

READING PLAN WEEK 4 for **The Epic of Eden – Jonah**

Word from the Author: “In the very first verses of Jonah, we read that God commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh to tell his enemies about his God. In his fear and his hatred of the Assyrians, Jonah instead ran the other way. It is likely you and I might have responded in exactly the same way. But, built into Jonah’s response, is the thought, in some small part of his soul, that Yahweh’s authority was limited to the land of Israel. Frankly, this is what any of his neighboring pagan cultures would think. Ultimately, Jonah knew better than to think that Yahweh’s authority only extended to the borders of Israel. But when he was afraid, really afraid, he defaulted to the worldview of the surrounding culture instead of his faith. That is something we need to think about when we are afraid, really afraid.”

Day #1: Ready Jonah 1:3. The countries and people of the Fertile Crescent dealt a brisk trade to the farthest reaches of their known world. A look at any of the following references will give a glimpse of the kinds of cargo which may have been transported on the Tarshish-bound ship Jonah boarded: **1 Kings 22:48, 2 Chronicles 9:21, Ezekiel 27:12, 18-19 Jeremiah 10:9.** The rough crews and captains sailing these ships were the sorts of people who were little concerned with the “why’s” of a traveler seeking passage on their vessels. It is we who are concerned with the motivation of Jonah’s fleeing – for it brings the matter of following or running from God’s directive home to us all. Have you ever tried to avoid doing something God was clearly telling you to do?

Day #2: Read Jonah 1:4-6. In these verses, we are particularly interested in the verb “to hurl,” as all the characters hurl something somewhere. Reflect on the actions of the sailors and the captain and the belief system that stands behind their activities. This is a focused look at polytheism in action (“polytheism” is the worship of many gods, as opposed to the worship of ONE God, or “monotheism”). Give some thought today to the possibility that these heathen characters were acting more ethically than Jonah, doing everything in their power to keep him alive, while he offered no similar concern for them.

Day #3: Read Jonah 1:7-10. Notice all the questions the men asked Jonah in verse 8. Note that in verse 9, Jonah does not answer all their questions. What does Jonah say about himself? What does he say about Yahweh? In verse 10, what was the effect on the men? What was it about Jonah’s answer that caused this extreme reaction? Isn’t it curious that the heathen men of the crew seemed more impressed with Yahweh’s titles and domain than Jonah? Their reaction to Yahweh seems more raw and urgent than Jonah’s. Why do you think this might be so?

This week’s reflection question: Isn’t it striking that the crew of the ship seems to take the events of the traumatic voyage more personally than Jonah, when, in fact, it is a very personally focused experience in the eyes of Yahweh? Do you feel we can also be blind to things which may be happening in our own lives, but which God intends (for whatever purpose) to be a matter of personal encounter with Him?

