

Chapter-by-Chapter Bible Studies

Jonah

**“6.8 Billion and
Counting...”**



Bible Studies
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Jonah

“6.8 Billion and Counting...”

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“6.8 Billion and Counting...”
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the book of Jonah

Who? What? When? Where? Why?

Introduction to Jonah from Chapter 1:1&2– A Few Questions to Get You Thinking

Here are the questions to ask any time you begin a Bible Study: Who? What? When? Where? Why? After you get the answers you'll have the big picture painted, and then you are able to fill in the details and learn the lessons God would have you learn.

In the book of Jonah we can begin to get our answers to those questions from the first two verses. I will give you the answers to these questions in just a couple of pages, but see if you can answer them first:

“The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.” (Jonah 1:1&2)

1. :1&2 Who?
 - Who is the principal character in this book?
 - Who wrote the book?
 - Who thought up the book?
 - Who made sure the book got into our hands?
 - Who is Jonah's message supposed to be directed to?
2. :1 What?
 - What about this story is true?
 - What happened?
 - What is the context of this story?
 - What should I learn from this story?
 - What is this book's place in the whole picture of the Bible?
 - What should I know about the people of Ninevah?
3. :1&2 When?
 - When does this story take place?
4. :2 Where?
 - Where does this story take place?
5. :2 Why?
 - Why does this story happen?
 - Why should I care about this story?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

6. Can you think of a time when you were very sure God was telling you to speak to someone about Him?
7. Did you do it?
8. How did that person respond?
9. Were you glad you did it?
10. How would you do it differently next time?
11. If you didn't do it, why not? How did you feel when you decided not to speak? Did you go back and try to do it another time?
12. Have you ever felt like a total failure when you tried to be a witness?
13. How did you feel about the person you tried to witness to?
14. If you have never, ever had a chance to speak about Jesus to anyone, how do you feel about that?

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Who? What? When? Where? Why?
Introduction to Jonah – Discussion Notes

The first person I ever witnessed to was my sister, Barbara.

I asked Jesus to be my Savior in the spring of 1965. I remember sitting in a little Baptist church in Tucson, Arizona, realizing, for what seemed like the first time in my life, that Jesus had died for me. Not just for the world, but actually for me. My world was rocked. The only response I could think of was to thank Him, and then offer Him back my life, telling Him He could do whatever He wanted to do with me for the rest of my life. I was seventeen.

The very next thing I thought of was that I wasn't sure whether or not my younger sister – she was sixteen - knew this amazing thing about Jesus. The Lord was very clearly giving me a huge urging to share the Gospel with her.

I was the perfect picture of conflicting emotions. You see, Barb and I were not exactly good friends. In fact, I had spent most of my life trying to make her feel unimportant because I was jealous of her. She was blond; I was plain old brunette. She was thin; I fought a losing battle with the bulge. She was fun and carefree; I was serious. She could whine and get what she wanted; I never asked for anything and wanted to depend only on myself. We were different and I didn't trust her...I don't think she trusted me, either. Oil and water.

So – now I was a believer in Jesus Christ, and I was supposed to invite her to my new church? Introduce her to my new friends? Watch her be the life of the party in the middle of my new world? Nope. Didn't want to do it.

“The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.” (Jonah 1:1&2)

1. :1&2 Who?

- Who is the principal character in this book?
Jonah, the son of Amittai. Just from that little bit of info we can research a few more things about Jonah. Jonah is mentioned in a few other places in scripture:
 - 1) II Kings 14:25. Here we see the time in which Jonah ministered (more about that when we get to the “when” question), and we see that he was from the town of Gath-hepher. (more about that when we get to the “where” question). From this verse we also see that

Jonah was used of God to predict the victory King Jeroboam would have when he captured back some land which had been stolen by Damascus.

- 2) Matthew 12:39-41. Jesus used the life of Jonah as an illustration of how evil Jesus' generation was. In doing so, Jesus verified the truth of the story of Jonah.
- 3) Matthew 16:4. In another place where Jesus referred to the life of Jonah He made it clear that Jonah's experience in the belly of the whale was for more than one purpose. It was not just to get Jonah to obey, but it was also to be a picture of an even greater prophet who would someday be three and one-half days in "death", and then miraculously brought back to life. That greater prophet was, of course, Jesus. Jonah's three and one-half days in the belly of the whale were a mirror image of Jesus' three and one-half days in the grave.
- 4) Luke 11:29-32. Again, Jonah is used by Jesus as a lesson for His generation.

- Who wrote the book?

The book does not state who the author is, but tradition has said Jonah himself wrote it.

- Who thought up the book?

This is important. Even though a real flesh-and-blood person wrote the book, it is part of the Bible, so we know God Himself decided, word-for-word, what would be in it. *"All scripture is inspired by God..." II Timothy 3:16*. Nothing in the book of Jonah is accidentally there.

- Who made sure the book got into our hands?

God Himself. Treat this book with care, for the Lord had many generations of faithful believers who were willing to even give their lives so that God's Words would be preserved for each successive wave of children and grandchildren.

