

## Discussion Starters

Jonah's story is a story of God's mercy, first to the mariners, then to Jonah, and finally on sinful Nineveh. It is not a story of God punishing people who do wrong, but a story of God's great love and mercy toward His own and toward the lost. It is not a story of punishment.

Jonah is a case of God disciplining a disobedient prophet. Sometimes when we begin to talk about God's disciplines and chastisements many believers get nervous. Too many times we misinterpret God's goodness that leads us to repentance as God's punishment. God could have taken Jonah's life away in answer to his rebellion and request to die. But He didn't. Jonah's story is a story of God's mercy, first to the mariners, then to Jonah, and finally on sinful Nineveh.

It is often the case that the **insecure introvert** tends to feel guilty all the time, whether he has done something wrong, or whether he is innocent. He feels his own heart-sin very deeply and therefore believes he deserves to be punished. He interprets every bad thing that happens a God's chastisement.

On the other hand there are people who feel positive about themselves. They are usually the **confident extroverts**. They too feel they are sinners but they readily see God as forgiving and loving. Therefore they do not carry about a load of self-accusation and guilt. He tends to live happy and free from feeling accused or punished when bad things happen.

1. Which person are you? Are you secure or insecure in the Father's love?
2. How do you know when God is chastising you? Does he ever? When? How? Why?
3. How do we know when a harsh life event is God's chastisement and when it is not?
4. Do bad things happen to good people, or only to bad people?

**Psalms 103:13** "Like as a father pities his children, so the LORD pities them that fear him."

**Hebrews 12:5-11** *And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, 6 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." 7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? 8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. 9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! 10 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*

## Discussion Study Questions

1. Discuss the use of the word "Sheol" in Jonah's prayer. What do you think? Did he die, or was he near death in the belly of the fish?
2. What happens when a believer dies? Where does he go? What does he feel? Can you use any Scripture to support what you think?
3. Using the Word Study Guides (found online) discuss your findings on the meaning of the words such as Sheol, corruption, bars of the earth, etc. ([www.MinistryToday.org](http://www.MinistryToday.org))