

SMALL GROUP

FALL 2018

Dear Students,

Congratulations! Do you know how rare it is for a high school student to find and commit to a Small Group like this one? The fact that you're holding this booklet represents the reality that God has given you an incredible gift. In this group, you have a community of Christian friends who want to help you grow in your faith. You also have one or more adult leaders who care about you and want to guide you through their teaching and example. You also have this study guide as a tool to help you grow in your understanding and application of God's Word!

As you journey through Small Group this semester, here are three points of advice to help you get the most out of your time:

Be consistent – Make a commitment to yourself and the group to attend as consistently as possible. If you have to miss a meeting, do the lesson on your own and try to catch up with what you missed by checking in with a leader or a friend from group.

Be real – High school can be hard. Be as honest as possible with God, with your leaders, and with your group about what's going on in your life. Don't bury your hurts, failures, questions, or doubts. Pretending everything is always amazing is not the path to growth.

Be open – Your small group might not always meet your expectations. Group members might be shallow, hypocritical, annoying, awkward, or fake. New people might join in the middle of the year and change the dynamic of the room. Remind yourself regularly that God is in control and that He can use anything to produce a positive result. Everyone deserves the gift of Small Group and God desires to bless each person in wonderful and unique ways.

Have a great semester studying the books of James, Jonah, and 2 Peter!

In Christ,



David Penuel



Jermaine Harrison



Cassidy Dahlsten

Watermark High School Ministry Staff

Small Group Fall 2018 Schedule

August 22	James 1
August 29	James 2
September 5	Shoreline
September 12	James 3
September 19	James 4
September 26	James 5
October 3	Shoreline
October 10	Jonah 1
October 17	Jonah 2
October 24	Jonah 3
October 31	Jonah 4
November 7	Shoreline
November 14	2 Peter 1
November 21	Thanksgiving Break
November 28	2 Peter 2
December 5	2 Peter 3
December 12	Shoreline
December 19	Christmas Party
December 26	Christmas Break

Special Events

September 21-23	Hideaway
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The Structure of a Small Group Meeting

Hang time (15 minutes)

Enjoys snacks, conversation, and games (football, basketball, video games, etc.) to connect and catch up as people arrive for Small Group.

Bible study time (30 minutes)

Teaching and discussion of the curriculum in this book. A student will open in prayer and then everyone will open their Bibles and focus on the lesson and discussion. During this time, a student will share a testimony, a student will share the gospel, and a student will help lead the lesson and discussion.

Community time (45 minutes)

Split up into smaller sub-groups for a time of sharing, accountability, and prayer. Sub-groups are to be formed at the leaders discretion, using feedback from students about who they trust and are comfortable with. Sub-groupings should generally be consistent week to week. This time should be devoted to Watermark's 6 core values of Biblical community and should focus on the goals and discussion prompts outlined on the following pages. Leaders should weekly offer a brief definition of Biblical community and remind the group of the calling and expectations for this time.

Six Core Values of Biblical Community:

As your Small Group matures, a bulk of your time should be allotted to the practice of Biblical community. This time should be informed and shaped by the following six core values of Biblical community.

1. Devote Daily

Healthy Small Groups consist of members who are devoted to an ongoing, personal relationship with God. Each member should be consistently taught and challenged to spend daily time with God through prayer, reading God's Word, and other spiritual disciplines. If we are not being transformed by a personal relationship with God, we have little to offer to the group.

(Six Core Values of Biblical Community Continued)

John 15:5

I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

2. Pursue Relationally

Healthy Small Groups are focused on intentionally building relationships with each other. Each member should be consistently challenged to cultivate each and every relationship in the group. Connectedness to the body of Christ is essential for spiritual growth and maturity. This includes placing a high priority on participation in weekly Small Group gatherings during the school year.

Romans 12:10

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love, give preference to one another in honor.

3. Live Authentically

Healthy Small Groups create a safe environment where each member can be completely real and free from condemnation because of Christ. Each member should be consistently reminded of the gospel and challenged to openly share their highs and lows, victories and defeats, strengths and weakness, and even sins and secrets. The goal is to develop a deep level of trust and unity as a result of living authentically with one another.