- Who is Jonah's message supposed to be directed to?

From verse two we see that Jonah was told by God to go to a specific city, Ninevah. The people of that city had been chosen by God to hear the truth from the lips of a prophet of God.

2. :1 What?

- What about this story is true?

We know this is a true story, not just a parable or an allegory, for two reasons:

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- 1) because Jesus, in His ministry on earth, referred to Jonah as a real, flesh-and-blood person (Matthew 12:39-41),
- 2) and, Jonah is mentioned in the book of II Kings as a prophet of God. (II Kings 14:25)

- What happened?

Just to summarize the first two verses of this book, God comes to Jonah with a directive: go to Ninevah and preach about Me there.

- What is the context of this story?

It helps to ask this question because so far the whole story line seems pretty cut and dried. What would be the big deal about someone who is already a prophet of God going to another place in the world and doing what he already knows how to do – tell about God?

But there is more to the story. Ninevah was the capital of Assyria. The Assyrians were a wicked and terrifying people. They did incredibly cruel and even unspeakable things to the people they conquered. They were mean and degrading and hated throughout the known world. In Jonah’s time they were the biggest threat to the security of Jonah’s country, Israel. At any time they could gather their armies together and walk through Israel, destroying, killing, raping, burning – and there was every reason to think they would do it in Jonah’s lifetime.

Now – doesn’t that muddy the waters a little? God’s command to Jonah was not so simple, was it?

- What should I learn from this story?

Obviously, we’ll know more about what we should learn once we walk our way through the whole book, but, even with only two verses under our belts, we can know this: If God thought this book was important enough to include it in the Bible, there is something each of us needs to learn and, even more, obey, as we read it. Our prayer as we begin has to be –“ Lord, open my eyes to how You want me to change as I read this book.”

- What is this book’s place in the whole picture of the Bible?

Literally everything in the Bible points to Jesus. Jonah didn’t know the whole picture about the Messiah named Jesus Who would someday come into the world, but he knew a little. And the little he knew he preached in Ninevah, and heathens there needed that

message as much as you and I ever needed it. Jonah is simply one more piece of the puzzle, which, when fitted all together, shows the tender hand of God reaching out to the people He loves.

- What should I know about the people of Ninevah?

Nahum, a prophet who with Jonah understood the people of Ninevah, described them in this way: “..plot evil against the Lord...” (1:11), “city of blood, full of lies....never without victims” (3:1), “enslaved nations by her prostitution, and peoples by her witchcraft” (3:4), “...they strip the land and then fly away.” (3:16), “who has not felt your endless cruelty?” (3:19).

They would be your worst nightmare. They would be the ones you avoid at all costs. They would be the dark shadows who lurk on downtown streets in gangs, ready to steal a wallet or slit a throat. Let's not romanticize them. You and I today, if we had an ounce of sense, would run as fast as we could away from them.

3. :1&2 When?

- When does this story take place?

Remember, we saw in II Kings 14:25 that Jonah ministered at the time of King Jeroboam in Northern Israel. Actually, there were two King Jeroboams. The first one ruled the Northern Kingdom of Israel in about 930 BC. But the one who lived during the time of Jonah was the second Jeroboam – he ruled also in the northern kingdom, about 780 BC. About 50 years after the time of Jeroboam II the Assyrian kingdom conquered the northern kingdom of Israel, and the northern kingdom was never heard of again.

It helps me to remember that no matter what great and mighty things we do for God, history is still going to keep going – evil is still going to have many victories – until the time Jesus returns again. Why is that a help to me? It keeps me from thinking that this world is what I am living for.

4. :2 Where?

- Where does this story take place?

We've already mentioned the northern Kingdom of Israel. Jonah was a prophet of God unto the northern Kingdom. He didn't minister in Jerusalem where the true kings of Israel reigned. He lived in the northern kingdom, and spoke the truths of God in the northern kingdom, which in itself must have been a hard life, since the northern

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kingdom was sinful in its rebellion against God’s plan to make Jerusalem His capital.

Jonah lives in Gath-hepher, which is located in northern Israel, north-east of present-day Nazareth.

Ninevah is about 500 miles away from Gath-hepher –directly to the northeast.

5. :2 Why?

- Why does this story happen?

Because The Lord decides to ask His prophet to go to Ninevah.

- Why should I care about this story?

Because God also asks us to do things.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

6. Can you think of a time when you were very sure God was telling you to speak to someone about Him?
7. Did you do it?
8. How did that person respond?
9. Were you glad you did it?
10. How would you do it differently next time?
11. If you didn’t do it, why not? How did you feel when you decided not to speak? Did you go back and try to do it another time?
12. Have you ever felt like a total failure when you tried to be a witness?
13. How did you feel about the person you tried to witness to?
14. If you have never, ever had a chance to speak about Jesus to anyone, how do you feel about that?

The pressure from God was so great on me to share my faith with Barbara that I could actually feel it. Even though I was just learning about knowing and following the will of the Lord I knew one thing – when God wants you to do something there is no avoiding it.

