

# **Growth Group Questions**

*17<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost, September 24, 2023*

## **Introduction**

Our new worship series looks at several of the parables Jesus used to teach some important spiritual truths. Share with the group what your favorite parable is and why.

## **Into the Word** – Jonah 3:10-4:11

1. Our text today finds the prophet Jonah outside of the Babylonian city of Nineveh, the center of Israel's foreign enemy. Review with each other how Jonah got to this point.
2. Jonah is angry because God was merciful and gracious to the repenting Ninevites. Why would a Christian be tempted to be upset by God's grace?
3. It is said that convicted serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer converted to Christian faith before his death in prison. How do some people fall into Jonah's sin when thinking about this and other deathbed conversions?
4. The people of Nineveh were some of the worst sinners in the world. Why did God not bring destruction on the people of Nineveh? What does that remind us as we seek to share our faith with others?

## **Into the Word** – Romans 9:6-16

5. Verses 6-8 are some of the most important in Scripture to help us combat false doctrines about the earthly nation of Israel and its place in God's plan for the future. Explain the difference between "physical Israel" and "spiritual Israel" and why it's so important to distinguish which one a Bible passage is talking about.

6. Some see the phrase "Jacob I loved but Esau I hated" and consider it God's unfair judgment against Esau. But that judgment is completely fair. (And would be fair on every sinner, including Jacob.) Rather this verse makes the opposite point. How is God's love for Jacob the thing that is really "unfair"?
7. Justice would demand that every sinner be damned forever, yet in mercy God saves some. Imagine you are talking to an unbeliever. Come up with a way to describe God's incredible, unearned mercy.

## **Into the Word** – Matthew 20:1-16

8. Why do the workers complain that the landowner is unfair? Are they right?
9. This parable shows us how God's mercy and grace are greater than his "fairness." Why is that a good thing for sinners like us?
10. Some might see this parable and think it would be better to "have sinful fun" for a whole life and then convert at the last minute. Explain why we are blessed greatly to be Christian for many more years than that.
11. This weekend's texts and service highlighted God's perplexing generosity. Identify some ways that his generosity is reflected in our own. Say a prayer that God would lead us to generosity in all those ways.

## **Closing Prayer**

Loving Father, your love and compassion are beyond our understanding. We praise you for grace and mercy that we could never demand or deserve. Open our eyes to your generous promises, and move us to respond with generous love, generous sharing, and generous service. In Jesus' name, Amen.