

J O N A H

STUDY GUIDE



SUMMIT VIEW CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

Regardless of one's upbringing, almost all individuals are somewhat familiar with the book of Jonah. Whether it's a story they've been told from their children's Bible, or they've seen pop culture references, Jonah is one of the most recognized books of the Bible, and is definitely the best known of the minor prophets. While the book itself is only forty-eight verses, it has demanded a lot of attention. While most remember the story of the great fish, the work of our great God often gets overlooked.

The story of Jonah is a historical record of something that happened. He is the only prophet God sent to a foreign people. But there is far more to the book. Jonah is a satirical comedy. It tells the story of a prophet who fails in every single task given to him. God tells him to go east, and he heads west. God says go preach, and Jonah falls asleep. God saves lost people, and the prophet pouts in response.

AUTHOR

In [2 Kings 14:25](#), "Jonah son of Amittai" appears as someone prophesying during the reign of Jeroboam II (782-753 B.C.). Jonah's ministry as a prophet had already served Israel well, as his message allowed the nation to prosper.

DATE

While the book contains no time stamp within the text, many scholars believe the events that take place in the book of Jonah occurred in the eighth century B.C. Many estimate the book of Jonah was written anywhere between the eighth century and the end of the third century. The book was most likely written between the sixth and fourth centuries based upon the language and descriptions used in the book.

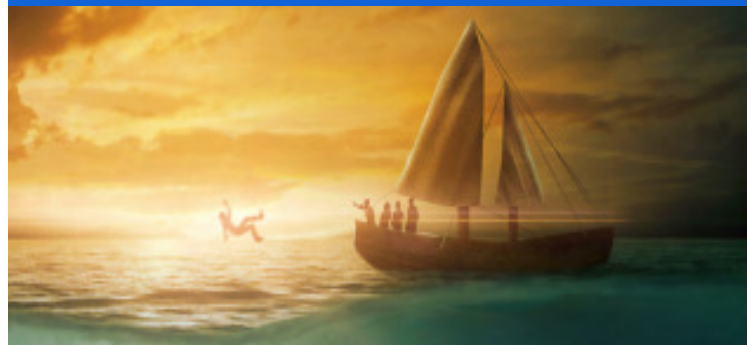
HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide has been specifically prepared with you in mind. This guide will help life groups grow deeper together in relationship with God and one another.

Each week, there are a few conversation starters to help get things rolling, followed by questions for discussion based on the text.

Each week wraps up with personal applications and weekly challenges to help stretch you spiritually.

Obviously, you are more than welcome to pull in other resources, or highlights from the sermon the past week. But our hope is that by participating in this study, you will get a firmer grasp on the Scriptures and a deeper connection with Christ.





NINEVEH

Jonah's call was to head north and east, yet he attempted to head south and west. Jonah was called to go to Nineveh, in the heart of Assyria (modern day Iraq). Instead, he fled to Tarshish, a location potentially in Spain or in the Mediterranean near Italy—the opposite direction!

At the peak of Nineveh's prosperity, it was surrounded by a wall nearly eight miles in length. The people of Nineveh were everything opposite of what God's people held dear. The Ninevites were known for their cruelty, killing men, raping women, ripping babies from wombs, and crushing children's heads against rocks. They often skinned their victims and impaled their bodies, leaving them to die. They often forced parents to watch their children get burned alive before murdering the parents. They also buried victims up to their necks in sand and left them to die of hunger, thirst, or wild animal attack. Entire cities would commit suicide rather than fall into the hands of the Ninevites.



OUTLINE OF JONAH

- I. First Commissioning - Jonah at Sea (Chapters 1-2)
 - a. Jonah's Initial Call (1:1-3)
 - b. Jonah's Rebellion and Subsequent Consequences (1:4-16)
 - c. Jonah's Deliverance (1:17-2:10)
- II. Second Commissioning - Jonah at Nineveh (Chapters 3-4)
 - a. Jonah's Second Call (3:1-3)
 - b. The People of Nineveh's Response (3:4-10)
 - c. The Angry Prophet's Response (4:1-10)

MAJOR THEMES WITHIN JONAH

Grace & Mercy

God's grace and mercy is on full display in the book of Jonah. Within this book, God shows grace and mercy upon the pagan Ninevites, the pagan sailors, and the rebellious prophet Jonah.