I grudgingly invited her to church, and, just as I feared, she was well-liked by all my new friends. The jealousy in me was growing. I watched her laugh and make jokes with my youth group and I despaired. Why, Jesus, would you give me this wonderful new life and then yank it away from me?

I drove and she didn’t, so I was her transportation to and from church. One Sunday night as we pulled into our driveway I knew this was the time to talk to her about Jesus. I still didn’t want to...but I knew I just had to. I asked her if she wanted to ask Jesus to be her Savior, knowing that once I got this over with I could stop feeling guilty and could get on with life.

I still remember her answer. I can still see the dashboard of our car and the blackness of the night outside. I can still feel the shock to my body as she whispered “yes”. In an instant of time I became someone else. I looked at Barb and realized I loved her. I bowed my head and prayed with her as she gave her life to Jesus, and I sensed an unusual feeling inside of me where all that hate and jealousy had been. The jealousy and distrust were simply gone. In their place was a desire to protect and love her which has not faded in over fifty years.

Why was the book of Jonah given to us by God? I think it was just so we would know there have always been weak and selfish people like us, given impossible jobs to do by God.

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Jonah the Dove

Jonah Chapter 1 – Discussion Questions

1. :1-3 Where did Jonah go in response to God’s command? Why would Jonah have wanted to go to Tarshish? Wasn’t this going in the wrong direction?
2. :4 What did God do? Why did He do this?
3. :5 Why are the sailors afraid? Why isn’t Jonah afraid?
4. :6 What did even the pagan Captain of the ship know that Jonah did not?
5. :7 What is “casting lots”, and why did they do it?
6. :8 Why did they suddenly want to know all about him?
7. :9 Jonah openly confesses whom he fears. If he fears God, then why has he done things which clearly rebel against this God he fears? How did Jonah get in such a deplorable state of mind?
8. :10-12 What did even the idol-worshipping sailors know that Jonah didn’t seem to know?
9. :13-16 Why didn’t the men want to throw Jonah overboard? What was their reaction when throwing Jonah overboard actually worked? Do you think these men came to faith in the One, True God through this incident?
10. :17 What do you think Jonah is thinking at this point? Do you think this would have brought him to his senses?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

11. Have you ever been mad at God? What did you do?

12. What did you learn from chapter one?

13. List the number of times it is obvious God is in charge in this story:

-
-
-
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-
-

14. What does that tell you?

15. God used the prophets of Israel to warn Israel when she was doing things that made no sense. What are two reasons Israel would get into this condition?

- ✓ Hosea 4:6
- ✓ Isaiah 5:18

16. Are you acting like you have “no sense” in any area of your life right now? Why are you? What can you do about it? Are you endangering someone else’s life through your disobedience?

17. What if we are not sure whether or not we are acting with “no sense”? How can we be sure? (Psalm 139)

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Jonah the Dove
Jonah Chapter 1 – Discussion Notes

The NIV Study Bible says, in the introduction to the book of Jonah: “The book is named after its principal character, whose name means “dove”.

The Psalmist describes Israel as God’s “turtledove”. “Do not deliver the soul of your turtledove to the wild beast...” (Psalm 14:19) The picture seems to be of a vulnerable little bird who needs protection.

The prophet Hosea used a dove as an example of how the rebellious northern kingdom was acting: “So Ephraim has become like a silly dove, without sense.” (Hosea 7:11). Here the picture is more of that same vulnerable little bird deciding to do something silly, something rebellious, something that makes no sense.

I think Jonah was both. He was loved and cared for by God. He was no doubt vulnerable in the same ways you and I are – he was weak and unable to be the perfect man God needed, and yet God protected Him. But, also, Jonah was silly, rebellious, and at least part of his life he did things which made no sense.

In chapter one, we’re about to see him in action. Our last lesson we saw that God asked Jonah to go to Ninevah and preach. Let’s see how Jonah the Dove responded:

“But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.” (1:3)

1. Where did Jonah go in response to God’s command? Why would Jonah have wanted to go to Tarshish? Wasn’t this going in the wrong direction?

The passage makes it pretty clear. Jonah was running away from the Lord. He was going in the opposite direction from the place God told him to go. It’s almost comical, isn’t it? How could anyone run away from God? Is there anywhere one could go to get farther away from God?

“Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.” Psalm 139:7-12

And yet Jonah ran. We all run. We foolishly think we can run away from the One Who is everywhere.

“The Lord hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up.” (1:4)

2. What did God do? Why did He do this?

God stopped Jonah’s run in the opposite direction. Why? He wanted Jonah to go to Ninevah. God wasn’t going to settle for Tarshish.

“Then the sailors became afraid and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down and fallen sound asleep.” (:5)

3. Why are the sailors afraid? Why isn’t Jonah afraid?

Now this is curious. The sailors were afraid to die. That’s not the curious part. Being afraid to die is natural. Almost every person would have reacted like the sailors. A huge, powerful storm in the middle of a body of water spells death.

Why wasn’t Jonah afraid? This is the curious part. I think he laid down and fell asleep because he wasn’t afraid to die. The truth is, he trusted fully the God he was running away from. Even while he ran, he knew God was faithful and generous and loving and full of grace. He trusted God.

