

JONAH: THE RELUCTANT PROPHET

STUDY ONE

Jonah: The Reluctant Prophet

Selections from Jonah

Though only forty-eight verses, the message of Jonah proves timeless and timely as it speaks not just about Jonah and his life but about us and our lives.

—Charles R. Swindoll

WHEN the Lord first spoke to one of His prophets, that person's life was never the same. Some prophets welcomed the Lord's words. Look how Jeremiah described his experience hearing the voice of the living God:

*“When I discovered your words, I devoured them.
They are my joy and my heart's delight,
for I bear your name,
O LORD God of Heaven's Armies.”* (Jeremiah 15:16)

What a privilege and joy to be chosen by God to bear His name as His messenger! But not every prophet thought this way. Even Jeremiah expressed some concern initially (1:6).

Take Jonah, the subject of this new series. God spoke to him more than a hundred years prior to Jeremiah. Yet, when Jonah heard the voice of the living God, he “got up . . . to get away from the LORD” (Jonah 1:3). Unlike Jeremiah, Jonah did not want to bear the divine name before Nineveh. *Would Jonah's reluctance keep the Divine tame?* NO! That reluctant prophet held no sway over our relentless God.

In this series, Chuck Swindoll will teach us about how God hurled the storm, appointed the fish, gave Jonah a second chance, spared Nineveh, and grew the plant—all so Jonah along with the rest of the world might get a glimpse of His glorious ways. We begin this first study by overviewing the book, so our verse-by-verse search of the Scriptures might be more memorable and enriching.



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Jonah: The Reluctant Prophet

Selections from Jonah



PREPARE YOUR HEART

First, pause. Simply quiet your heart, and express gratitude to God for His Word, asking that He guide you in this study and bless you through this series. Pray the words below as you posture yourself before the Almighty.

Father, what gratitude I have for the ability to discover Your Word and devour it. It is true food for my soul that always fills me, guides me, comforts me, corrects me, and delights me. In Your Word I hope. I pray that You make this study of Jonah meaningful to me. I want to grow in Jesus Christ, so I ask that You use this book to increase my spiritual maturity and awareness of Your divine hand upon this earth. For Christ's glory I pray, amen.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

In these studies, we use Chuck's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method so we can rightly understand and apply God's Word. This method incorporates four steps to help us create our own spiritual meals.

1. *Observation*: We read what the text says, perceiving how each word fits in sentences, how each sentence fits in paragraphs, and how each paragraph fits in the book.
2. *Interpretation*: We understand what the text means, delving into word studies, ancient culture, history, and theology.
3. *Correlation*: We compare the passage with other biblical passages that address similar topics whether they be historical, theological, or applicational.
4. *Application*: We integrate into our lives biblical truths and principles, obeying Jesus' commands, believing Jesus' promises, and walking with Jesus always.

Since we're at the beginning of a series, it's a good time to add to your library of Bible study resources. Chuck recommends you add one per month. Below, we've provided a few to consider if you don't already have them.

1. *Bible Dictionary*: This invaluable tool compiles hundreds—if not thousands—of articles explaining what you find in the Bible. Chuck prefers *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*.



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2. *Study Bible:* We recommend *The Swindoll Study Bible*. If you already have it, Chuck also likes the New Living Translation *Life Application Study Bible* and the New American Standard *Ryrie Study Bible*. All of these study Bibles complement each other.
3. *Commentary:* If you don't have a commentary set, we recommend either *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* or *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* for a full set. If you want a stand-alone commentary on Jonah, we recommend *The NIV Application Commentary: Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*.

Before examining each fruit in the spiritual orchard of Jonah, this study puts us on a plane to fly above it. To aid us, Chuck Swindoll created an overview chart of Jonah. Review that now to get a bird's eye view of the flow of the story.

JONAH

	Running from God	Running to God	Running with God	Running against God
	First commission of Jonah	Prayer of Jonah	Second commission of Jonah	Prejudice of Jonah
	Results of disobedience	Communication with the Lord	Results of obedience	Lessons from the Lord
	CHAPTER 1	CHAPTER 2	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTER 4
Theme	God's infinite mercy for all people; our reluctance to share His mercy			
Key Verses	2:9; 4:11			
Christ in Jonah	Jonah's three days in the fish anticipates Christ's death and resurrection. The Ninevites' salvation represents the salvation available to all people in Christ.			

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See something especially insightful? Record that below.



Jonah: The Reluctant Prophet

Selections from Jonah



Observation

For observation, we'll simply read through Jonah and answer four basic questions summarizing each chapter. Consider doing so with *multiple translations*, such as the New Living Translation and the New American Standard Bible.

In chapter one, how did Jonah run *from* God?

In chapter two, how did Jonah run *to* God?

In chapter three, how did Jonah run *with* God?

In chapter four, how did Jonah run *against* God?



Jonah: The Reluctant Prophet

Selections from Jonah

If you're trying to run from God, don't waste your time. You'll find He'll be there waiting for you. But Jonah, of course, is caught up in himself. —Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation

In the Old Testament, the book of Jonah is classified as prophesy. What was the role of an Israelite prophet? How did God use prophets? Answer these questions by looking up *prophet* and *prophecy* in your Bible dictionary. Summarize your research below.