Love of "Others"

What's remarkable about the book of Jonah is the great care for others that is on display. It's clear from reading Jonah that God had an interest in expressing this love to others ([Jonah 4:2](#)), yet God's chosen instrument did not share in that sentiment. It appears he couldn't care less about the sailors in the boat or the citizens of Nineveh; he was far more concerned with his own comfort and preferences. Yet the sailors ([1:14](#)), their captain ([1:6](#)), and the king of Nineveh ([3:9](#)) expressed a deep concern, care, and love for others. This serves as a subtle rebuke toward those who know God; challenging them to think outside of themselves.

Mission

When grace, mercy, and love for the outsider meet, we find mission. While Jonah's heart appears small, unmerciful, and uninterested towards unbelievers, we find that God is the opposite! God breaks down walls and leads people out into the world with good news and forgiveness. The book of Jonah highlights the mission of God to reconcile people back to him.

The Sovereignty of God

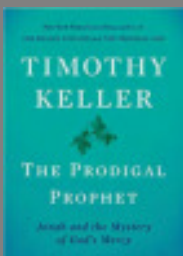
Throughout the book of Jonah, God's supreme authority and control are on display. In Jonah, we see God control the storms ([1:4](#)), the lot ([1:7](#)), the great fish ([1:17](#)), the plant ([4:6](#)), the worm ([4:7](#)), and the winds ([4:8](#)).

PURPOSE OF JONAH

God's grace is much bigger than we can comprehend, and much more expansive than what we are comfortable with.

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

Helpful Article: [The Bible in One Verse](#) by Dustin Messer



Book: [The Prodigal Prophet](#) by Tim Keller



Children's Book: [Man on the Run](#) by Tim Augustyn



The Bible Project - [Jonah](#)



Right Now Media - [The Book of Jonah](#) by Eric Mason



JONAH CHAPTER 1

INTO THE STORM

INTRODUCTION

Jonah is often spoken of as if he was a “hero” in the Bible. But as we will read and study in the coming weeks, Jonah doesn’t actually have many qualities that we would want to emulate. In Chapter 1, we see God call Jonah to go to Nineveh and warn them of coming wrath of God. Instead fulfilling his calling, Jonah runs in rebellion, causing grave consequences not only for himself, but also for others in his presence.



Most of us like what God says, until we are called to action.

– Eric Mason

MAIN IDEA: It is impossible to run from God.

CONVERSATION STARTER

Q. Can you think of a time when God has prompted you to do something difficult or inconvenient? How did you respond?

READ & DISCUSS JONAH CHAPTER 1

Q. What do God’s initial call and Jonah’s response tell us about Jonah? What do they tell us about God? Follow Up: Is there someone in your life that incites the same feeling that Jonah had? If they were to show up at church this Sunday, would their presence make you want to flee? **Follow Up:** What do we reveal about ourselves when we fail to love the “unlovable” in the way God has loved us?

Q. In the midst of the storm, the men on the boat cried out to their “gods.” Instead of calling out to the true and living God, Jonah was fast asleep. When storms hit in your life, do you cry out to God, or attempt to rely on something else? **Follow Up:** Jonah is surrounded by pagans seeking deliverance while he is asleep at the bottom of the boat. Do you see any correlation between Jonah’s actions and yours as you interact with unbelievers on a day-to-day basis?

Q. In verse 9, Jonah describes God as the one who “made the sea and the dry land.” In light of that, his attempt to flee seems quite foolish. Can you think of a time when you acted in a way that now seems foolish, considering what you know about God?

Q. Verse 13 is a key verse in this passage. Amid the storm, the sailors reached a point where they realized they could not save themselves, and turned to the Lord in verse 14. What storms are you facing? What is God breaking apart to wake you up spiritually? Where do you need to cease from trying to save yourself?



JONAH CHAPTER 1

INTO THE STORM (CONT.)

