



RELENTLESS

Thriving ON MISSION

INTRODUCTION

In every generation, disciples of Jesus consistently point to their time in the Scripture and in prayer as a centerpiece of their spiritual growth. So, kudos to you for making Biblical devotions a priority for 2021! Our theme for the entire year is thriving with God. on mission. together.

After putting 2020 to bed :), a year of upheaval, forced pauses, and uncertainty, how important it will be to reflect intentionally on what it means to thrive and not just survive. God still has great things in store for each of us individually and as a church family, as we continue to embrace His mission where we live, work, and play. Over the course of 2021 we will walk through ten different series each with a slightly nuanced take on this theme of “thriving.”

“What do you picture, when you picture God?” That is a simple, yet compelling question to ask a neighbor or a friend. Most people have developed caricatures of God; these are made-up descriptions formed through their own upbringing, stories told to them, and their own life experiences. But who is God, really? For disciples of Jesus, He is the three-in-one God of the Bible. And this God has revealed Himself as the Holy Spirit who relentlessly pursues men, women, and children from all nations in order to have mercy on them through King Jesus, drawing them into a forever-relationship with Him as their loving Father. Yet humans, in our sinful commitment to self, intentionally run away from God and reject His pursuit. Or, even as we receive His pursuit and come to know Him as Father, we often shy away from His missional call to be an intentional part of His pursuit of others through us. A man named Jonah struggled with this very thing. He thought he could avoid mission; He thought he could avoid God. God had other plans. Let’s discover together the RELENTLESS pursuit of God! His heart for us. His pursuit through us.

HOW TO USE YOUR JOURNAL

The journal begins with suggestions for “Tangible Steps” to help us be “doers” of the Word and not hearers only (James 1:22). Read through the list and ask God which He might have you do to grow in love for those who are “outside the faith but inside your reach,” a major theme of the book of Jonah. It is followed by a list of resources to help you be more prepared to engage thoughtful, respectful, spiritual conversation with people who don’t know Jesus. Then make your way through the four-week journal to prepare your heart and mind for the message each Sunday on campus or online.

TAKE A TANGIBLE STEP

- **Prayer Walk 1** – Go somewhere that you visit often (your local grocery store, walk around your neighborhood, etc.) and do nothing but pray for every person you see, asking God to draw them to Himself, that they would know God’s amazing grace and abundant life with Him! You can do this alone, or better yet, take a friend.
- **Prayer Walk 2** – Go to a place you know there will be people whom you struggle to love (the local headquarters of a “rival” political party, an organization that you strongly disagree with, etc.), and pray for the people there. Ask God’s greatest blessings on their life: His mercy, His presence, His love poured out over them, for their eternal joy, and for God’s glory. Ask Him to give you His heart for them!
- **Join the “Good Neighboring Initiative”** – Reach out to Pastor Gary to learn more about this initiative here at Hope Church: gangstadt@hopemason.org.
- **Get Equipped** – What equipping do you most need to be an effective witness of the gospel? Grab a friend and seek out that equipping together. (See Resources page.)
- **Take the “Perspectives” Class** – This is an amazing 15-week class on God’s heart for the world. Guest speakers each week are missionaries who have served in various parts of the world. Find out more information here: www.perspectives.org
- **Mend a Fence** – Has a relationship in your life been damaged by a tense or even aggressive conversation about faith? Reach out to that person and say something like, “I’ve been thinking about our conversation and I regret some of the things I said, or how I said them. Would you be willing to talk about that with me?” If they’re willing, own your responsibility for the conversation going badly, ask their forgiveness, and express your desire to show honor and respect to them, even in your disagreements.

- **Websites:**

- **GodSpace** – www.godsgps.com – Doug Pollock’s website is a great resource. Be sure to check out the short “Faith Adventure Challenge” videos under the “Resources” tab.
- **RightNow Media.** There are a number of great equipping resources here, including series’ from Tim Keller, William Lane Craig, RC Sproul, Lee Strobel, and more. Just search “Apologetics” or “Evangelism.”
- **Art of Neighboring** – www.artofneighboring.com. How to love our non-Christian neighbors well.
- **Q Place** – www.qplace.com – Ideas for starting a “spiritual conversation group” with friends and neighbors, with content suggestions.
- **CS Lewis Institute** – www.cslewisinstitute.org – Great resource for apologetics.
- **Stand to Reason** – www.str.org – Another great resource for apologetics.

- **Books:**

- **God Space** by Doug Pollock
- **The Reason for God** by Tim Keller
- **The Art of Neighboring** by Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon
- **The Gospel Comes With a House Key** by Rosaria Butterfield

WEEK 1: JULY 5-9 - JONAH 1



Monday

Receive Gospel Grace

Read Jonah 1. What are multiple ways that we see the grace of God at work in this chapter? Write them below, then thank God for His grace evidenced here in Jonah 1...and towards you!



Tuesday

Thriving with God

Read Jonah 1. What do we learn about God from His words and actions in this chapter?

What do we learn about Jonah from his words and actions in this chapter?

Contrast the mariners' heart toward Jonah and Jonah's heart towards the Ninevites. How do they compare? What is striking about that?