1 John 1:7

If we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

4. Counsel Biblically

Healthy Small Groups are marked by members who humbly seek and give advice that is grounded in the wisdom and truth of God's word. Each member should be consistently challenged to ask for input and guidance from the group. The group should be challenged to always find and share scripture to back up advice, encouragement, or correction.

Proverbs 15:22

Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisors they succeed.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

(Six Core Values of Biblical Community Continued)

5. Admonish Faithfully

Healthy Small Groups are not afraid to lovingly sharpen one another (Proverbs 27:17) when they see sin in each other's lives. Each group member should be consistently challenged to speak up when they notice areas where others obviously need to grow in Christ-likeness. It is kind and godly for us to point out faults and to help each other grow through gentle rebuke and correction.

1 Thessalonians 5:14

We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

6. Engage Missionally

Healthy Small Groups remind one another that God has commissioned us to share His love with all people. Jesus calls His followers to also be "fishers of men." Each group member should be consistently challenged to live a life on mission by initiating spiritual conversations and loving others for the purpose of making disciples and serving the church.

Matthew 28:19-20

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Weekly Questions for Community Time

1. How has your time with God been this week? What have you learned?
2. What has inspired or encouraged you this week?
What was your "high" this week?
3. What has been weighing on you this week?
What was your "low" this week?
4. How have you struggled with sin or temptation this week?
5. How have you shared Christ with and/or shown God's love to others this week?
6. How can we pray for you or serve you (advice, encouragement, support) this week?
7. What are your hopes or goals for next week?

Follow Up Questions

1. What does God's word say about that?
2. What do you think God is trying to teach you through that?
3. What do you think God wants you to do next?

Before you begin...

What is the Gospel?

The gospel is the epicenter of the Christian faith, the theme of the whole Bible, and the only hope of every human soul. Understanding and being able to share the gospel are foundational skills for every follower of Jesus Christ. “What is the gospel?” This is a question that will be asked at the start of each and every Small Group meeting, so be prepared. To learn more, Google “Sharing Your Faith 101” from Billy Graham, “One Verse Evangelism” from the Navigators, or “Romans Road to Salvation” from GotQuestions.org.

Suggested Resources

Many Christians fall away from faith because of difficult questions. This is a tragedy because, for most of these challenging questions, there are helpful and clear answers just a few clicks away! Young Christians should familiarize themselves with the following resources so they can be ready for the difficult questions that are sure to come.

www.gotquestions.org

Here you can find discussions and explanations relating to almost any question you may have in mind. Just type in a question and get ready to learn!

www.openbible.info/topics

This website is perfect for finding Bible verses related to almost any topic you can think of. What does the bible say about _____? This website has the answer!

www.lumina.bible.org

This is your go-to online Bible study resource complete with commentary notes, articles, sermons, maps, and name explanations. Perfect for going deeper.

www.realtruthrealquick.com

A series of short videos from Watermark’s Senior Pastor, Todd Wagner, that addresses common questions with direct answers from God’s Word.

MoreShoreline.com

HIDEAWAY

Pine Cove Shores
September 21-23, 2018

First Wednesdays



MoreShoreline.com

Why Study James?

When someone places their faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit begins a work of transforming that person's character which includes actions, attitudes, priorities, treatment of others, and perspective of the world. The life of someone who has genuinely become a Christian should look increasingly different the longer they are a believer. The work of transformation by the Holy Spirit is a lifelong process and requires the believer to daily surrender to the Lord. If you want to know what it looks like to daily surrender to God or what the transformation process should look like, the book of James is one of the first places in Scripture you should look.

This short book was written by James, the half brother of Jesus who had at some point placed his faith and trust in the work that his brother accomplished on the cross and in His resurrection. James later on becomes the "senior pastor" of the church in Jerusalem. This church and most of the believers at that time experienced intense persecution for their faith in God. As a result, many had become discouraged and weak in their faith, not understanding how to live out their faith in literally life threatening times. So James wrote this book to spur them on to live faithfully in any circumstance.