“So the Captain approached him and said, ‘How is it that you are sleeping? Get up, call on your god. Perhaps your god will be concerned about us so that we will not perish’ (:6)

4. What did even the pagan Captain of the ship know that Jonah did not?

I’m not sure he actually “knew” this....but it sure seems like he was at least wondering....that the storm was from Jonah’s God. That Jonah’s God was

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making a not-to-be-ignored demand. Jonah was sleeping, trusting God. But it was time for Jonah to not just trust His God, but also obey His God.

“Each man said to his mate, ‘Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity has struck us.’ So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.” (:7)

5. What is “casting lots”, and why did they do it?

Casting lots is sort of like throwing dice. If it's a “7”, or a “3” (etc.), then that means Jonah is the problem.

“Then they said to him, ‘Tell us, now! On whose account has this calamity struck us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?’ (:8)

6. Why did they suddenly want to know all about him?

Now he was “scary guy”. Why would a God powerful enough to send such a storm care about this guy?

“He said to them, ‘I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land.’ (:9)

7. Jonah openly confesses whom he fears. If he fears God, then why has he done things which clearly rebel against this God he fears? How did Jonah get in such a deplorable state of mind?

I think Jonah knew His God, and had served Him for a portion of his life, and had become casual about His God. He had begun to tell God what to do, rather than realizing it didn't work that way. God is Who He is. He doesn't change for us. We change for Him.

What's the solution to Jonah's deplorable state of mind and spirit? An encounter with the living God. He needed to come to the end of his foolishness because he clearly saw Who God was.

“Then the men became extremely frightened and they said to him, ‘How could you do this?’ For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them. So they said to him, ‘What should we do to you that the sea may become calm for us?’ – for the sea was becoming increasingly stormy. He said to them, ‘Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm has come upon you.” (:10-12)

8. What did even the idol-worshipping sailors know that Jonah didn’t seem to know?

They knew, and Jonah was beginning to know, too, that they must respond to God.

You see, God doesn’t show us Who He is so that we can say “Hmmm, I’ll think about that, I’ll get back to you sometime.” God shows us Who He is, and then He demands a response.

It’s not enough to know that Jesus is the Savior of the world. You have to respond. Bow your knee. Accept His offer of salvation. Admit you need it.

“However, the men rowed desperately to return to land but they could not, for the sea was becoming even stormier against them. Then they called on the Lord and said, ‘We earnestly pray, O Lord, do not let us perish on account of this man’s life and do not put innocent blood on us; for You, O Lord, have done as you pleased.’ So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging. Then the men feared the Lord greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.” (:13-16)

9. Why didn’t the men want to throw Jonah overboard? What was their reaction when throwing Jonah overboard actually worked? Do you think these men came to faith in the One, True God through this incident?

They probably thought throwing overboard was a pretty extreme solution. They wanted to live....but they didn’t actually want to kill someone in order to live. They actually prayed to the God of Jonah. Did they come to faith at this moment? Probably not. Recognizing that the One, True God does exist is a first step. Falling before Him in repentance is the next. Accepting His offer of salvation is the next. I don’t see any repentance in this passage....but I hope it came soon for them.

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“And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.” (:17)

10. What do you think Jonah is thinking at this point? Do you think this would have brought him to his senses?

What was he thinking? I think we’re going to see in the next chapter the result of the things he was thinking for those three days and three nights. 😊

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

11. Have you ever been mad at God? What did you do?

12. What did you learn from chapter one?

13. List the number of times it is obvious God is in charge in this story:

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- ✓ Isaiah 5:18

16. Are you acting like you have “no sense” in any area of your life right now? Why are you? What can you do about it? Are you endangering someone else’s life through your disobedience?

17. What if we are not sure whether or not we are acting with “no sense”? How can we be sure? (Psalm 139)

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Top Ten Things To Do When Swallowed by a Fish

Jonah Chapter 2 – Questions

From the following verses, list the Top Ten Things to Do When Swallowed by a Fish:

1. *“Then Jonah prayed to the LORD, his God, from the stomach of the fish,.”
(:1)*

2. *“and he said,
‘I called out of my distress to the LORD,
and He answered me.
I cried for help from the depth of Sheol;
You heard my voice.” (:2)*

3. *“For You had cast me into the deep,
into the heart of the seas,
And the current engulfed me.
All Your breakers and billows passed over me.” (:3)*

4. *“So I said, I have been expelled from Your sight.
Nevertheless I will look again toward
Your Holy temple.” (:4)*

5. *“Water encompassed me to the point of death.
The great deep engulfed me.
Weeds were wrapped around my head.” (:5)*

6. *"I descended to the roots of the mountains.
The earth with its bars was around me forever.
But You have brought up my life from
The pit, O LORD, my God." (:6)*

7. *"While I was fainting away,
I remembered the Lord,
And my prayer came to you,
Into your Holy temple." (:7)*

