

# “God is Merciful”

Flash Theology | Week Six | Newbreak Church

June 11th, 2023

Newbreak’s Sermon Study Guide is an in-house resource that serves sermon-based Life Groups and/or individuals who want to reflect further on how the message contributes to our spiritual formation.

In this week’s study, we continue our sermon series *Flash Theology*, based on the book. This time we talk about God’s mercy in ways that are both familiar and surprising to us. Although the sermon goes briefly through the story of Jonah, we highly recommend you read the book of Jonah (4 chapters) in its entirety.

## Icebreakers for Life Groups

- Are you a roller coaster fan? Why or why not? What is an example of the most intense ride you would go on?
- Does mercy come naturally to you? Why or why not?

## Going Deeper Into the Message

*God is merciful.*

### **Read Micah 7:18–19; Jonah 1:1–17**

Micah 7:18–19 (NIV) Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.

\*To “tread” and “hurl” our sins is the language that recalls the Exodus. When the Egyptians pursued the Israelites to try to re-enslave them, God collapsed the sea over them. This is what God does to our sin as our sin tries to re-enslave us!

For the ancient Israelites, the bottom of the ocean was Sheol, the realm of the dead. So for God to throw their sins into the depths of the ocean (verse 19) was to send them to Sheol—to “kill” the very sins that formerly had killed them. What a satisfying reversal! The mercy God offers to

you in Christ takes your track record of sin (past, present, and future) and buries it in the deepest part of the sea—where dead things go and don't come back!

One way that our God is not like any other so-called god (Mic. 7:18) is because of his generous mercy. In fact, Scripture says that God is “rich in mercy” (Eph. 2:4). So next time you think you are exhausting the mercy of God, just remember that he has an abounding and rich supply of it!

Charles Spurgeon reminds us: “God’s mercy is so great, that you may sooner drain the sea of its water or deprive the sun of his light, or make space too narrow, than diminish the great mercy of God.”

### **Point 1 – God’s mercy is boundless toward me...**

As you read the story of Jonah, you quickly realize that this whole book is about mercy. Jonah is shown mercy when he runs away from God’s call for him and yet God redeems him and gives him another chance.

### **God’s mercy is boundless toward me ... and also toward my enemies.**

And here is where we get hung up... because we desire mercy for ourselves, but often don't think *that person* deserves mercy. And you know what? We are usually right. *That person* does not deserve mercy. And yet, neither do you. None of us deserve mercy because mercy is not a deserved right. And that is what makes mercy, *mercy*.

God's Mercy is Boundless: Not just towards Jonah, but also towards the people of Nineveh. Despite their reputation as a sinful and merciless city, God sends Jonah to warn them about what's to come, giving them a chance to repent and change their ways. God's mercy isn't exclusive, but is instead available to all who seek it, regardless of their past mistakes.

Jonah is one of the oddest prophets in the Bible for three reasons. He reluctantly shared God’s Word. He was the only prophet whose message was heeded by his audience! And he was successful in bringing the Ninevites to repentance, despite hoping they would be obliterated by God. Not to mention, he got thrown into the ocean, swallowed by a fish, and lived to tell the tale!

Before we judge Jonah too harshly, let’s give him some slack. Was he wrong in his actions? Absolutely! But context helps explain his motivations. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, the world superpower that threatened the safety and well-being of Israel. On top of that, they were the most pagan of pagans. They worshipped false gods and were known for their brutality toward conquered peoples, especially for how they mistreated women. They epitomized sin and evil. You and I would probably hate Nineveh too. And that’s why we need this message just as much as Jonah did.

We are asked to not only harbor the message of mercy for ourselves but to be harbingers of it as we bring it to the people and places that need God's mercy most!

### Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- How are you at receiving God's mercy? What role does his mercy play in your ongoing life as you walk with him?
- How does an understanding of Nineveh's wickedness increase your understanding of God's mercy?
- How does the story of Jonah speak to you as you wrestle with God's mercy being extended to our enemies? What are you processing through it?

*God is merciful.*

**Read Jonah 3:5–10; 2 Peter 3:9; Romans 2:4**

#### **Point 2 – God's mercy leads us to repentance.**

The main reason for God to show mercy to us, beyond the fact that it is who He is to be merciful, is to bring us to a place of repentance. He gives us mercy while we are in the height of our sinfulness. I think this is what bothered Jonah so much about being sent to preach to the people of Nineveh. They were notorious for being brutal to those they conquered. And God wanted Jonah to go to them in the midst of this behavior and tell them to repent. That would be a hard task for anyone.

Jonah was grateful for God's mercy, but he didn't want God's mercy to be preached to Nineveh because he knew that even they would repent if shown mercy. Jonah didn't want them to get mercy because they did not give mercy. But that's not how God works. He doesn't wait for us to feel bad about what we've done and then give us mercy. He doesn't wait for us to show mercy to others and then show us mercy. He is merciful toward us while we are being awful and unlovable.

When we realize that God is loving us and desiring to be with us at our most undesirable, it creates in us a longing to repent and turn to Him, to be with Him. This is what God wants from us. He wants us to share that experience with others. He wants us to show mercy to those who are in rebellion to Him. He wants us to be His hands of mercy to those around us. Luke 6:36 says, "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

**Bottom Line:** “It’s not that God makes *light* of our sin; he just makes *more* of his mercy. God is far more willing to give mercy than humans are willing to ask for it.” – *Flash Theology*, 125.

### Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- What do you think of Jonah’s message to Nineveh? Do you think he was genuine in delivering the message or do you think he short-circuited the message so as to not give hope? Why or why not?
- Read the “bottom line” again (above). What are your thoughts on this?
- Who in your life needs you to be a harbinger of God’s mercy to them? What can you do to resemble God’s merciful heart in a way that speaks to them? Are you waiting for them to deserve God’s mercy?

### —FINAL CHALLENGE QUESTIONS—

How are you going to think or live differently in light of what you have read, heard, and discussed this week?

How does this week’s message shape or nurture your relationship with God?

BONUS: For those of you with kids or around kids: What is one truth from this message that you can share with your kids in a way that they would relate to or understand?