Today, we (if you're a Christian) too are called to live faithfully in any circumstance and so the ancient words of James are applicable right now. Amongst other things, a study of this book will teach you how to face trials, obey instruction from the Bible, think about poverty, deal with favoritism, use your words wisely, and get along with difficult people. As you learn these lessons and begin applying them to your life, you will experience the blessings that come with daily walking with Jesus become more of a light that draws nonbelievers to Christ and encourages believers to stay faithful. Let's get to work!

Suggested Memory Verses

James 1:3-4

James 2:17

James 3:13

James 4:6-7

James 5:16

James 1

Key Points

(vv. 2-12) James suggests that God's purpose in sending trials isn't because He hates us or wants to make our lives miserable. In fact, it is the exact opposite. We should remember that the very presence of trials and difficult circumstances in our lives is a validation of the Father-Child relationship between us and God (see Proverbs 3:11-12 for more on this point). For the person who trusts God, the end result of enduring trials is always blessing. What is a hard situation that you are currently experiencing or went through recently? How did it grow you? What did you learn about God and yourself?

(vv. 2-12) If we focus solely on the difficult situation and how bad things are, the result will be anger, frustration, and sadness, but if our focus is on what God is doing, we can be joyful knowing that God is drawing us closer to Him and making us more like Him in the process. God is at work making beautiful things out of your situation—no matter how dark or hopeless. What are some steps that you can take to keep yourself focused on the eventual positive outcome of trials rather than on the difficult situation right in front of you? Share your thoughts with the group.

(vv. 13-18) God does not tempt us. Temptation comes because we live in a fallen world with sinful broken bodies that are wired to chase sin. Our flesh and the devil take advantage of this opportunity and we honestly give in to temptation because we want to. Being tempted is not a sin, it is a reality of our world. Giving in to temptation or placing yourself in situations where you might be prone to give in to temptation is where danger lies. God only gives us good gifts and, temptation is not a good gift. He's a good Father who gives good gifts in His own good timing for His good purpose. We can trust Him!

(vv. 19-27) It doesn't get more practical than this. Someone who is faithfully following Christ is quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry, obeys God's word—not just hears it, takes care of orphans & widows, and protects themselves from the filth of the world. How are you doing in these areas?.

This Week's Assignments

_____ will share the gospel.

_____ will share a 3-minute personal testimony.

_____ will lead the discussion.

Discuss

Questions I want to ask at Small Group about this chapter:

Know and Do

In your opinion, what's the most important idea that you will take away from this chapter?

How does this chapter move you to action? After reading this chapter, what would God have you start doing, stop doing, or keep doing?

James 2

Key Points

(vv. 1-7) Favoritism is defined as the practice of giving unfair preferential treatment to one person or group at the expense of another. James challenges his readers to not treat good looking, impressive people better than poor, unimpressive people. At the heart of favoritism is selfishness and you may not have realized, but most people reading this have been guilty of favoritism. If you decided to hang or not hang with a person or group of people because you wanted to be perceived a certain way by others, if you decided how you should respond to/treat someone based on how they look/sound, or if you treated someone better than you would others because of fame or fortune that they possessed, then you let selfishness get the best of you and lead you into favoritism. How can we fight our tendency to play favorites?

(vv. 8-13) Mistreating people based on their appearance, social, economic, or racial status is an offense to God. This section makes the point that even if you are protecting yourself from what we mistakenly think of as “bigger sins,” but are unfair and unkind to people, you are as guilty before God as if you had committed adultery or murder. Clearly, fair and kind treatment of others is a big deal to God and should be to you. Favoritism illustrates a misunderstanding of the mercy we have been shown by God, but when we extend mercy as we have been extended mercy by God, we live like Christians are supposed to. Who can you treat with more respect or kindness this week?

(vv. 14-26) James makes the point in this section that faith is more than trust & belief in God. It is **a way of living** that is supported by a trust & belief in God. Abraham trusted & believed God, so he acted. Rahab trusted & believed in God, so she acted. If we claim to trust & believe in God, it should be accompanied by action, especially generous, sacrificial action on the behalf of others. Genuine faith is incapable of stopping at belief, it always includes action. In other words, you can't say you have faith, but no action to accompany it. Genuine faith is ALWAYS accompanied by genuine action. True faith is a faith that works. How can you live out your faith this week?