Wednesday

Thriving with God

Read Jonah 1. Twice in this chapter, the phrase is used that Jonah “went away from the presence of the Lord.” In what ways might you be avoiding the presence of the Lord for fear of what He might ask of you? On a “Notes” page at the end of this journal, write a prayer telling God that you’re willing to do whatever He would have you do...or ask Him to help make your heart willing.



Thursday

Thriving Together

Read Jonah 1. Is there a brother or sister in Christ that you see “going away from the presence of the Lord”? Ask God to bring someone to mind, then pray for them, that God would pursue them and bring them back. Perhaps reach out to them, invite them to get together, and share your concern with them.



Friday

Thriving on Mission

Read Jonah 1. God wasn’t just pursuing the Ninevites...He was pursuing Jonah’s heart! How does God want to grow your heart for people “outside the faith but inside your reach”? On a “Notes” page in the back of this journal, write a message from God to you, something you imagine God wants to say to you about this. What step of faith is He calling you to take?

Message Notes: July 11

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Monday

Receive Gospel Grace

Read Jonah 2. Where do you see God's grace in Jonah's prayer? Thank God for His grace toward Jonah...and you!



Tuesday

Thriving with God

Read Jonah 2. List below the things that Jonah said God did for him in this chapter. What are ways God has done the same for you?

Jonah says it was the Lord that cast him into the deep (v. 3), when it was Jonah who asked the mariners to throw him into the sea. What was God's part in Jonah being cast into the sea, what was Jonah's, and what does that teach us?

For further reflection: The storm...and the rescue...is an example of the merciful discipline of our Heavenly Father. Read Hebrews 12:1-11. What does that passage teach about God's discipline? Write your thoughts on a "Notes" page at the end of this journal.



Wednesday

Thriving with God

Read Jonah 2. Summarize Jonah's prayer in 10 words or less. What is the overall tone of Jonah's prayer? Considering his circumstance, how can we learn from him here?



Thursday

Thriving Together

Read Jonah 2. Who is a brother or sister in Christ who is "in distress" right now, going through a really challenging time? Pray that they would turn to the Lord, that their hearts would be filled with thanksgiving, and that God would deliver them. Consider sending them a text or note telling them that you're praying for them.



Friday

Thriving on Mission

Read Jonah 2. In verse 8, Jonah prays, "Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love." Think of someone who is "outside the faith but inside your reach." Write them a text message or note (you may or may not send it), telling them where they appear to be turning for to receive joy or satisfaction in life, and then urging them to turn from those things to find steadfast love in God! Pray about whether you should send the note or not.

Message Notes: July 18

WEEK 3: JULY 19-23 - JONAH 3



Monday

Receive Gospel Grace

Read Jonah 3. Then look at the contrast between Jonah 1:1-3 and Jonah 3:1-3. This is repentance...not merely confessing sin but turning away from it. What sin might the Lord be calling you to turn away from right now? What steps do you need to take to turn from it? Write it below...and don't forget to receive His grace over you in a new way!



Tuesday

Thriving with God

Read Jonah 3, putting yourself in the Ninevites' shoes. How might you have responded? List below all the ways they did respond.

How do you feel about your sin? Would you say you grieve like the people of Nineveh? Is it right to? What do you think is a right response to your sin? When was the last time you did that?



Wednesday

Thriving with God

Read Jonah 3. Then read Matthew 12:38-41. What does Jesus teach here?



Thursday

Thriving Together

Read Jonah 3, putting yourself in Jonah's shoes. How would you feel about this assignment? Read Matthew 28:18-20. How do you feel about that assignment? Write your thoughts below, then reach out to a brother or sister in Christ and ask them to pray that you would have courage to share the gospel with people who don't know Jesus.



Friday

Thriving on Mission

Read Jonah 3. Are there any individuals or groups of people you have written off as "evil" or "beyond hope"? One key message of the book of Jonah is that we should never assume anyone is beyond repentance and receiving God's grace! Repent of your negative attitudes towards those people and ask God to give you His heart for them! Then pray for them!

Message Notes: July 25

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Monday

Receive Gospel Grace

Read Jonah 4. List below the qualities that Jonah says are true of God. Beside each, write a sentence thanking and praising God for that quality that is in Him.



Tuesday

Thriving with God

Read Jonah 4. In addition to what you wrote yesterday, what does this passage teach us about God's character, activity, and heart?

How do God's interactions with Jonah in this chapter differ from God's engagement with Jonah in chapter 1? What do these two different interactions teach us about God?



Wednesday

Thriving with God

Read Jonah 4. In ten words or less, what lesson is God trying to teach Jonah in this chapter? How might you need to hear this lesson as well?



Thursday

Thriving Together

Read Jonah 4. On a "Notes" page at the end of this journal, write a note to Jonah as if he were a friend of yours. What would you tell him? Can you think of a brother or sister in Christ who may need to hear that? If so, pray about sharing it with them.



Friday

Thriving on Mission

Read Jonah 4. Jonah cared more about the plant (his comfort) than he did the people of Nineveh. On a "Notes" page at the end of this journal, confess to God any ways you are more concerned about your comfort than for people's lives with Jesus...and ask Him to change your heart. Write a next step you sense God calling you to take!

Message Notes: August 1

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