



# WOODLAND HEIGHTS

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CHRISTIAN CHURCH

## Castaway: God's Relentless Pursuit of Redemption Part #2 – Discovering God's Grace in the Depths

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### Small Group Discussion Guide on Jonah 2:1-10

#### Woodland Heights Christian Church Core Value Connection

This sermon on Jonah 2:1-10 resonates deeply with the core value of **Discipleship** at Woodland Heights Christian Church. Discipleship is about growing into faithful followers who trust God's Word, repent of their shortcomings, and commit to His purpose.

Jonah's prayer from the fish's belly—a raw cry, a humble confession, and a vow of renewed obedience—mirrors the journey of a disciple turning back to God. The sermon's Big Idea, *"The Prayer of the Faithful Turns Your Pit of Ruin into His Path of Restoration,"* challenges us to deepen our walk with Christ, aligning with our church's mission to train disciples who live out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

#### Section #1 – ENCOUNTER

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##### "Observing God's Word"

Imagine a hiker, lost in the rugged wilds of a mountain range, his map useless, his supplies gone. Night falls, and the cold creeps in, wrapping him in despair. He's wandered too far, made too many wrong turns, and now he's stuck, with no way out. In his desperation, he whispers a prayer, a plea for rescue. Suddenly, a faint light flickers in the distance—a ranger's lantern, cutting through the dark. That light wasn't there by chance; it was sent. Friends, that's Jonah's story in the belly of the fish. He's lost, sinking in the consequences of his rebellion, yet God's grace shines through, a beacon of hope in his darkest hour. Let's dive into Jonah 2 and discover how God meets us in our deepest pits, ready to lift us out with His relentless love.

Let's start our study by anchoring ourselves in Scripture. Read Jonah 2:1-10 (ESV) as a group, family, or an individual, letting God's Word sink in. Picture the scene: Jonah swallowed by darkness and despair realizing he is on the edge of existence then crying out to the Lord in repentance with a broken and contrite heart.

##### Core Questions

- What do you notice about Jonah's words and actions in this story? Why is this relevant?
- What are key words, phrases, or themes that grab your attention in this text?
- What is the main lesson or lessons that God wants you to remember from this passage?

## Section #2 – EXPLORE

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### “Understanding the Passage and Sermon”

Let’s unpack Jonah’s prayer with questions that connect the sermon’s insights to our lives. Discuss these as a group or reflect on them as an individual.

**Quote** – “God is more ready to hear your prayer than you are to utter it.” – **Charles Spurgeon**

- Have you ever felt resistant to lift a prayer to the Lord in your life? Why or why not?

#### ***The Cry of Desperation (Jonah 2:1-2)***

Jonah prays, “*I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me*” (Jonah 2:2).

- What does it mean that Jonah cried out from the “belly of Sheol”? Why is it important to learn from Jonah’s lesson and make sure to cry out to the Lord in overwhelming times?
- How does Jonah’s faith, even in the depths, reflect the promise of Psalm 34:17-18: “*The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit*”?
- In what ways, does the promise of Psalm 34:17-18 remain relevant for you today?

#### ***The Confession of Faith (Jonah 2:3-6)***

Jonah confesses, “*I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple*” (Jonah 2:4).

- How does Jonah balance despair with hope in this moment? What can you learn from his example for today?

The sermon reminds us that one of the key disciplines in the life of every Christian must be to: “Make Repentance Your Reality by Choosing to Turn to the Author of Your Restoration.” This key insight is a connection drawn from Acts 3:19-20 which states, “<sup>19</sup> Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, <sup>20</sup> that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus.”

- How do you define repentance and why does it seem so hard for many people to practice in their life?
- What is the fruit of repentance as described in Acts 3:19-20?

**Quote** – “Confession is the key that unlocks the door to God’s mercy.” – **Thomas Watson**

#### ***The Commitment to God (Jonah 2:7-10)***

Jonah vows, “*I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay*” (Jonah 2:9).

- What does this shift from despair to gratitude reveal about his heart? What lesson does it teach you today?

As you read the words of Jonah 2:9, they speak an eternal truth that declares: “*Salvation belongs to the LORD!*” This truth is absolute, and it speaks to the reality that salvation comes only from the one true God.

- Why is this simple truth so controversial in our culture today?
- How does this truth, echoed in Romans 10:13, shape your understanding of God’s grace, mercy, and authority?

## Section #3 – EMBRACE

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### “Applying God’s Word”

Now, let’s move from insight to action. Jonah’s prayer isn’t just a story – it’s a call to live differently. Discuss these questions and choose one step to take this week.

#### ***Crying Out in Faith***

The sermon’s memory verse is **Psalm 40:2** (NLT) which states: “*He lifted me out of the pit of despair... He set my feet on solid ground.*”

- How can you cry out to God this week in a specific area of struggle?
- What’s one way you can trust God’s nearness, even when you feel trapped in a “pit”?

#### ***Committing to God’s Purpose***

Max Lucado’s quote resonates with many Christians: “*God’s grace is not just a pardon for your past but a power in your present.*”

- How can you live out Jonah’s commitment to praise and obey God this week?
- As part of Woodland Heights’ mission to “Reach, Teach, and Serve,” brainstorm one way your group or you as an individual can share the message of God’s grace with others (e.g., praying for a neighbor, serving together).

## Prayer

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Close your time by praying together or as an individual.

- Thank God for His grace that meets us in the depths, as Zephaniah 3:17 declares: “*The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save.*”
- Ask for courage to cry out, confess, and commit to His purpose.
- Pray for those in your life who are in their own “pit,” that they may experience God’s deliverance.