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James 3

Key Points

(vv. 1-2) After making the point that we shouldn't hastily decide to be teachers of God's Word because of greater accountability from God for our actions, James echoes the believers' struggle with sin: we all stumble in many ways. You heard it here first, being a Christian does not mean you will no longer be tempted to and give yourself to sin. You will! It is normal to wrestle, struggle, and battle with sin. It is natural to fail, but it is also normal to experience victory because "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6).

(vv. 3-12) Most, if not all, Christians consistently struggle and fail with the tongue (words). This section makes that point and your experience proves it. With our tongue we bless, curse, wound, heal, shame, discourage, encourage, exclude, include, etc. And even if you are doing an amazing job with controlling your tongue today, unfortunately tomorrow might be different. With this great reminder that we all struggle with our tongues, we should be way more patient with others if they use their words to hurt or attack us. We are all fellow strugglers in need of patience and compassion for our mistakes with our words while we strive to be more disciplined. Who can you be more patient with in spite of how they use their words? Do you need to ask someone to forgive you for the way you used your words in a negative way towards them?

(vv. 13-18) Wisdom isn't about knowing a ton about a particular topic or issue. A wise person is demonstrated as such through the way they live their lives. A wise person is marked by good deeds, humility, peace, consideration for others, submission to authority, mercy, lack of favoritism (see James 2), and genuineness. What a completely different picture of 'wisdom' than what we typically think! I hope you want to be wise in the way that James defines it. Know that it is a gift from God to be wise in this way, so a constant prayer of yours should be, "God, help me to live wisely." That's a prayer that He loves answering.

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James 4

Key Points

(vv. 1-6) At the heart of conflicts we have with others and a stagnant relationship with God is selfishness. Selfishness can be defined as seeking or concentrating on one's own advantage, pleasure, or well-being without regard for others. Because of our selfishness we hurt and fight others. Because of our selfishness, we seek to control our lives and make our way without God's influence—which ends unsuccessfully. And because of our selfishness, we make requests toward God for our own benefit or blessing with no concern for how others are affected. If quarrelling and fighting for what we want is selfish, how should we handle the frustration caused by unmet desires?

(vv. 7-12) What does it mean to submit to God? Simply put, submission to God is allowing your passions, desires, and entire way of life to be informed and transformed by Christ. You can submit to God through entrusting your life to Him in salvation, by learning more about Him as you spend time in the Bible, by obeying and living by the kind of life God outlines in Scripture, by treating others the way God's Word calls us to, and by sharing the good news of Christ's work on the cross. We can all choose to submit to God more in one way or another on a daily basis. In what aspect of submission to God can you improve?

(vv. 13-18) James addresses the fragility of human life in this section. Here today, gone tomorrow. It is prideful and unwise to plan our lives or daily activities without consideration of the One who gave us life. It is prideful and unwise to try to control our lives because we have no control over when it may be taken from us. The wise thing to do is to submit our lives to the Author and Giver of life. He should have ultimate say in how we live our lives. Our lives should revolve around honoring Him with decisions big & small. We should live our lives for what really matters, because life is short. Is there something you need to confess? Do it today. Is there a relationship you need to mend? Do it today. Do you have hopes & dreams for your future? Bring them to God and ask for guidance and direction.

This Week's Assignments

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James 5

Key Points

(vv. 1-6) A believer who wants to grow in his or her relationship with God cannot get caught up in the rat race for the accumulation of wealth and stuff. James makes an interesting point here. He basically says that being selfish and greedy with our money always leads to unhealthy treatment of others (see also 1 Timothy 6:10). Greed and selfishness can lead you to withhold from others who really need help or it can motivate you to take advantage of the less fortunate to gain more for yourself. The way to loosen money's grip on our hearts is to give it away. We are not owners of our money. Instead, we are stewards of the money God has given to us. Have you ever given to the mission of your church? Why or why not? What do you think generosity with money looks like for a high schooler?