PERSONAL REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

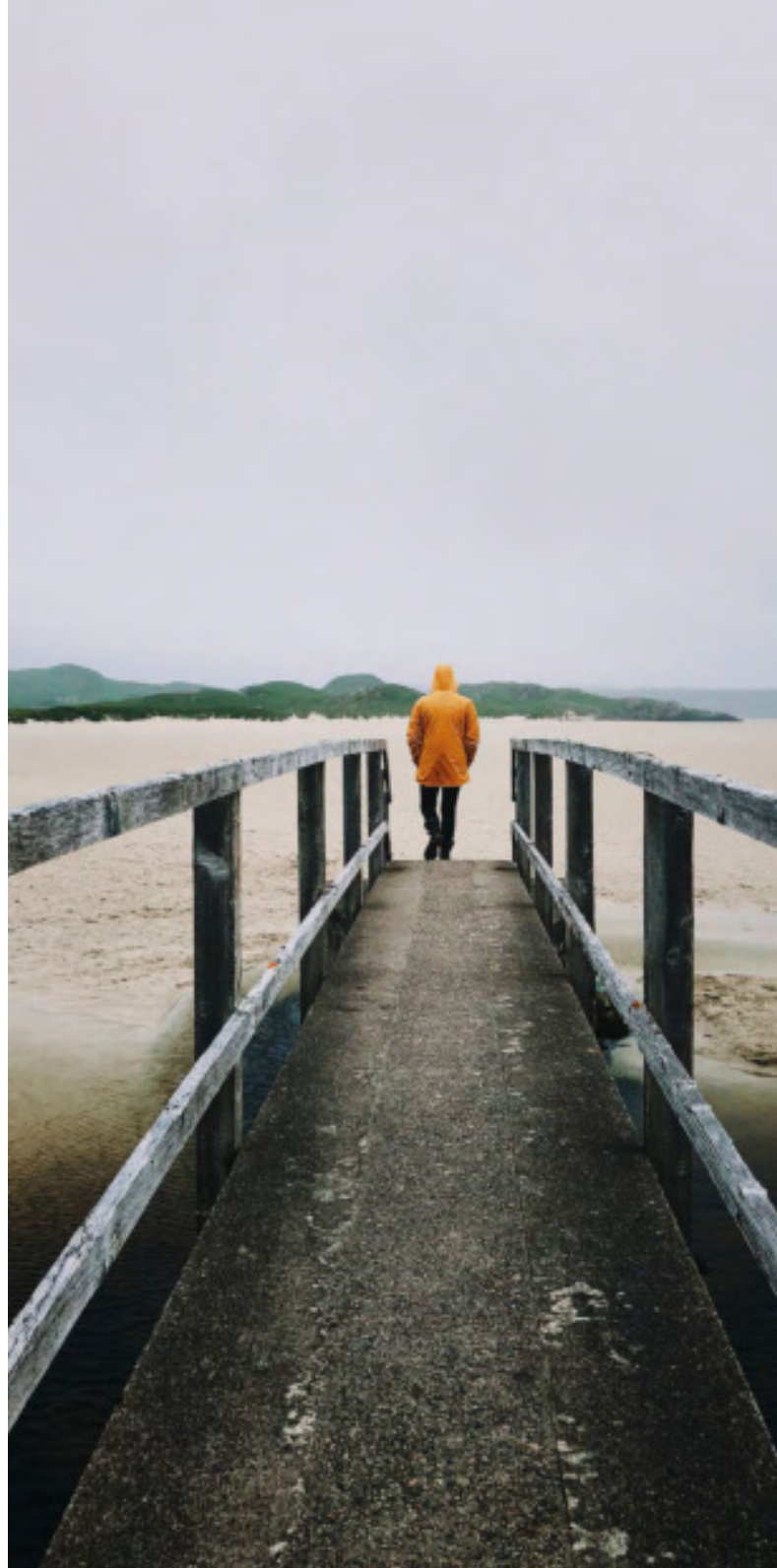
Q. Do you picture God as a God of the nations, or just your own little world? Is God's grace limited to only good people?

Q. How are you running from God today?

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

The instruction from the Lord came to Jonah in a pretty clear and concise way. It wasn't that Jonah didn't understand, or as if God left it muddied for him to misunderstand. His problem was that he simply didn't want to do it. This is often our problem as well.

What would it take for us to commit ourselves this week to follow and obey where God leads us?





JONAH CHAPTER 2

DIVINE INTERRUPTION: GOD SPEAKS IN A FISH

INTRODUCTION

Jonah's rebellion has finally caught up to him and he's starting to realize it. In this passage, Jonah cried out to God from the belly of a great fish. Here we aren't simply reading a newspaper article reporting what happened, we get a glimpse into the human experience and personal struggle.

MAIN IDEA

We are never far from the presence of God. He always hears the prayers of His people.

CONVERSATION STARTER

Q. Can you think of an unpleasant time in your life where God used it to refocus your attention back to him?



Some men are brought to God by gentle means—they are drawn by soft but mighty bonds. Still, a much larger class of persons remains. They must not be handled softly but must be dealt with heavily. The picklock will never open their hearts—there must be the crowbar, or even the battering ram. Some hearts can never be captured for God and for truth except by storm.