8. *"Those who regard vain idols
Forsake their faithfulness." (:8)*

9. *"But I will sacrifice to You
With the voice of thanksgiving.
That which I have vowed I will pay.
Salvation is from the Lord." (:9)*

10. *"Then the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up
onto the dry land." (:10)*

Top Ten Things To Do When Swallowed by a Fish

Jonah Chapter 2 – Notes

From the following verses, here’s my list of the Top Ten Things to Do When Swallowed by a Fish:

“Then Jonah prayed to the LORD, his God, from the stomach of the fish,.” (:1)

1. PRAY!

As long as you are still alive, no matter how hopeless or terrifying your situation, you can always talk to the One, True God. You can always pray. Now, as you grow in the Lord you learn that prayer can have several very important parts, which we’ll see as we scroll down through the ten verses in this chapter. But the only thing to remember when the light disappears around you, and the water is sloshing at your feet, is: Pray.

*“and he said,
‘I called out of my distress to the LORD,
and He answered me.
I cried for help from the depth of Sheol;
You heard my voice.” (:2)*

2. PRAY IMMEDIATELY, DON’T WAIT UNTIL YOU CHANGE YOUR SITUATION!

You’d think this would be common sense, but, think of it, how many times do you get into trouble (especially if it’s of your own making), and your first thought is: “I can’t approach God with this until I do all I can to clean it up first.” ?

Why do we do that? Look at John 3:20 and find out how Jesus explains it.

We want to hold on to our fantasy that we are able to clean ourselves up and control our own world, so our first impulse is usually to trust in our own ability to survive, and then, finally, when all else fails, we cry out to God.

If Jonah were here I think he'd be telling us: Don't wait! Pray now! Take it to God!

Is there anywhere I can be, any situation I can be in, from which God will not hear me? Nowhere.

Often when someone comes to me asking for prayer about something, I look them in the eye and tell them from the sincerity of my heart that I will be praying about it. And I mean it. And most of the time I do it. But it is always much better when I stop whatever I'm doing, join this friend in a position of prayer (heads bowed or hands folded, or knees bowed, etc.), and actually pray about it right then and there. In the middle of whatever conversations are going on around us, or on a crowded sidewalk, or over the phone, we just simply take the situation to God together, right then.

Why wait? Prayer first.

*"For You had cast me into the deep,
into the heart of the seas,
And the current engulfed me.
All Your breakers and billows passed over me." (:3)*

3. DON'T PUT A SPIN ON IT

Go ahead and bring to mind exactly what has happened. Jonah had been tossed overboard by a ship full of men. He felt the waves wash over him. He sensed that he was being tugged along and under by the current. He was under the water, holding his breath, struggling to get the surface.

It was surely frightening and desperate. He had no idea what to expect, except that he knew he had gotten himself into this mess, and had no ability to save himself.

Obviously Jonah is telling us about this after it happened, but notice that he doesn't give in to the temptation to simplify, summarize or glorify what has

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happened. He doesn't say, "You, God, had them toss me into the ocean and then You did a miracle" He gives the terrifying details. Why? Because it wasn't just another day in the life of Jonah, prophet of God. This was huge. Huge deserves description.

And once huge is described, then it follows naturally that God will be glorified for what He does.

*“So I said, I have been expelled from Your sight.
Nevertheless I will look again toward
Your Holy temple.” (:4)*

4. DO THE NEXT RIGHT THING

Jonah had been heading in the wrong direction, away from Ninevah, and away from Jerusalem, the temple, the place of God's abiding presence.

Even while inside a fish, Jonah turned around. He looked in the right direction once again. He looked toward God's Holy temple.

There wasn't much Jonah could do in the belly of this fish, and he still had no idea he was going to live through this, but this much he knew: point my face in the direction of Jerusalem. Start to take the first step back home.

What is the next right thing in your life? Wherever you find yourself right now, there is something you know you could do, something you know you should do. Don't think that thing is unimportant because it doesn't compare with the greatness of the challenge you are facing.

Quite often the next step you take will determine the next, and the next, and the next. So just do the next right thing.

*“Water encompassed me to the point of death.
The great deep engulfed me.
Weeds were wrapped around my head.” (:5)*

5. DESPAIR IS GOOD

Until we get to the point of despair it seems we are not willing to give up our pride. In today's self-diagnosis terminology, that means: "We have to come to the end of ourselves."

What difficulties are you walking through right now?

- Have you come to the point where you know there is no way out?
- Have you felt the “weeds wrapped around” your head?
- Are you absolutely sure at this point that you will not be able to deliver yourself?
- Do you realize yet that you do not deserve deliverance?
- Has it occurred to you yet that you have considered yourself more worthy of the intervention of God’s hand in your life? More worthy than someone else who is not living for God?

If you are truly loved by God, He will graciously allow you to get all the way to despair.

*“I descended to the roots of the mountains.
The earth with its bars was around me forever.
But You have brought up my life from
The pit, O LORD, my God.” (:6)*

6. HOPE

Now. After despair. After the breaking down of every thought which says “I deserve the protection of God”. After your pride is fully on Christ and fully off of yourself. Then. Hope.

