



The Sailors' Prayer: Fearing the Lord

Date: August 4, 2024

Text: Jonah 1

BIG IDEA

When talking to an audience it is important to know who your audience is and who you are. When speaking to 1st graders, you don't want to use big technical terms, and you want to spend ample time explaining each and every concept, while if you are speaking to a group of generals you want to be brief, specific, and direct. In the same way, do we know our audience when we pray? Do we know ourselves and our posture when we pray? God is the God of creation, all knowing, omnipresent, and judge of the world - a fact Jonah was reminded of and that he taught to his shipmates in this first chapter in Jonah.

Conversation Starter

- What does it mean to fear the Lord?
 - Is there such a thing as a healthy fear?
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COMMENTARY #1

(Jonah 1:1-3) Jonah's folly here was to disobey the Lord's commandments. This mirrors our study a few weeks ago in Joshua where the Israelites disobeyed God by not taking the Promise Land when he gave it to them. Jonah forgot who he was in this moment and who he answered to, which caused him to flee.

Discussion Questions

1. What is your identity? What defines it?
 2. What should our response to the Lord's calling be?
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COMMENTARY #2

(Jonah 1:4-13) After Jonah tries to flee the Lord, God is right beside Jonah to remind him who God is. In the passage, we see God control the seas, send a storm, and demonstrate His mighty power just to reach out to Jonah. We also see God control the lots to single out Jonah from the rest of the crew. Through this experience, the crew of the ship learned who God was and they had a healthy fear of Him.

Discussion Questions

1. What aspects or characteristics of God are in the forefront here?
 2. Contrast the response of the crew versus the response of Jonah in the storm. Who responded correctly? How did they respond?
 3. How has God gotten your attention when you were far from Him? How did you respond?
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COMMENTARY #3

(Jonah 1:14-17) Through their fear of the Lord, the crew prays to God and follows His instructions to throw Jonah overboard. God then calms the seas and in response the crew becomes more afraid of Him. Their new fear drives them to offer sacrifices to the Lord and make vows with Him. God, in this instance, showed His power and character at the same time; the crew knew God could completely destroy them and had full control of the situation, but He was also *just*. He did not exact further action than what was needed, and He did not punish for inconvenience.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to “fear the Lord?” Do you hold that level of awe and reverence?
 2. How was the fear of the crew reflected in the prayer they prayed to God?
 3. What impact should our fear of the Lord have with our prayer life and general walk with God?
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GOING DEEPER

In Paul’s letter to the Philippians, he writes “So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to desire and to work for His good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:12-13)

1. What does it mean to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”?
 2. Does the indwelling of the Holy Spirit change the way you think about the fear of the Lord?
 3. Does fear bring upon good change in us? If so, what?
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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Commentary for Fearing God

<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-does-it-mean-for-the-christian-to-fear-god>

Group Activity

In the story, the crew became more fearful when God fulfilled His promises in response to their faithful action. Part of our fear of the Lord should be to remember what He has done for us.

Throughout this week, write down your prayers and where you see God moving. This can be an actual written prayer, or it can be shorthand/ bullet points. But write some tangible way that you can remember your prayers and see how God is moving.

Specifically, highlight where you see God fulfilling a promise and be ready to share with your group next week if you feel comfortable doing so.