– Charles Spurgeon

READ & DISCUSS JONAH CHAPTER 2

- Q. According to verse 2, how does God respond to Jonah's prayer of desperation?
- Q. Why is it so important that we understand both our need for forgiveness (i.e., due to our sinfulness) and the immense breadth of God's love (salvation comes from the Lord)? What happens if you neglect to acknowledge either of these?
- Q. Verse 9 can be viewed as a theme of the entire Bible. Jonah declares, "Salvation belongs to the Lord." What do you think he means by this?
- Q. In this passage, God saves Jonah from an inward struggle before delivering him from external difficulties. Would you rather have God save you from an outward circumstance, or from an internal struggle of sin? Would we rather be comfortable or holy?



JONAH CHAPTER 2

DIVINE INTERRUPTION: GOD SPEAKS IN A FISH (CONT.)

PERSONAL REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

Q. Prayer is not simply receiving things that we want from God. Prayer is more about aligning our hearts, minds, and wills with God. How can we keep the focus of our prayers on God's will?

Q. What is your biggest prayer need? Take plenty of time to pray for each other.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Jonah's prayer in this chapter is a psalm of thanksgiving. Jonah thanks God for using the fish to save him from drowning. Take some time this week to compose your own psalm of thanksgiving. This could be about a time God delivered you from trouble, brought you to Jesus, or some other miraculous thing He has done for you.

Other examples you can look at:
[Psalms 30, 34, 66, 73, 105-106, 111-118](#)

If you feel comfortable, consider sharing it with someone close, or your group next week.



JONAH CHAPTER 3

OUR GOD IS A GOD OF SECOND CHANCES

INTRODUCTION

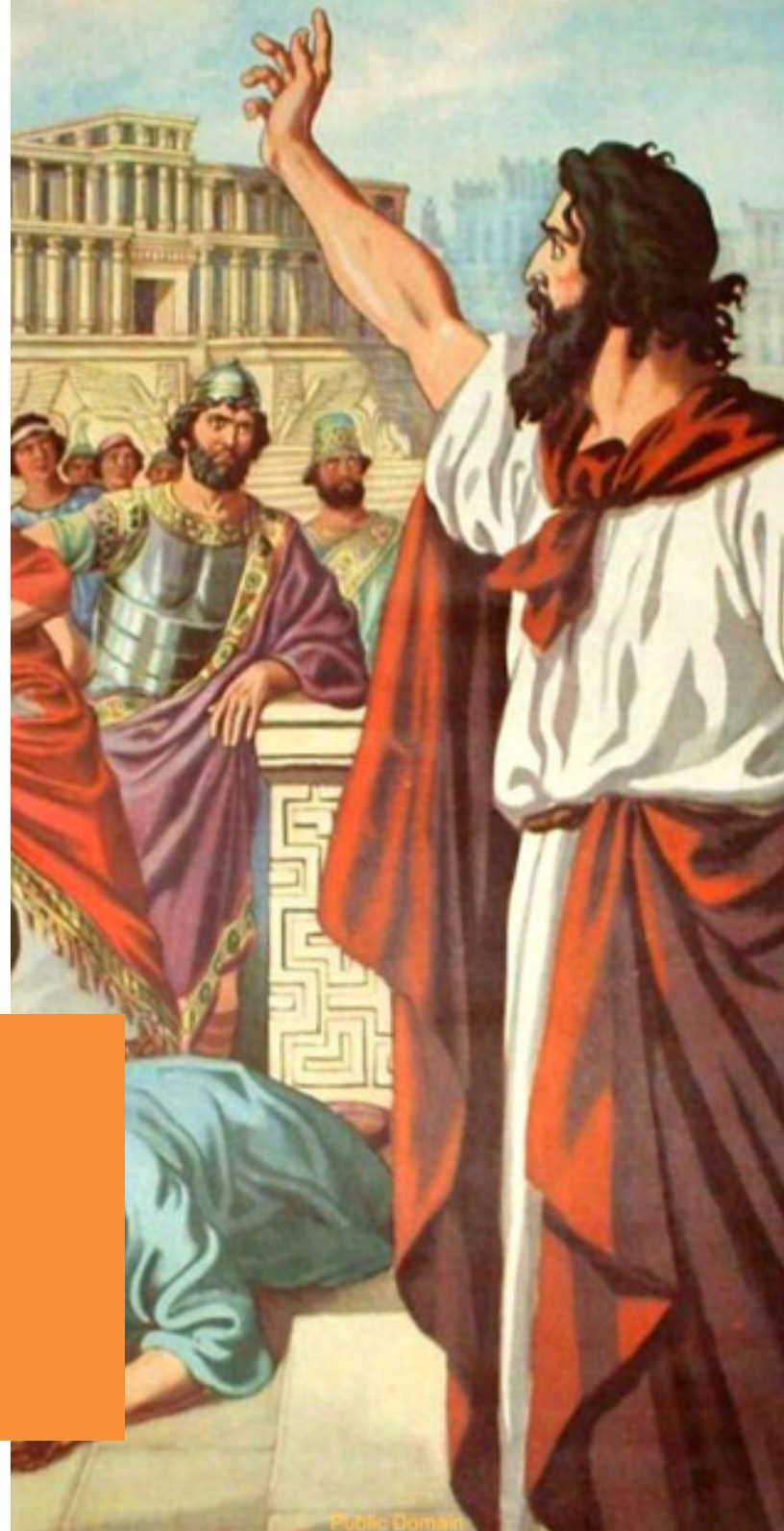
What's the worst sermon you've ever heard preached? My guess is that it's probably not even close to being as bad as the one Jonah preached to Nineveh.

