

Uncaged: Living in the Freedom of Grace

Releasing Bitterness (April 25th, 2021)

PREPARATION

- Familiarize yourself with this Study Guide.
- You can watch the sermon online [HERE](#).
- Spend some time in prayer before your group gathers.
- You **always** have the option to use some or all the questions and/or prepare your own questions.

Welcome: *Icebreaker* – Can you think of a time where God called you to one thing and you ran away from it?

Study Tip: Scholars debate whether the book of Jonah is meant to be taken as a literal history of the prophet Jonah or a parable that includes his likeness. Regardless, we do have evidence that Jonah (*dove*) son of Amittai (*truth*) served as an actual prophet to King Jeroboam II in the northern kingdom of Israel (2 Kgs. 14:25). While both kingdoms were struggling to completely follow YHWH during his prophetic career, we read of a territorial expansion and border restoration in Israel as well as king Amaziah who was doing what was good in the eyes of the Lord in Judah. Judah even experienced the restoration of some cities that were important conquests dating back to kings David (Damascus 2 Sam. 8:6) and Solomon (Hamoth 1 Chron. 8:1-3). As you will see in the video, Jonah prophesies favorably toward Jeroboam II while Amos (Am. 2:6-3:15) will prophesy negatively. *Why is this the case?* Scholars speculate that historical Jonah may have been influenced by nationalistic feelings. With Israel expanding, Judah changing for the better, and favorable prophets at a premium, perhaps the *dove* son of *truth* would have seen a perfect opportunity to insert himself into the beginnings of a national revival! Everyone was going to remember Jonah as the next great prophet of Israel...only he was called to go to Nineveh, the great “city of blood, full of lies, full of plunder, never without victims (Nah. 3:1)”, one of the greatest traditional enemies of Israel (Gen. 10:11-12), the city that impaled the heads of those it defeated! ***Feel the bitterness now?***



What's Going on This Week

This week, Pastor Danny led us into the third week of our new series titled *Uncaged: Living in the Freedom of Grace*. Pastor Danny brought our attention to *Jonah 3:10-4:11* in order to highlight the bitterness of Jonah towards the people of Nineveh and his mission to them. As you read this chapter of Jonah, pay attention to the emotional roller coaster that exposes Jonah's bitterness and how God attempts to “clean out the cut” of bitterness. As you seek to apply these scriptures in your life, expose the splinters of judgment that have caused deep wounds in your life and walk with God through the cleansing process outlined in the sermon!

“Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the door of resentment and the handcuffs of hatred. It is a power that breaks the chains of bitterness and the shackles of selfishness.” – Corrie Ten Boom

GROUP MEETING (60 – 90 minutes)

*******(NEW) Opening Time of Worship******* (10 – 15 minutes)

Take a moment with your group and prepare your hearts as you enter into the presence of God for this meeting.

Option 1: Worship Music Have someone share their favorite worship song. Find it online, play it, and sing along! Have them explain why the lyrics mean so much to them!	Option 2: Scripture Reflection <i>Luke 23:26-43</i> Reflect on this infamous moment on the cross and think about all of the occasions Jesus had to be bitter towards others	Option 3: Video Meditation <u>Corrie Ten Boom Forgiveness</u>
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Objective #1: Explore the concepts of judgment and bitterness in your life (15 – 25 minutes)

Primary Texts: Jonah 1:1 - 4:11 – In his sermon, Pastor Danny uses the story of Jonah to connect the concept of bitterness to judgment (the determination that some people are less deserving of God’s mercy than you are). He argues that Jonah wants to see Nineveh judged for the sins they have committed which causes him to view the Ninevites as “those people” who fall beyond God’s mercy. **In terms of *bitterness*, what is something that was said in the sermon or that you read in these passages that stood out to you? If *judgment* is the “splinter” that causes *bitterness* “infection” of the soul, what are some of the reasons you believe we still gravitate towards judgment?**
Prayer Tip: As we prod into the splinter and infection areas, pay attention to any areas that may cause pain.

Objective #2: Discover how God may be actively cleansing out your bitterness wound (15 – 25 minutes)

Primary Texts: Jonah 3:10 – 4:11 – Pastor Danny focusses on the conclusion of the Jonah story to highlight the way God cleanses us from bitterness. As God tries to remove the splinter, he asks Jonah (1) can you let go of your bitterness and hand judgment to God? / As God starts digging deeper into the wound, he asks Jonah (2) can you agree that the bitterness you are harboring is damaging your life? / Finally, as God calls Jonah out, he asks (3) will you let God teach you how to love people like He does? **Which one of these questions is the most convicting for you in this season and why?**
Prayer Tip: As they explain which question resonates in their soul, pray that each member would step into the cleansing process as they learn how to forgive!

*******(NEW) Closing Time of Prayer******* (20 – 25 minutes)

In light of this week’s discussion, here are some different ways that your group can pray!

- Pray for any painful wounds that have been uncovered and exposed in this series.
- Pray for the Holy Spirit would begin the bitterness cleansing process in each group member.
- Pray for any individual prayer request that comes up in your group.
- Pray for the entire group and how they might be able to contribute to future group meetings.
- Pray for an interaction with someone who you can invite into your next group meeting!

In 2 weeks, we invite your entire group to participate in our **PRAYFAST** on the National Day of Prayer (Thursday 5/6 from 8:00 am – 5:00 pm @ the top of each hour)

THROUGHOUT THE WEEK

-**Stay up to date with Coronavirus Ministry Opportunities:** Help us out by pointing the people in your Community Group to [3Crosses.org/coronavirus](https://3crosses.org/coronavirus) . If you or anyone in your group is looking to serve food in our pantry, access spiritual care, or seek financial assistance, you can find all you need at [3Crosses.org/neighborhood](https://3crosses.org/neighborhood)

-**Read Ahead: Psalm 51** – For the first three weeks of this series, we’ve looked at ourselves as those who have been sinned against. This week, we look at forgiveness from the other angle: What happens when we are the perpetrators? Through the lens of Psalm 51, we will learn that our sin is ultimately against God alone and so our journey of forgiveness should begin between us and Him

-**Suggested Resources:** Want to dive deeper into this week’s topic? Here are some recommended resources

- [The Prodigal Prophet \(Book\) by Tim Keller](#)

-**Community Groups 2021:** For more information about joining a group, leading a group, or general inquiries, contact AJ at avanegas@3crosses.org