(vv. 7-12) Both the farmer and the Christian must live by faith, looking toward a future reward for their labor. One day, Christ is going to return and will give a full reward to those who have placed their faith and trust in Him and have submitted their lives to His care and transformation. But until then, there is work to be done, obstacles to overcome, and a trustworthy Savior we can rely on. Instead of grumbling and complaining about the hardship you may be facing, learn from the examples in Scripture and real life examples of people you know that have persevered through challenging times. What is a current situation that you need to be more patient with?

(vv. 13-20) It's interesting that the last practical application James challenges believers with is prayer. Prayer is talking to God in heaven and inviting Him to move and act in the affairs of earth. Does prayer work? James sure thinks so. He argues that prayer is the most important thing we can do when faced with trouble, discouragement ("sick" in this passage refers to being weary or weak), and addiction to sin. The God of the universe sees us, knows us, and cares for us in whatever situation we find ourselves. Prayer is the ultimate acknowledgment that apart from God we can do nothing (John 15:5); it is the ultimate display of humility; it is powerful and effective. What aren't you bringing before the all-powerful God of the universe who stands ready to act on the behalf of those whose hearts are fully His (2 Chronicles 16:9)?

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Church membership is
part of God's plan for all believers.



Find us on your phone!

Why Study Jonah?

In your lifetime, murderers have mercilessly taken the lives of innocent bystanders, restaurant patrons, children and teachers, marathon runners, or people going to see a movie. We rightly become furious at individuals who take innocent lives as if they are in charge of giving and taking life. It is heartbreaking and frustrating when broken, fallen humanity acts in ways that make no sense to the average citizen. We should be enraged by actions that leave people hurt or dead, families broken, and relationships torn apart.

But what if I told you that God has compassion for the most evil murderer you can think of? What if God gathered all the murderers that have ever existed into one place and gave you the job of going to them and preaching about the grace and acceptance found in a relationship with Jesus? Would you be excited at such an opportunity? Or would your anger and hatred for that group of people cause you to not want to say yes? The book of Jonah was written to answer all these questions and more.

Jonah offers a clear presentation of the never-ending and far reaching mercy and compassion of God. His mercy and compassion know no bounds. Reading through Jonah also teaches us a lot about ourselves and how we might be tempted to respond to God's activity or inactivity in our lives. And finally, another great reason to study Jonah is that God called the prophet to share God's mercy and compassion with the most wicked people of his day, and he calls you and I to do the same today.

Suggested Memory Verses

Jonah 1:16

Jonah 2:8

Jonah 3:10

Jonah 4:11

Jonah 1

Key Points

(vv. 1-3) Nineveh was the powerful, wicked, and most important city of the Assyrian empire. They were known for exploitation of the helpless, cruelty in war, idolatry, prostitution, and witchcraft. But still, God wanted to extend mercy to them by sending his servant Jonah to warn them of what would happen (destruction), but also of what could happen (mercy). But Jonah didn't like the fact that God loves His enemies, so he ran in the opposite direction. Jonah did not want his enemies to experience mercy, so he ran from God (as if that's even possible). How about you? When you think of terrorists, mass shooters, that guy or girl that bullies you, or that person that clearly does not like you, do you want God to show mercy or judgment to them?

(vv. 4-10) The storm that Jonah and the sailors found themselves in was directly caused by Jonah's lack of compassion for lost people and his disobedience to God's command. It raises the point that there are consequences to our rebellion against God. Life is hard enough when we walk faithfully with God because of the sin and brokenness of our world, yet we often add more challenges because of our own selfishness and pride. What experiences are you currently having that may be a direct consequence of sinful choices you have made?

(vv. 11-16) The consequences of our sin are meant to draw us back to God's compassion, grace, and boundless love (Psalm 103:8). The sailors' final response to the storm was to turn to God for mercy and hope. They also offer sacrifices to Him and develop a reverence for the one true God. Jonah on the other hand makes a request that seems noble. Everyone knows that the storm is happening because of Jonah's disobedience, so his request to be thrown overboard seems kind and selfless at first. Until you remember that death would be another way for Jonah to escape having to obey God. So his request to be thrown overboard may be Jonah's most selfish move yet. How do you try to manage the image others have of you while being motivated by selfishness deep down?

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_____ will share the gospel.

