

# BREAKOUT

## LEARNING FROM JONAH FOR LIFE AFTER LOCKDOWN



### Introduction

So much has happened in the last 3 months and we've all been learning new ways to live. And now as lockdown is very slowly being released, one of the things I'm hearing time and time again is 'I don't want to go back to our old ways of doing things'. Many people have seen a new way of living. Slower pace of life, neighbours getting to know one another, people supporting and looking out for others, cleaner air and environment. There has often been time to reflect on our life and faith too.

Of course others have also had a different experience. There are people who have suffered loss and trauma. People who have become anxious as they've been furloughed or lost their jobs. Key-workers who have had to work harder than ever before to keep others safe, well and fed.

Lockdown has changed us all. We've experienced and learned so much, but when this is all over will we embrace and move forward with the new or will we go backwards to the way things always were? That choice is ultimately up to us.

Psalm 85.8 says these words which seem poignant as lockdown is slowly eased.

**'I will listen to what God the Lord says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants - but let them not turn to folly.'**

Let's not miss this opportunity to press reset. To listen to God, hear his thoughts and ways, allow them to become our ways, and not to return to folly.

The story of Jonah is an important scripture to learn from in this regard. He is the ultimate lockdown prophet, three days and three nights in the whale, and he came out of it changed. Of course he still made plenty of mistakes. But there is much to learn from this book about how we can breakout from lockdown with a greater and stronger faith in Jesus Christ than we did before

## Challenge

Over this series on Jonah why not write a letter to your post-lockdown self one year from now. Here's some ideas of things to include

What have you learned that you'll want to remember.

What will you keep and what will you change?

What have you learned about following God?

Ask God to give you a specific bible verse that you can include.

Write the letter and put it somewhere prominent where you can come back to it time and time again. If it feels appropriate why not share it with someone.

## Week 1 || Who's in control?

**Read:** Jonah chapter 1

**Watch:** the talk on 'Church at Home' 14th June episode.

This is available on our YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLQRBOtXrKOk4MWNthHOB-w>



You may have heard the phrase 'Let go and let God.' This was something Jonah - like most of us - had trouble working into his life. Twice God called him to do a job - 'Go to Nineveh' - and twice Jonah refused to give over control. Of course Jonah did go to Nineveh the second time, but he didn't do it with God's heart for the people there, he did it and bore a grudge towards God. That's not letting go and letting God. It is of course hard to surrender to God. It can create anxiety because we have to trust him for our lives. But that is what faith is, not merely a set of beliefs but a lifestyle of trust as we are led by the Holy Spirit.

One of the practices I've found helpful over the years is to work through the 12-steps (you can find them here <https://www.celebraterecovery.com/resources/cr-tools/12steps>). The 12-steps is a recovery programme that arose from Alcoholics Anonymous and is now used by many different recovery fellowships around the world. But it's not only for people in recovery from substance addiction. In essence it is a discipleship programme, and steps 1-3 are all about releasing control. The idea is that you take 1 step at a time and don't move on until you've completed the previous step. Here are steps 1-3 with their biblical basis:

### **Step 1.**

**We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and compulsive behaviours, that our lives had become unmanageable.**

'I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature.

For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.' Romans 7:18

### **Step 2.**

**We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.**

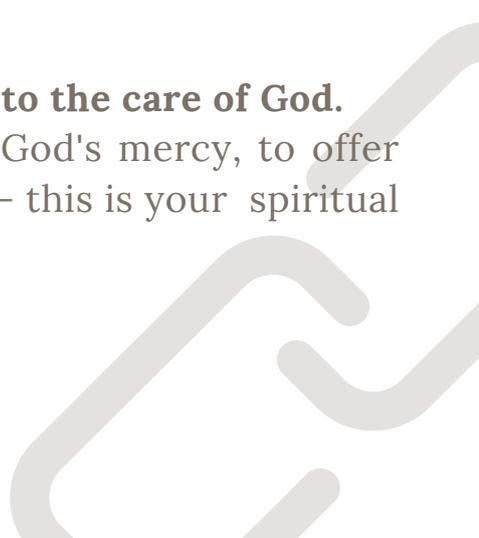
'For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.' Philippians 2:13

### **Step 3.**

**We made a decision to turn our lives and our wills over to the care of God.**

'Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship.'

Romans 12:1



## Questions for discussion and reflection

Q. What do you think of the idea that ‘we can be in ultimate control of our lives and our destiny’?

Q. Being trapped inside the belly of the whale was a dramatic and pivotal moment in Jonah’s story. Why do you think he didn’t learn from his lockdown?

Q. What are the lessons you’ve learned during lockdown? Consider writing these things down as a letter to your post-lockdown self 1 year from now (see the challenge in the introduction).

Q. Share some examples of how you have acted in faith.

Q. What are the things that you currently feel you could never hand over to God? (You may be uncomfortable discussing these but do ask yourself the question) Ask God to speak to you about this situation.

Q. What stands out to you from Steps 1-3?

## Prayer:

Loving Father, I believe in you and who you are. Would you help me to go beyond just belief and act in faith as I trust you with my life. You know lord how hard I find it to count the cost of following you and surrender. But that’s what I want to do. Would you give me strength when I feel to anxious and fearful of doing this. I welcome you now Holy Spirit to come into my life and reveal to me areas that I haven’t yet given over to you. Search me, know my heart, test me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Amen.