



JONAH

FAMILY DEVOS

The Lord is Merciful

Scripture: Jonah 1

Memory Verse: Psalm 103:8

“The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.”

For My Family:

In these next few devotions, we are going to be looking at the book of Jonah. For many of us, this story is one of the most familiar in the Bible, but do you know what it's all about? As cool as the story of a man swallowed by a big fish is (and we'll get to that next time), Jonah is about something much better than that. It's about God's amazing mercy.

So what is mercy? Mercy is when you don't get the punishment you deserve. When you disobey your parents and they give you a warning instead of putting you in time-out, that's mercy. The God we serve is full of mercy, and that's good news for all of us. He could have left us to suffer the punishment for our sins, eternal separation from Him, but instead He sent Jesus to die on the cross so that we could be forgiven. That's incredible mercy.

Jonah knew that God is merciful, but when God wanted Jonah to warn the people of Nineveh of their sins, he ran away. Why? Because the people of Nineveh hated Jonah and his people, the Israelites. The Ninevites had done all sorts of evil things, and Jonah thought they should be punished. He didn't think the people of Nineveh deserved God's mercy.

So Jonah got on a boat and sailed as far away from Nineveh as possible. He thought that he could run away from God's command, but you can't escape from God. God sent a storm, and it looked like the ship was going to sink. The sailors (who didn't know the one True God) tried to escape the storm and prayed to their idols, but Jonah was asleep. They woke him up, and when they discovered that the storm was his fault, he explained to them that he worshipped the God of Israel, that this storm had come because he disobeyed the Lord, and that the only way to escape was to throw Jonah into the sea.

Even after he said that, the sailors didn't want to throw him in and did their best to row to shore. These unbelievers had more mercy on Jonah than he had on the people of Nineveh! But eventually, they realized they had no choice, so they threw Jonah into the sea, praying that his God would have mercy on them... and He did. Once they threw him over, the storm stopped, and the sailors worshipped the Lord. Before the chapter ends, we see one more example of God's mercy. Rather than allowing Jonah to drown in the sea, the Lord sent a big fish to swallow Jonah, keeping him safe.

Our God is a merciful God. Jonah knew that, but he didn't think that the people of Nineveh deserved God's mercy. The problem is, Jonah didn't deserve His mercy either. None of us do, and that's the point. Mercy is forgiveness that we don't deserve. God's mercy is for everyone, no matter who you are or what you've done. He was merciful to an Israelite like Jonah by sending a fish to save him. He showed mercy to the sailors by calming the storm.

But He also wanted to show His mercy to Jonah's enemies, the people of Nineveh. The same way, today God's mercy is available to you and your friends and family, but also to those who are unkind to you. As we'll see as we continue to study this book, Jonah learned that lesson the hard way. Let's learn from His mistake and remember that God's mercy is for everyone.

Questions for Young Children:

What did Jonah do when God told him to go to Nineveh? Why did he do that?
What happened when Jonah disobeyed God?

What did God do once the sailors threw Jonah off the boat?

What is mercy? Is it easy to forgive people when they are unkind to you?
Should we still do it?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

What is mercy? Have you ever experienced mercy? How has God shown you mercy?

Are there people that you think don't deserve mercy? Do you deserve God's mercy?

What are ways you can show mercy to other people?