



Small Group Guide | Session 8

Alpha Prayer Points

Praise God for the way FPC has embraced praying for Alpha. We've seen so many prayer requests answered and encouraging signs throughout the course! The number of people who kept coming back week after week was higher than usual (attrition can be high) and it's been exciting to feel momentum growing in prayer throughout the church body.

Pray that as Alpha concluded on June 1st, the participants would want to get connected to FPC and to continue their spiritual journey—and that we as a church would create space for them in our lives.

Pray for God to continue to meet the real and honest prayer requests that people shared in the Holy Spirit weekend. Praise God that they were open to share these needs, and thank Him in anticipation for the way He will continue to reveal Himself to them.

HOW DID IT GO?

- What appropriate ways have you found to express anger to God? How have the psalms (such as Psalms 5, 40, 52, 69, 94, and 143) been a guide for you?
- In his sermon on May 28, Pastor Curtis said that when he has disagreements with a person, he reminds himself that the person with whom he disagrees is made in God's image and is a person whom God loves and for whom God died. How does this perspective help you with persons with whom you have challenges?

Read aloud the passages for this week: **Jonah 4:5-11**.

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

1. In Verse 5 rather than leaving Nineveh, Jonah withdraws to a place east of Nineveh where he waits to “see what would happen to the city.” What do you think Jonah was expecting to happen?
2. In Verses 6, 7, and 8, God “appoints” (in some translations “provides”) first a plant, then a worm, and then finally a scorching east wind. The word here translated “appoints” is the same as the one used in 1:17 about the fish. The text could have said, “a plant grew up,” or, “a worm appeared.” Why is it important that the fish, plant, and worm are described as having been appointed or provided by God?
3. In verses 9-11, God draws a painful comparison for Jonah between his anger over the death of a plant and his seeming lack of concern about the possible deaths of 120,000 people created in God's image. The book ends abruptly with a question from God that is not answered by Jonah. If he had answered it, what do you think Jonah's answer would have been? Does Jonah ever finally “get it”?

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

1. One of the most familiar quotations from the Book of Job is this extraordinary statement of faith in the face of calamity: “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21 KJV). If anyone had the right to be angry at God, it was Job. Contrast his response to that of Jonah in this chapter. Even God seems perplexed, asking Jonah twice if he has any right to be angry (vv. 4, 9.) Did Jonah have a right to be angry? Describe a time when you were angry at God, whether that anger was justified, and how you handled it.
2. Think of times in your life when God provided for you. Did He provide in exactly the way you expected or wanted? Were your responses different based on whether His provision was in accordance with your desires and expectations or not?
3. Discuss whether there is a single, consistent response that God wants from us when He provides for us.

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

- In his book *The Prodigal Prophet*, Keller describes God's treatment of Jonah in this passage as “spiritual surgery on the idols of Jonah's heart” (p. 221). Jonah's idols, Keller says, were his pride about Israel's superiority as God's chosen race and his own self-righteousness. What are some of the things that are important to you but may not be so important to God? Ask God to help you see those things for the idols that they are and to “seek first God's Kingdom and his righteousness” (Matt. 6:33).
- This is the conclusion of our study of Jonah. What will you take away from this study? How has it impacted your life? What steps will you take to make this part of your journey with Christ?

Reaching Outward | Investing in Your Neighbors

- God states that He “takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their evil ways and live” (Ezek. 11:11). In contrast, Jonah wants God to destroy Nineveh and kill its inhabitants, whom he considers enemies of Israel. What conclusions can we draw from this study in Jonah about how we are to respond to people we encounter who reject or may be hostile to our faith?
- This week is FPH Vacation Bible School which serves our youngest neighbors. Pray for those who are serving and for the children attending to sense the love of God as they learn more about Him. VBS is June 5-9 from 9am-noon.

Reaching Beyond

- In “The Prodigal Prophet,” Keller describes the Book of Jonah as a “shot across the bow” for Christians who fail to show compassion and love for people who are not like them (pp. 224-225). Keller writes: “God asks, how can we look at anyone—even those with deeply opposing beliefs and practices—with no compassion?” We are blessed to be part of a large, well-resourced church with connections in many ministries whose purpose is to carry the gospel to people who are “not like us.” Pray about a role that God may have for you in such a ministry, and then reach out to the staff and pastors about how to get plugged in. Here are some possibilities:
 - Alpha concluded on June 1. Pray about starting a summer small group for people who recently completed ALPHA.. They need a safe space to continue to learn about God and ask questions, get integrated into community, and ultimately start studying the Bible in an accessible way. Contact Pastor Caitlin at crhodes@fpchouston.org to learn about how to be equipped and resourced to lead a group.
 - Explore opportunities with FPC ministry partners by joining one of these upcoming events:
 - The Landing | [Food For Freedom](#) - Sun June 11 | 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM
Join for a family-friendly food festival, indulging in curated bites and cocktails from the best food and drink vendors in Houston! Every bite and sip will contribute to empowering survivors of human trafficking.
 - Local Mission Partner Field Trip: The Forge for Families
Thurs June 22 | 12:00 noon

For more information about either event, please reach out to FPC Missions Director Mary-Floye Federer, mffederer@fpchouston.org. To RSVP, email Missions Coordinator Kennedy Hunter at khunter@fpchouston.org.