_____ will share a 3-minute personal testimony.

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Discuss

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Jonah 2

Key Points

(1:17-2:10) In the midst of consequence, God is still merciful to Jonah. He hopes Jonah gets a change of heart, but unfortunately, Jonah's heart and attitude before and after being in the belly of the great fish remains the same – defiant to God and hateful toward his enemies. So while Jonah seems genuine in his prayer, it is clear from his actions before and after this incident that he was saying empty words that had no impact on his heart or life; he just wanted his current situation to change, so he mouthed what he was “supposed” to say. Think of and share a situation where you only said what needed to be said (empty words) so that you could get out of that situation.

(vv. 2-9) Jonah never really acknowledges and confesses his sin. Rather, he focuses on his physical deliverance from the depths of the sea. In fact, the words in this prayer aren't even his own words! All of his words are derived from various Psalms (v. 2 is from Psalm 18:4-6 and Psalm 120:1; v. 3 is from Psalm 69:1-2 and Psalm 42:7; v. 4 is from Psalm 5:7; v. 5-6 is from Psalm 69:1-2 and Psalm 18:5 and Psalm 116:3; v. 7 is from Psalm 18:6; v. 8 is from Psalm 31:6; v. 9 is from Psalm 3:8, Psalm 50:14, and Psalm 50:23). It's clear that Jonah knows the Word! The problem is that it didn't make a difference in his life. How about you? Have you grown up in a Christian home, always been in church, or go to a Christian school and find yourself going through the motions of your faith? How can you fight against apathy or disinterest in God in your own life?

(v. 10) The Hebrew word translated as “spit” in v.10 is better translated as “vomited.” The same word is used elsewhere in Leviticus 18:24-30 and 20:22. The word is explicitly used by God to explain what would happen when the people of God did not follow His guidelines and instructions. So what we need to understand is that this “spitting” out of Jonah on dry land is another expression of God's displeasure with the actions and attitude of Jonah while at the same time an expression of mercy toward a stubborn prophet.

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Jonah 3

Key Points

(vv. 1-4) Jonah is reluctant in his obedience, so he performs a half-hearted job. Nowhere in the story do we see Jonah realize and repent of his sin. It feels like he obeys God to avoid consequences as opposed to faithfully carrying out the mission God has for him. This idea is most clearly demonstrated in what Jonah says to the Ninevites. He doesn't mention God, mercy, or salvation. All he says, probably in a half-hearted way, is that Nineveh would be destroyed in 40 days. The question Jonah challenges us to ask ourselves is "Do I obey God out of fear and obligation or out of joy and the acceptance we find in Him?" If you were to evaluate your walk with the Lord right now, what word would best describe it? Obligation? Opportunity?

(vv. 5-9) In spite of a half-hearted effort by Jonah, the Ninevites hear, believe, and repent. These pagan people realized their need for mercy from the true God and turned to a new way of life. What a great reminder that God's word always accomplishes the purpose for which it was sent out (Isaiah 55:11), regardless of the messenger or the way in which the message is communicated. This is not to say we shouldn't seek to be excellent in proclaiming truth, but it is to say that how people respond is completely in God's hands. It's our job to faithfully share. Who have you shared the gospel with recently?

(v.10) Sometimes we create this picture of God where He is somewhere up in heaven waiting for us to mess up so He can punish us. But that is not the image of God that we get from Scripture and this verse is a clear example. God, who is grieved by our sin, is required to judge it, but is willing and able to withhold judgment if we genuinely confess our sin against Him. Of course, there are consequences for our actions that aren't erased simply because we repent of our sins, but genuine repentance leads to the God of the universe being inclined to work on our behalf (2 Chronicles 16:9) or be merciful. What do you need to repent of in your life right now?

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Jonah 4

Key Points

(vv. 1-4) Jonah was angry at God's decision to extend mercy; bitter even. He believed that God had gotten it wrong. And when God didn't act how Jonah would have acted if he were God, he was driven to extreme anger. How about you? How do you respond when God doesn't act or come through in the way you think He should? Jonah clearly demonstrates his selfishness (not wanting others to experience mercy) and self-righteousness (moral superiority) in his prayer to God. God's question to Jonah is the same for any of us frustrated with God for how He chooses to act or not act: "Is it right for you to be angry?"

