

Scripture and Background Information for September 1-7

To prepare for discussion each week, group members should use the **Discussion Guide** to complete the **GOD'S WORDS** and **MY WORDS** columns using the scriptures at the bottom of this page. You will notice that we are continuing the pattern of your discussing scripture *after* the Sunday message on that passage.

Background for Jonah 4:4-11

Beginning this week, remember to grab an updated "Community Group Discussion Guide" from the Next Steps Center. As the passages get longer over the next few weeks, we have adapted the prompts to keep the time commitment between 20 & 30 minutes. In the "God's Words" section, rather than copying the scripture "word for word", you'll write down a few of the details that you might need to retell the story to a friend or a neighbor. In the "My Words" section, take a few minutes to retell the story in your own words.

When God called Jonah to preach to the wicked people of Nineveh, Jonah was shocked. Jonah was so opposed to the task that he went in the opposite direction of Nineveh. He knew that if he went, God's mercy might follow. However, Jonah's attempted escape from God's plan did not go as planned. Instead, God gave him a humbling experience to show Jonah His power and sovereignty. Jonah then realized that God was serious about his command. Nineveh must hear God's word, and so Jonah goes. Though his preaching is a success and the Ninevites repent, Jonah goes away discouraged, wanting instead that God would judge them rather than being merciful.

In Jonah 4:4-11, while Jonah is angry and sulking that God has had mercy on the Ninevites, God gives him a great illustration. Utterly consumed with his own comfort and selfishness, Jonah wishes for death when his ideal is compromised. However, God shows His incredible heart and love for His people, a compassion that God wants Jonah to learn—a Christ-like compassion that wants the best for our friends, co-workers, neighbors, family, and enemies.

Scriptures for the upcoming weeks:

September 8

Genesis 6:5-7:5

September 15

Exodus 24:12-18; 32:1-8