The really great thing about this kind of hope is that there is no fear. There is no lingering thought that “this may happen to me again”, and “would I make it through next time?

Why is that fear gone? Because it is absolutely clear that you did not deliver yourself. You didn’t get yourself through this time, so there’s no reason to worry about next time. You won’t be able to get yourself through next time, either. It is totally irrefutable that God Himself brought you up from the pit. There was no other way it could have happened.

Jonah should have drowned. All hope was gone. A big fish saw a nearly drowned man, scooped him up in his mouth and in so doing gave him air to breathe. In the depths of the ocean. Jonah lives. He has hope. Hope in God.

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*“While I was fainting away,
I remembered the Lord,
And my prayer came to you,
Into your Holy temple.” (:7)*

7. WHEN IT’S YOUR TURN TO TALK, TALK.

Sometimes God wants us to listen. Sometimes God wants us to observe.
Sometimes God wants us to fall on our knees overwhelmed with His presence.
There’s a time for humility, and a time for silence.

And there’s a time to start praying. Sometimes it’s time for us to talk.

Just you and God. Talk. Tell Him what you are thinking.

*“Those who regard vain idols
Forsake their faithfulness.” (:8)*

8. TELL HIM EVERYTHING

Do you see what Jonah is telling God? He’s reminding God that the Ninevites are idol-worshippers, unworthy of God’s message. He’s telling God what was on his (Jonah’s) mind when he first ran away from God’s instruction to go and preach to the Ninevites.

Is Jonah being stubborn? I don’t think so. I think he’s just honestly telling God that he (Jonah) doesn’t see that the situation has changed. Jonah still doesn’t think this is a good idea.

God doesn’t want us to be robots. He doesn’t want us to say, “OK, God, You said it so my own thoughts don’t matter.”

What does He want, then?

*"But I will sacrifice to You
With the voice of thanksgiving.
That which I have vowed I will pay.
Salvation is from the Lord." (:9)*

9. NEVERTHELESS, I SUBMIT TO YOU

What does He want? He wants our honest feedback. Our honest thoughts. And then, once we have communicated, He wants our submission.

What's the difference between Jonah's first reaction to God's command (get on a ship to Tarshish) and Jonah's second reaction to God's command? ("that which I have vowed I will pay")

The difference is not that Jonah has changed his mind about the "deservingness" of the people he has been told to witness to. The difference is that Jonah is now willing to submit to God's plan, even though he disagrees.

This is where God was trying to get Jonah from the start. The results of Jonah's obedience are going to be a surprise (and not a welcome surprise) to Jonah. But what happened in Jonah's heart was also important to God. He submitted to God's plan, even though he didn't like it. He obeyed God because he lost all pride in himself. His thoughts were still relevant to God, but they didn't change God's mind.

God wanted Jonah's eyes-wide-open submission. He got it.

*"Then the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up
onto the dry land." (:10)*

10. GET READY TO BE VOMITED

A root canal is not what I wanted when I dragged myself to the dentist yesterday. But the pain had gotten so bad I was at the end of my excuses: "It will be better tomorrow", "God can make the pain go away", "I'm too busy", "I can't afford it".

"This will be a long process...I don't want to spend my day in a dentist's chair...I have important things to do."

But a root canal it was.

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- Was Jonah glad to be alive, on terra firma, and out of the fish’s belly?
Oh yes.
- Was he going to keep his promises to God? Yes.
- Was he happy about it?
- Tune in next week.

Salvation is not always pretty.

6.8 Billion People Who Do Not Know Their Right Hand From Their Left - Questions

Jonah Chapters 3 & 4 – Questions

1. (3:1) When was the first time the Word of the Lord came to Jonah?
Who else can you think of in Biblical history who got a second chance to respond in faith to Jesus?
2. (3:2-4) Compare the first message Jonah was told to preach (1:2) and the actual message he ended up preaching. Were they different? The same?
3. (3:2) Why does Jonah call Ninevah a “great” city? In what sense was it great? (See also 4:11)
4. (3:5) How do the people of Ninevah react to the message of Jonah?
What two things does this verse say they did?
 - 1.
 - 2.

Why would they believe in God so quickly?
What did fasting have to do with anything?
5. (3:6-9) How did even the King of Ninevah react to Jonah’s preaching?
6. (3:8) What did the King want the people to repent of?

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7. (3:9) How did God react to their response? How is it possible that God would change His mind? (see Jeremiah 4:28, Numbers 23:19, Malachi 3:6, James 1:17, Jeremiah 18:7-10, Joel 2:11-15)
8. (4:1-3) What was Jonah angry about? How does Jonah's anger compare to God's anger?
9. Can you think of anyone else in Bible history who simply wanted to die because God's ways weren't working the way he wanted? (I Kings 19:1-4)
10. Have you ever been disappointed in God? Mad at God? What happened?
11. (4:4&5) How does God respond to Jonah's anger?
12. (4:6-10) What object lesson does God give to Jonah?
13. (4:11) Why did God care about the people of Ninevah? Why didn't Jonah care about the people of Ninevah? What did Jonah need to repent of?

