Jonah — Potential

It seems easier, or more palatable at least, to trust the Story when I am talking about *my* story, my own potential. You know, trusting that my story will turn out well.

But what about the part of trusting the Story in regards to everyone else? Not just my friends and family—even my enemies. Do I trust the Story when it deals with those outside my circle of comfort or realm of influence? People on the other side of a political chasm, religious tradition, or moral compass? Those that I, of course, *know* to be wrong?

Do I trust the Story when it deals with those outside my circle of comfort?

Yet, when we say to God, "Speak, Lord, I am listening," and He speaks that unexpected call —to go and preach to the leaders of our oppressors, of those who have wounded us, our children, our nation—what is our reaction?

Is it fear? Is it anger? Is it confusion?

Jonah is an oddball of a prophet because he handles the call of God so differently than the other prophets. First, he runs. I've always somewhat identified with this part of the story. I would be terrified to walk into the capital city of my greatest enemies, presumably walking to torture and my imminent death. I've asked myself, "If God told me to go, would I go?"

Yet, is it Jonah's fear that offers the biggest lesson for us today? Up until recently, my quick answer would have been yes. I'd get so caught up in the running away, the miraculous fish swallowing, and then going to Nineveh, I wonder if I ever actually finished, or at least looked closely, at the rest of the story.

Jonah isn't just afraid of Nineveh. He fears even more that God is actually who God says He is. A God whose grace and mercy outweighs His anger 1000:1. Whose faithfulness is to *all* of humankind, not just "us," and sees the potential in everyone. Jonah says to God in chapter 4 that this faithful truth is why he ran away from Nineveh in the first place. In spite of all that Nineveh has done to Jonah's people, God wants Jonah to be a part of saving them. Yet, to prove his truth and anger with God, Jonah pointedly misquotes a powerful piece of Exodus. Compare these two differences.

"I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, …" –Jonah 4

"The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and **faithfulness**…" –Exodus 34

With Jonah's anger in chapter 4, we see "the unstoppable force of God's love [meeting] the immovable object of Jonah's truth—and Jonah will not budge," as Reed describes it. Perhaps that is why the book ends where it does. With no resolution, answer, or clear change in Jonah other than the ongoing wrestling match of God's passionate compassion and Jonah's understanding of truth.

How does the story end? How would we finish the story? If we are truly trusting the Story ourselves, how would this story finish for us? Would we be pouting on a hill, waiting for God to be more faithful to us than others? Would we run away in anger at God's unending faithfulness and belief in the potential of others?

I hear echoes of "am I my brother's keeper" in Genesis. I see the angel before Joshua, not declaring God's army *for* Joshua, or the enemy's, but *for God*… What can we learn here?

God has patient compassion for all of us. He sees not just our mistakes or successes, but also our potential. In a communal world, I can't help but wonder that the point is that God also sees the potential for *all* of his creation working together, across divides, in spite of differences, and fueled by forgiveness and compassion. This is a truth we cannot begin to even understand, yet we are challenged with the question he leaves Jonah with, deeply rooted in God's all encompassing faithfulness, "Should I not be concerned for them?"

PRAYER

May we not run away in fear
May we not run away in anger
May we run towards You
When You call us across divides
When You call us to forgive
May we be more like You.

In a world us versus them
Of taking sides and grasping bitterness
Remind us, they are Your beloved too.

When we covet our own truth
Above Your patient compassion
When our stubbornness withers our own shade
May You get our attention, to concern ourselves with all creation
You so earnestly seek to save

Amen

EPISODE 52 (SESSION 2)

THE FOUR PILLARS



BEMA Discipleship is built on four pillars; a **Four-Pillared Perspective** to help us remember **to elevate the words of God** (not ours) and help us identify the principles that we see recurring in the story of God's people.

Here are some applications for this episode echoing the ideas of the four pillars:

I

TEXT

What stands out to you from the Text that you want to carry with you as you read the prophets? What could you meditate over or memorize from the story of Jonah?

II

COMMUNITY

How does your community see the message of Jonah in this new(er) light? What similarities do you see to us versus them today? How do you see God calling you to Nineveh?

III

DISCIPLESHIP

Who are you bringing alongside you to model trust in God's faithfulness and HIS truth? What challenges stand in your way? How might you more effectively invite such conversation?

IV

WRESTLING

What are your thoughts on the lack of resolution to this book? What are you most curious about in this book still? How do you feel about the parts not discussed?

Spotify

Are you a music listener?

Listen along to our BEMA Music Playlists on Spotify.

Song suggestions? Send them to bemabesorah@gmail.com.

BEMA SESSION 2

MEDITATION & PRAYER

REFLECTION, APPLICATION & IMPACT

There are three emphases that we are always thinking about in terms of application at BEMA. These may be stated explicitly at times, but often we will want you to do the work of finding ways to connect the dots to the things we are learning. Much of this is what makes the work of BEMA distinct as a ministry of Impact Campus Ministries.

CREATING A SPACE
SPIRITUAL FORMATION

True success is developing intimacy with God. In Session 1, we encountered the idea of "Creating Space for God" in our lives. We believe that ***if we do our part of creating that space, God will fill it*** *as He desires. You're already doing this as you dive into the Text and jump into a place to discuss. God will meet you in these places! Look for places the Holy Spirit can do work in and through you as you go about your everyday life.*

CONSIDERING CAMPUS
YOUNG PEOPLE FOCUS

We believe that young adults are shaping the future of this world. *Jesus modeled a ministry of discipling young adults, and that approach has and will work. If you are a college student who is listening, we want this material to be directly helpful to your pursuits. If you are not a college student, we want to challenge you to come alongside one and work together.*

SACRED STATION
THEOLOGY OF WORK

This isn't only for church or Bible study; this is about what we do every day. How we do our job and how it may take advantage of or bring life to others is something God says is central to our presence in the world. Justice is very much something God cares about. Does our physical work (our 9–5 job) bring shalom or chaos? Does it exploit creation? The way we manage our employees, interact with customers or coworkers, care for our children, or create products can provide relief to others. ***The work we do every day is sacred and matters!***

© 2026 BEMA Discipleship