

The Christmas story is the story of the whole Bible. Can you find the Christmas story in the story of Jonah? Where? What other Old Testament narratives tell the Christmas story?

1. A superior attitude toward sinners. (v.1)

Discuss this statement: *The nature of the human heart is to feel superior to somebody.*

How do you see this reality in your life?

Who do you look down on? Who do you pity? Is your pity motivated by a sense that you are superior to them?

Is there a person or people group that you feel is more deserving of God's judgment than you?

How does pride destroy your ability to extend grace to undeserving people?

How does a proper understanding of the gospel prevent the tendency to feel superior to anyone else?

2. An inferior grasp of God's love. (v.2, Exodus 34:5-9)

How have you personally experienced the love of God in the last month?

Jonah 4:2 is one of the most repeated verses in the Bible. It originally appears in Exodus 34:5-9.

What is the difference between sentimental love, romantic love, and God's love?

Is it possible to show love without feeling love? Why or why not?

Discuss the aspects of God's love described in this verse. How has each become personal to you?

- God's love is merciful.
- God's love is gracious.
- God's love is patient (slow to anger).
- God's love is endless (abounding in steadfast love).
- God's love is promised (faithful).
- God's love is forgiving.

3. An ulterior purpose for living. (v.3-4)

What is God's ultimate purpose for creating you?

Do you ever act like God exists for you rather than you existing for God? How?

Are you consumed with the thought, "What is better for me?" Do you ask that question more than "What is better for others?" or "What is better for God?"

How Jesus Saved Christmas (Matthew 12:38-41)

The book of Jonah leaves us longing for a better Jonah. Read Matthew 12:38-41. Who did Jesus identify as the better Jonah?

Do you ask God for a sign? What did Jesus say about people who seek signs?

Jesus tells us the sign of Jonah points us straight to Himself. List as many similarities between Jonah and Jesus as you can.

Reflect on the differences between Jonah and Jesus...

Jonah fled the presence of God.

Jesus brought the presence of God.

Do you regularly experience the reality of Jesus' presence as Emmanuel, "God with us?"

Jonah became angry at God.

Jesus absorbed the anger of God.

When you sin does God get angry? How often do you consciously reflect on how Jesus absorbed the anger of God on the cross for you?

Jonah would rather die than see sinners experience grace.

Jesus would rather die than see sinners experience wrath.

What price did Jesus pay so that you could experience the love of God?

Jonah reluctantly went to Nineveh as an angry prophet.

Jesus willingly became a Ninevite as an incarnational missionary.

Do you think of yourself as an incarnational missionary? How are you reaching unbelievers with the gospel? Do you speak their language? Do you know their cultural tendencies?

Jonah despised the gift God gave.

Jesus was the gift God gave.

God's gift of salvation is something we intentionally receive everyday. How are you expressing your gratefulness to God for this gift?

Additional Scripture

- Psalm 145
- Joel 2:13
- John 3:16-18
- Romans 2:4
- 2Corinthians 5:20-21