After being vomited ashore, Jonah marches to Nineveh to proclaim the message he has been sent to preach: repent or be destroyed. Yet it wasn't the quality of Jonah's message, but the quality of his God that turned the city back to Him.

The biggest miracle in the story of Jonah isn't that he survived in a fish, but that an entire city repents! Here we see a city – a people who were far from God – repent of their sins. God relented from destroying them.

MAIN IDEA

God is one of second chances. He forgives the repentant.



CONVERSATION STARTER

Q. Have you ever received a second chance to do something that you had previously failed at? How did that feel? Did you do anything differently the second time around?



JONAH CHAPTER 3

OUR GOD IS A GOD OF SECOND CHANCES (CONT.)

READ & DISCUSS JONAH CHAPTER 3

- Q. How does the structure of Jonah 3:1–3 parallel 1:1–3? What are the similarities? What are the differences?
- Q. How should Jonah’s experience encourage us towards obedience?
- Q. Why do you think the Ninevites responded in the way they did? What did they recognize about themselves?
- Q. The Hebrew word for “repentance” occurs four times in Jonah. All four of them are within the verse of 8-10, which signals the emergence of a new and important theme. What do you think that is?
- Q. How does God respond to the repentance of the Ninevites (3:10)? **Follow Up:** What does His response teach us about His character?

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

As believers, God has called us to join Him on a mission in making disciples. Take some time to think of people in your life who don’t know Jesus. Pray for them. Can you find an opportunity this week to share the gospel with them?

PERSONAL REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

- Q. Is God calling you into repentance today? What, if anything, is holding you back?





JONAH CHAPTER 4

A MATTER OF THE HEART

INTRODUCTION

Imagine an entire community or city turning to God, and suddenly filling the church. How would you respond? One would hope that we would rejoice. Yet, in Chapter 4, Jonah provides a snapshot of a propensity in all of us. *It would be inconvenient for us.* We wouldn't be able to claim our usual seat. We'd have to open our homes to make room for the newcomers. We might not be served and catered to in the way we would prefer. We might have to sit with people who hurt us.

In this chapter, we get to see God's desire for our hearts and His patience towards us.

MAIN IDEA

God is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in love.

CONVERSATION STARTER

Q. When you were a little kid (or when you still act like one), how did you (or, how do you) usually express your anger?



JONAH CHAPTER 4

A MATTER OF THE HEART

READ & DISCUSS JONAH CHAPTER 4

- Q.** According to Jonah 4:2, why did Jonah flee to Tarshish (1:3)? **Follow Up:** According to 4:2, what is God like? And why do you think Jonah has a problem with this?
- Q.** Think back to week one of this series, where we read about Jonah's experience on the ship. How does Jonah's attitude towards the Ninevites compare to the sailor's attitude to him? How does God's compassion compare to Jonah's? **Follow Up:** Does this challenge the attitudes you have toward people?
- Q.** What does the interaction between Jonah and God in verses 3-4 teach us about our relationship with God?
- Q.** What do you think Jonah was waiting to see in verse 5?
- Q.** In the closing verses of this chapter, we see God continually provide for His obstinate prophet. **Follow Up:** In your most stubborn times, how has God expressed grace and mercy in your life?
- Q.** What do verses 10-11 teach us about God?

PERSONAL REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

- Q.** We are much like Jonah. We want to receive God's forgiveness, but we are not always willing to extend it to others. Who is it that we need to extend forgiveness to?
- Q.** How is God calling you to grow in compassion for the lost?

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

When God gave us grace, we received something we did not deserve. Think of someone in your life who does not deserve grace and be intentional about showing it to them over the coming week. This can be a family member, co-worker, neighbor, or even someone in your group!