(vv. 5-10) Selfish, self-righteous Jonah continues to act like a spoiled brat and goes out of the city to see what would happen to it. As if to say "God better rain down some judgment on this city or else!" Next, we observe a strange sequence of events where Jonah cares more about the preservation of a plant than he does thousands of human beings. If you haven't noticed by now, Jonah is NOT an example for you to follow, but a warning against being stuck in your own way and expecting God to act against His character or perform for you like some genie. How would you respond differently now if God were to act in a way you didn't really like?

(v. 11) God loves mercy and redemption more than He loves judgment and destruction (James 2:13), but this is a lesson that Jonah misses completely. Don't miss it! God cares for people, no matter how wicked they are. God cares for the people who hate you, mistreat you, and maybe even want to kill you. You should too! The book ends with an intentional cliffhanger. Each reader is to decide how to respond to God's call for compassion for the lost. Remember that you are somewhere on the list of people that have grieved God by your sin. Because of His grace, His wrath was poured on Jesus instead of on you and you get mercy while Christ endured your judgment for you. This should lead you to a great sense of compassion for others.

This Week's Assignments

_____ will share the gospel.

_____ will share a 3-minute personal testimony.

_____ will lead the discussion.

Discuss

Questions I want to ask at Small Group about this chapter:

Know and Do

In your opinion, what's the most important idea that you will take away from this chapter?

How does this chapter move you to action? After reading this chapter, what would God have you start doing, stop doing, or keep doing?

February 1-3, 2019

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Why Study 2 Peter?

Most major sports have an off-season. Football runs from August to February, baseball runs from April to October, and basketball runs from October to June. During those months, athletes give their sport all they've got. They practice, train, and play games competitively for months. One of their main motivations is the desire to win a coveted championship. But the off-season can get tricky for some athletes. They get lazy, party, don't practice, and don't eat right. The lack of discipline during the off-season then affects an athlete's performance during the next season. If LeBron James doesn't train & practice this summer, he will be a scrub next season!

The book of 2 Peter was written to encourage and challenge believers to maintain discipline during the "off-season." When 1 Peter was written, the Church was in the midst of persecution, hardship, and suffering from external enemies and forces. The Church needed to be encouraged and motivated to persevere through tough times. But at the time 2 Peter was written, external opposition had subsided, people were beginning to get comfortable & lazy, and false teachers were taking this opportunity to swindle people out of the truth and the money in their pockets.

The Church needed to be reminded that just because they weren't running for their lives like in times gone by it didn't mean that they should let their guard down and start to coast in their faith. The "off-season" is a time to keep putting in work and to pursue Christ all the more in preparation for the future. And that's where we come in. We aren't being beheaded or imprisoned for our faith, so the temptation is to just cruise through life with our assurance of salvation and fall into laziness, apathy, and deception. But Peter wanted to call the early church to a higher standard and he calls us to the same standard. This is why we should read the book of 2 Peter. He challenges believers to pursue growth in their walk with the Lord, to be on the lookout for false teachers, and to live in light of the hope of Christ's return. Let's dive in!

Suggested Memory Verses

2 Peter 1:3

2 Peter 1:20-21

2 Peter 2:1-2

2 Peter 3:9

2 Peter 1

Key Points

(vv. 1-11) To become complacent in your faith is to lose sight of the importance for continual growth. It is to feel like you have arrived at the pinnacle of spirituality or that you don't need to learn anything new. It's like a guy who really likes a girl and gives her presents, flowers, and takes her on dates, but after she agrees to be his girlfriend, he never takes her on another date again. What kind of "relationship" is that? This is Peter's point. To trust in Christ's work on the cross and stop there is to stunt the relationship. Followers of Jesus should never stop growing. He reminds us that we have every principle, lesson, and promise from God that we need to live a godly life. What is one way you can grow in your relationship with God?

(vv. 12-15) We easily forget simple truth about God and need to be regularly reminded about foundational truth to keep our faith healthy, strong, and growing. In math class, concepts build upon each other. If you can't understand the basics of algebra, it will be hard to do well at harder concepts. You've probably had to go back and refresh yourself of foundational math concepts to help you understand new ones. In the same way, we need foundational reminders so we can keep developing our faith. To have an attitude of "I've heard this before" is to set yourself up for failure.