APPLICATION QUESTION:

14. How much do you care about the wicked, *unsaved* people of the world you live in? How much do you care about the wicked, *saved* people of the world you live in? How much does God care about them? How does your attitude compare to God's?

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Jonah Chapters 3&4 – Notes

1. (3:1) When was the first time the Word of the Lord came to Jonah?
Who else can you think of in Biblical history who got a second chance to respond in faith to Jesus?

The first time the Lord spoke to Jonah about Ninevah was in Chapter 1:1. Then Jonah ran away from God and had to go through the whole swallowed by a whale thing. Now God is giving Jonah a second chance. He is speaking to Jonah again.

Have you ever heard that God is the God of second chances? He is. Look at Peter. He was given a chance to walk on water and blew it. (Matthew 14:22-31) He was given a chance to speak up when they were abusing his best friend, Jesus, and blew it. (Matthew 26:69-75) And yet, who is one of the first to run to the tomb and find that Jesus has risen from the dead? Peter. (John 20:1-6). And who throws himself into the sea when he realizes Jesus, risen from the dead, waits on the shore? Peter. (John 21:1-7). And who leads the one hundred twenty disciples of Jesus as they wait for the Day of Pentecost? Peter, again. (Acts 1:15)

The God of Jonah is the God of Peter. Jesus Christ is the God of second chances.

2. (3:2-4) Compare the first message Jonah was told to preach (1:2) and the actual message he ended up preaching. Were they different? The same?

In chapter one Jonah is told to cry out against Ninevah, to tell them how very wicked they were. In Chapter three Jonah is preaching that same message, adding a new detail: in only forty days the One, True God was going to destroy the city because of its wickedness. Same message.

3. (3:2) Why does Jonah call Ninevah a “great” city? In what sense was it great? (See also 4:11)

I think Indianapolis is a great city. It has a very easy highway system. You can get to anywhere in the city in 30 to 45 minutes. It has a good economy.

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Its suburbs are wonderful places to live, with excellent school systems. It has a terrific baseball team, and a pro football team and a pro basketball team. It has universities and colleges, and a downtown which feels safe and clean.

But that kind of great is not what Jonah was talking about when he described Ninevah. This wasn't a public-relations-brochure-type-of-“great”.

This was a “big”-type-of-“great”. In other words, Ninevah stretched out over a large area of land. It was big. There were 120,000 people there. It would take three days to walk through the city.

4. (3:5) How do the people of Ninevah react to the message of Jonah?
What two things does this verse say they did?
 1. They believed in the One, True God
 2. They fasted and put on sackcloth – and not just the poor and lowly of the city, either. Even the government officials and rich people fasted and put on sackcloth.

What did fasting have to do with anything? It meant they were repenting. They stopped eating food and stopped dressing beautifully so that they could openly declare to God and the whole world: “I have been wrong.” They grieved at their wickedness.

Wow! Why would they believe in God so quickly? In my experience it usually takes quite a while for the truth of God's word to sink in to a person's brain. It takes prayer and perseverance most of the time. What made such a difference here?

We can't know for sure exactly what was going on in the spirits of these heathen, wicked people. But a book by a man named Don Richardson has gotten my attention – and I think he may have the best possible answer. In Eternity in Their Hearts, Don tells story after story of missionaries who arrived in Mission fields which had never been reached with the Gospel, expecting to spend long years slowly teaching the basic precepts of One God, moral codes, the sinfulness of man, and finally seeing the light come on in pagan eyes as they realized the One True God could be known when they believed in His Son, Jesus.

But these missionary stories unfolded differently than anyone expected. Missionaries met with totally unexpected welcomes, and amazing acceptance of the message of Jesus, with, in some cases, hardly any foundational truths having to be taught, even though these wicked unreached people had never seen a Bible!

For instance, he tells of Ethiopia's Gedeo people. (pp. 54-56, Eternity in Their Hearts) The Gedeo were a tribe who sacrificed to an evil being named Sheit'an. They had an old belief in a benevolent Being named Magano, and believed He was the loving Creator of all that is. But that was all they knew. They sacrificed to Sheit'an because they did not know how to reach Magano to ask Him to help them.

One Gedeo man, however, had such a deep longing to reach Magano that he prayed to Him...."a simple prayer, asking Magano to reveal Himself to the Gedeo people!"

"Warrasa Wange got speedy response. Startling visions took his brain by storm. He saw two white-skinned strangers....erect flimsy shelters for themselves under the shade of a large sycamore tree near (the village of) Dilla, Warrasa's hometown....

"Then Warassa heard a voice. 'These men,' it said, 'will bring you a message from Magano, the God you seek. Wait for them.' "

Eight years later, in 1948, "Albert Brant and his colleague Glen Cain lurched over the horizon in a battered old International truck. Their mission – to begin missionary work for the glory of God among the Gedeo people. " They were advised to go to a small outpost village named Dilla so that they wouldn't arouse the attention of those who would oppose them.

"With a sigh, he turned the old International toward Dilla. Glen Cain wiped sweat from his brow. 'This is a hot one, Albert,' he said. 'I hope we can find a shady spot for our tents!'

