



Small Group Guide | Session 4

Alpha Prayer Points

Praise God! We prayed for God's light and love to shine through the Christians serving with Alpha; one participant commented that he has been "shocked" by how "kind and understanding" the community has been—something he doesn't experience often in this world. Please continue to pray that participants would see the love of God flowing through the Christians serving and attribute that love to God and His goodness.

Pray for God to be working in the hearts of participants. As we have prayed for God to draw more people to Alpha, this has become FPC's largest round yet. Seven participants even came to FPC last Sunday.

Pray for spiritual protection for those who are participating in and serving with Alpha. People experience spiritual opposition during the course, as our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (see Eph. 6:12). Pray for God to cover and protect them so that they might encounter His love and His power.

HOW DID IT GO?

- When you asked God where you were putting your trust in something other than Him and His grace, what did He show you? How did you respond?
- Jonah's sin affected his relationship with God and his relationship with those around him who were the sailors and other passengers on the boat. How has sin impacted your relationship with God and your relationship with others?

- Pastor Emmanuel preached in his April 30 sermon that identity is something we receive from God—and not something we achieve on our own. How does being a child of God (our central identity as Christians) impact your other identities such as career, relationships, personality?

Read aloud the passages for this week: **Jonah 1:11-17.**

HEAD | Observe the text and the author's main points.

1. What resolution does Jonah offer to the mariners after he admits to being the cause of the storm in verse 12?
2. How do the mariners initially respond to Jonah's suggestion in verse 13?
3. Why are the mariners reluctant to throw Jonah overboard in verse 14?
4. How do they respond after the sea calms? Compare this to their reaction in verse 5.

HEART | Envision how the text—when applied—might transform your inner life in terms of your thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors.

1. Jonah's resolution to the storm does not take him to Nineveh. When have you found yourself disobeying God and responding with a different form of disobedience?
2. The pagan mariners first sought any god before seeking the one true God. In what ways do you pursue something other than God in a time of stress or crisis? What reminds you to turn to Him?
3. The sudden calming of the storm leads the mariners to make vows and sacrifice. Are you more likely to reach out to God when there is a storm, as opposed to when all is going smoothly? What practices could make your faith more consistent even when the seas are calm?

HANDS | Apply the text by moving from inward reflection to outward action looking for ways to live the text out in our lives to serve others.

Reaching Upwards | Growing in Your Relationship with God

- Compare and contrast how Jonah has acted with how you think you'd act. Pray over areas of your life where you feel you run—or would be tempted to run—from God's call. Pray that you would respond in loving obedience.
- While we do not necessarily worship a number of deities, we are tempted to idolize and find rescue in worldly things. What worldly things are you tempted to turn into idols? Pray against these idols and ask God to help you put them in their proper place.

Reaching Outward | Investing in Your Neighbors

- In times of stress and anxiety, people tend to open up to spiritual things and the comfort Jesus provides. Who in your midst would benefit from you sharing God's peace with them this week?

- How can you be available to your neighbors before a storm comes? What would it look like if they knew they could reach you before something happens to provide encouragement, support, and prayer?

Reaching Beyond

- First Presbyterian Church of Houston is situated in an area where people are facing storms from poverty, homelessness, health crises, and more. When could your small groups volunteer together with a partner ministry, such as Main Street Ministries, the Nehemiah Center, or elsewhere, to support God's work in calming the storm in our city? See <https://fpchouston.org/upcoming-opportunities/> for opportunities to serve our city.
- To learn more about different ministry partners, consider joining one of the upcoming events:
 - Make It Possible: A Night with Restoring Justice | May 11th 6:30 - 9 PM
 - Local Mission Partner Field Trip: The Landing | May 25th 4 - 5 PM
 - If you would like to attend, please RSVP to Kennedy Hunter at khunter@fpchouston.org.

For more information about either ministry partner event, please reach out to FPC Missions Director Mary-Floye Federer, mffederer@fpchouston.org.