course of events. Dr. Gary Habermas defines a miracle as an event whereby God “temporarily makes an exception to the natural order of things, to show that

God is acting.”¹ Why is the belief in miracles essential to the Christian faith? How can we live faithfully even when we may never personally see such miracles?

Read Matthew 12:38-41. It seemed that Jesus believed that the story of Jonah was real and historical, but the tide of culture pushes harder and harder against belief in miracles. This is due to believing a worldview that makes no room for anything outside nature or the natural world. What problems arise when we only believe in what we can experience with our senses? Can you see how that would pose problems personally? For how we understand things like goodness and wickedness, or what is valuable? What good would prayer be?

Look again at chapter 1. What are the differences between the lives of Jonah and Jesus and between their three-day events?

It's easy to look with condescension at Jonah, who was resistant to share the story of God's forgiveness with a people who hated him and his God. But then we are struck with the realization that we all have family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, people we know and love and that may know and love us, yet we are still resistant to sharing the gospel with them. What ways should we not be like Jonah and more like Jesus? On a Large Post-it note or piece of paper, brainstorm as many practical steps that come to your mind for how we can be more like Jesus and less like Jonah. Now have each person in your group put a check mark next to the action step they are most drawn to taking. If time allows, have them give a brief answer as to why they felt drawn to that tangible action.

Take four minutes to watch “Annie's story”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dy6t9TjJwIQ>

What made Annie hesitant to reach out to her neighbor? What was her moment of realization to make a change? How does this relate to what we are learning in Jonah? How can you relate to Annie? When listening to her story, what encouraged or affirmed you? What convicted you?

[living it out]

CVC's UNLEASH campaign is about having greater obedience to God when it comes to loving our neighbors, the nations, and the next generation. What is harder for you to love? Your neighbors? Or is it foreign countries you have never been to that have people of another faith who do not know Jesus? Or is it the next generation, which may hold different attitudes and beliefs than you? What will you do differently during UNLEASH to make a step in greater personal and relational risk to connect with that group?

We can all be like Jonah, identifying as religious but not living a life in accordance with the Word of God. Ultimately, it does not matter if you know all the right things or consider yourself religious. It's our love of God that is expressed in obedience that is most important. Like Jonah, we can be sleeping while the lives and souls of others around us are in danger. Spend time in prayer repenting of hypocrisy, sleepiness and disobedience, and ask God for an obedience that comes from a deeper love of Him. Just like Jonah had the realization that he was personally responsible for what was happening around him, ask God to show you, to help you realize where you too may have dropped the ball or fallen asleep on the job.

Spend some extended prayer time praying for the group you have a harder time connecting with and reaching out to—Neighbors, Nations, or Next Generation.



¹ Douglas, Geivett, R. and Gary R. Habermas, In *Defense of Miracles: A Comprehensive Case for God's Action in History*, (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1997). 62-63.