'Look at that old sycamore tree!' Albert responded. 'Just what the doctor ordered!'

Brant revved the International up a rise toward the Sycamore. In the distance, Warrasa Wange heard the sound. He turned just in time to see Brant's old truck pull to a stop under the sycamore's spreading branches. Slowly Warassa headed toward the truck, wondering....

Three decades later Warrasa (now a radiant believer in Jesus Christ, Son of Magano), together with Albert Brant and others, county more than 200 churches among the Gedeo people." !!!!!

What made the difference? The Lord Himself had already prepared the Gedeos for the Gospel they would receive. Their own folk legends had given them a hook – something which catapulted them in their understanding of the

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possibility of One, True God who wanted to know the people He created, and Who died so that their sins could be forgiven.

And the Lord Himself had already prepared the Ninevites for the arrival of one prophet of God, even though he walked into Ninevah with no love in his heart for the people God had told him to warn. Jesus Christ Himself had already gotten them ready. How many people do we shy away from speaking to about Jesus because we just can't see how they would ever understand what we want to tell them? Maybe Jesus has already gotten them ready, and we are dragging our feet for nothing!

5. (3:6-9) How did even the King of Ninevah react to Jonah's preaching?

He, too, repented, and demanded that all of his people repent.

6. (3:8) What did the King want the people to repent of?

Violence. Interesting little word in verse eight. They were a violent people, and they were being called to repent of their violence. Sure, there were other sins they were guilty of, but the Lord was touching them where they would be the most sensitive. They were violent. They liked to be violent. They passed on violence from one generation to another. The God of love was showing them the area they were most unlike Him.

7. (3:9) How did God react to their response? How is it possible that God would change His mind? (see Jeremiah 4:28, Numbers 23:19, Malachi 3:6, James 1:17, Jeremiah 18:7-10, Joel 2:11-15)

God is God and never changes. You can see it over and over again in scripture: Jeremiah 4:28, Numbers 23:19, Malachi 3:6, James 1:17.

But something can change His mind. What in the world can change the mind of God? Repentance. (Jeremiah 18:7-10, Joel 2:11-15). Repentance in the heart of one of God's beloved human beings can change the mind of God. Wow!

8. (4:1-3) What was Jonah angry about? How does Jonah's anger compare to God's anger?

Jonah was angry with God! God was doing exactly what Jonah had been afraid He would do. He was changing His mind. Jonah wanted those dirty Ninevites to suffer, not be forgiven. After all, their sinfulness had caused him pain! He wanted them to hurt for what he had had to live through.

Jonah's anger was swift and based on hatred and revenge. God's anger is always slow, and based on truth, love, and righteousness.

9. Can you think of anyone else in Bible history who simply wanted to die because God's ways weren't working the way he wanted? (I Kings 19:1-4)

How about Elijah? "But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree; and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, 'It is enough; now, O Lord, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers.' " (I Kings 19:4)

Human discouragement is just around the corner for most of God's people. It's human. But not divine. God never gets discouraged. He knows exactly what He's doing, and how and why and when He is doing it. Human discouragement, and human anger are always pushed out of the way by running to God and throwing our arms around Him and asking Him to change us – to show us how to react to things the way He does.

10. Have you ever been disappointed in God? Mad at God? What happened?

11. (4:4&5) How does God respond to Jonah's anger?

God is being gentle here, isn't He? He asks Jonah why he thinks he has a right to be angry. Basically, Jonah says with his actions, like a petulant child, "Because I want to!"

12. (4:6-10) What object lesson does God give to Jonah?

He gives him comfort and shade with a plant which grows up overnight., and then He takes away that comfort and shade by bringing along a worm which destroys the plant. Does that sound mean? It isn't. God didn't want to just

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comfort Jonah, He wanted to bring Jonah to an understanding. He wanted Him to see that the little comfort Jonah got out of that shade was so pleasing to Jonah. And then He wanted Jonah to see that the repentance of the Ninevites was comforting and pleasing to God!

And it was God’s pleasure which was most important here. Because God is mean? Goodness, no. Because God is the standard by which we live. His way is the best way. His attitudes are the attitudes we want to copy.

13. (4:11) Why did God care about the people of Ninevah? Why didn’t Jonah care about the people of Ninevah? What did Jonah need to repent of?

God did care about Ninevah because long before the world began He saw them and loved them and provided a way to finally reach them and let them know He wanted to forgive them and live with them forever.

Jonah didn’t care about Ninevah because he could not think past his own hurts.

Jonah needed to repent of his self-centeredness, his human attitudes, his un-Godly hatred and legalism.

The Lord knew that the people of Ninevah were clueless. They didn’t know what was up or what was down. They didn’t know their right foot from their left. They needed a little light so they could see their way to the One, True God....Jesus.

APPLICATION QUESTION:

14. How much do you care about the wicked, *unsaved* people of the world you live in? How much do you care about the wicked, *saved* people of the world you live in? How much does God care about them? How does your attitude compare to God’s?