



The Nourishing Vocation Project
Near and Now:
Reframing Regret: From Hindsight to Insight – Jonah

Warm-up Question
When was the most recent time you asked for help?



"Crying Child" by [Asad Amjad Chang Ezi](#) is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

Discussion Questions

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

I called to the Lord in my distress

Read [Jonah 2:1-10](#)

Bible Story Reflection

Jonah was struggling. In the previous chapter, God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and call them out for their wickedness. When faced with this daunting task, Jonah runs in the opposite direction and tries to flee from the task that God has given him. Attempts to run from God usually don't end well for characters in the Bible, and in this case, Jonah finds himself on a boat in the middle of a storm that God created. And as if his day could get any worse, Jonah gets thrown off the boat and swallowed by a fish. Needless to say, Jonah was probably feeling pretty defeated at this point. The scripture that you just read takes place in the belly of the fish and shows Jonah's plea to God for help. After a failed attempt at running from God, he is faced with a choice, and he chooses to reach out to God. He prays to God in his distress with the hopes that God will hear his cry. He recounts how he remembered God and prayed as his life was ebbing away.

In this case, God does rescue Jonah by speaking to the fish and causing it to spit out Jonah. After what Jonah went through, that is certainly one of the most positive outcomes. But care must be taken not to expect a direct correlation to prayer and the complete erasure of all our sufferings. God rescues Jonah from the belly of the fish, but Jonah is far from having all his struggles resolved. He continues to struggle with God in the final two chapters. Throughout Jonah's story, he makes choices that lead to various outcomes, some positive and some difficult.

We are invited to find ourselves in Jonah's experience, to look at the times in which we are faced with a choice, to cry out in the midst of struggle, and to hope that God will hear our prayer. We are faced with many choices throughout our lives, and sometimes we may make the wrong choice, but we also can try again. We can choose to reach out to God, who remembers and comes to us in times of struggle. We hear of a God who hears us and who acts. The outcome may not be free of pain, but we can trust in a God that abides with us and responds to us, regardless of whatever we may have done before.

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways do you identify with Jonah?
2. What stands out to you in Jonah's prayer to God?
3. What does it mean to you to be heard by God amid your own suffering?
4. When have you cried out to God?
5. How do past times of suffering inform your experiences of future times of suffering?
6. How are you being called into God's presence?
7. How has God been present for you in times of distress?
8. Recall a time when someone reached out to you for help. What did that feel like?



9. How are you called to be the presence of the God who helps people in times of distress?

Activity Suggestions

This passage is only a small portion of Jonah's story. Look back at the previous chapter and the ones that follow this one and create a timeline of the events. Discuss where you see Jonah gaining insight from hindsight.

Like Jonah's prayer in this story, psalms can convey strong emotions, including suffering and thanksgiving. Go to the book of psalms and find some hymns that Jonah might relate to.

There are many people in our communities who are in distress. Brainstorm some ways that either you as an individual, or your group can provide assistance to those who need it.

Prayer Concerns

Those who feel abandoned, those who seek help, and those who respond to calls of distress

Closing Prayer

Use my regrets, O God, to give me insight into my choices and actions. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