What do you "already know" that you need to be reminded of today?

(vv. 16-21) Peter reminds us that the story of Jesus and the Church's existence isn't some made up story. He knew Jesus. He walked with Him, saw the miracles, heard the sermons, and saw Him die and rise again. For Peter, belief in the accuracy and authenticity of the story of Jesus is the only foundation for faith to grow on. The Old Testament prophets didn't make up their prophecies about Jesus either. Rather, the Holy Spirit of God guided them in speaking and writing. The anticipation of Jesus in the Old Testament and the revelation of Jesus in the New Testament is one long, Holy Spirit led, TRUE story! Do you believe it?

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2 Peter 2

Key Points

(vv. 1-3) False teachers want to create a picture of Christianity that allows them to live the lifestyle they want to. They are selfish. False teachers want to distort truth and Scripture in a way that gains them a massive following and with this large following, large financial support. They are prideful and greedy. False teachers existed in the Old Testament, the New Testament church and today in 2018! There are greedy men & women who are only after fame, fortune, and license to live however they want. We should make it a priority to study and know what God says about certain issues so that when false teachers try to lead us astray we can stand firm. What is a topic that you need to take time to do more research into what the Bible actually says about it?

(vv. 4-9) Peter makes the point that God can and will meet rebellion with His justice. False teachers and people who reject the good news of the gospel—that God demonstrated His love for us through Jesus' sacrifice and offers us abundant life now and eternal life to come (Romans 5:8, Romans 10:9-10, Luke 19:10)—can be sure that they will one day experience the judgment of God. Because of God's holiness and perfection, He has to judge sin & rebellion as He did in the past. But even in His judgment, God offers a way of escape for all of us. You have a chance today to be one of the godly who escape the judgment of God. Do you know anyone that needs to be told the truth because they are giving in to the lies of false teachers?

(vv. 10-22) Peter continues to outline the defining characteristics of false teachers and those who rebel against God—those who will ultimately experience God's judgment. He isn't talking about messing up in these ways now and then as a Christian. He is talking about people who have rejected the gospel and chosen a different way to live that is characterized by sin. They are controlled by fleshly desires, authority hating, greedy liars who are arrogant, disrespectful, and curse God. Verse 19 points out that false teachers and rebellious people are slaves to whatever has mastered them. What are you allowing to master you currently?

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2 Peter 3

Key Points

(vv. 1-4) Up until the return of Christ, there will be people who doubt and ridicule the legitimacy of Jesus' promise to return as well as His other commands. The reason for this is because humanity does not want to be held accountable. At the center of the Christian view of the return of Christ is a day of reckoning for those who have rejected God all their lives and a day of joyful celebration for those who have placed their faith in Jesus. Our response to people who try to refute or ignore Christ's return should be compassion that leads us to pray for them and motivates us to continue showing and sharing with them the good news of the gospel! Who can you pray for that they would trust Christ before He returns?

(vv. 5-10) God stands outside the bounds of time. What seems like a long time to us is a split second to Him, and on the other hand, what seems like a short time to us is a long time to Him because He sees and intimately cares about every minute detail of our lives. Therefore, we should see the "delaying" of the Lord's coming as an expression of God's mercy and compassion; another opportunity for people to come to faith in Him. But make no mistake about it, Jesus will one day return to create a new heaven and new earth where all believers will live with Him forever and those who have chosen to reject God in this life will be where God is not.

(vv. 11-18) The fact that there is a coming day of judgment where Christians will be with God forever in a re-created heaven and earth and non-Christians will be in hell should motivate us to live our limited days on earth with purpose and passion. Our waiting for the return of Christ shouldn't be one where we passively enjoy our "ticket to heaven." We should be actively calling as many people as we can into life transforming relationship with Jesus. We should be availing ourselves to all that God has provided for life and godliness. Our lives should be a living testimony that life in Christ is truly the abundant life. When was the last time you had a meaningful conversation with someone about their relationship with Jesus?

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