Next, read an overview of the book of Jonah. You can consult Insight for Living Ministries' [overview](#) as well as your dictionary's entry for *Jonah*. Note the time period in which the prophet lived and the message the book contributes to the biblical account of God's divine saga.



Jonah: The Reluctant Prophet

Selections from Jonah



Correlation

Jeremiah loved hearing from God. Jonah dreaded it . . . until a fish swallowed him. We have such a privilege, by God's grace, to be able to study His Word. So for correlation, we'll read a paragraph penned by the apostle Peter near the end of his life.

Read [2 Peter 1:12–21](#). How did Peter describe the nature of God's Word? How does God's Word benefit us when we pay close attention to it?

Anticipating Jesus

In Chuck's book *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, he writes, "The Bible is divided into two major sections: the Old Testament, which anticipates the coming of Jesus, the Messiah; and the New Testament, which presents Jesus as the Messiah and explains His ministry and purpose."¹ So as we study Jonah, we will take time to consider ways this Old Testament book anticipates the person and work of Jesus Christ.



Application

Chuck provided four principles to consider as we embark on this study of Jonah.

1. *From Jonah 1:* Running from God is a theological impossibility.
2. *From Jonah 2:* Running to God is a personal necessity.
3. *From Jonah 3:* Running with God is a remarkable discovery.
4. *From Jonah 4:* Running against God is a pitiful catastrophe.



Jonah: The Reluctant Prophet

Selections from Jonah

Reflect on your life over the past year and record how these principles have proven true.



A FINAL PRAYER

Consider your current season of life. How would you like your relationship with Jesus to grow? What would you like Jesus to do for you through this series on Jonah? Express your answers to these questions by writing a prayer below.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 4.



JONAH: THE RELUCTANT PROPHET

STUDY TWO

Resistance of a Racist Rebel

Jonah 1:1–12

It's the grace of God that keeps you alive, the grace of God that's brought you to this moment.

—Charles R. Swindoll

EVEN with small beginnings in Gath-hepher, Jonah developed a reputation for being God's spokesman. He knew when the Lord of Heaven addressed him. Look at what the author of 2 Kings said:

Jeroboam II recovered the territories of Israel between Lebo-hamath and the Dead Sea, just as the LORD, the God of Israel, had promised through Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath-hepher. (2 Kings 14:25)

In this series, we will observe a less obedient side of the prophet Jonah. He preached only when the message and people suited his preference. He even harbored deep-seated hatred against the Ninevites, which drove him to the port of Joppa where he set sail in the opposite direction of God's will.

However, God used one man's rebellion as an opportunity to display His own character, now recorded in Scripture for all to see. In this study, we will explore with Chuck Swindoll the significance of Jonah 1:1–12 to gain a clear understanding of what happens when God's persistence storms against our prejudices.



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Resistance of a Racist Rebel

Jonah 1:1–12



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Before we engage with God’s Word, we should pray that God makes it personally meaningful.

*Be good to your servant,
that I may live and obey your word.
Open my eyes to see
the wonderful truths in your instructions. (Psalm 119:17–18)*

Make this prayer your own, expressing your humble request to our Lord.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

In *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, Chuck Swindoll wrote, “It takes some effort to learn how to consistently draw truth from the Bible, but it is well worth the effort. As [you] get into the process . . . you will discover how beneficial such study can be.”¹

After weeks or even months of study, how rewarding it is to see how Jesus has shaped your thinking, brought you closer to Him, and given you the grace to live by His Spirit rather than your own power.



Observation: The Resistance and the Storm

When we observe a passage, we examine:

1. The who, what, where, when, why, and how
2. What you can see, touch, taste, hear, and smell
3. The logical connections, flow of thoughts, and range of subjects
4. What’s repeated, emphasized, related, alike, and unlike



Resistance of a Racist Rebel

Jonah 1:1–12

Observe *Jonah 1:1–12*. Take it slow, and record important findings.

Bound for Tarshish

Did you see the repetition? In *Jonah 1:3*, what did the author mention twice to convey emphasis?

How does *Jonah 1:4* relate to that emphasis in *1:3*?

Contrast the sailors' and Jonah's responses to the storm.



Resistance of a Racist Rebel

Jonah 1:1–12

Jonah was a racist rebel. Instead of being wide open and willing to go wherever God told him, he was a prejudiced, narrow-minded Jewish prophet who wanted nothing to do with those Gentiles living in Assyria. —Chuck Swindoll

Jonah on the Witness Stand

Often, a biblical author's use of a repeated word or phrase draws attention to his point. Contrast the captain's command to Jonah in 1:6 with the Lord's command to Jonah in 1:2. (Hint: Note the verbs.)

How many questions did the sailors ask Jonah in 1:8–11?

How did Jonah describe his identity in 1:9, and how did his answer address the sailors' first set of questions?

What three points did Jonah make in 1:12 when he answered the sailors' second set of questions?



Resistance of a Racist Rebel

Jonah 1:1–12

The Lord did not throw His hands in the air and give up on this fleeing prophet. God not only wanted the Ninevites to hear His warning, He wanted *Jonah* to announce it.



Interpretation: The Lord’s “Hounds of Heaven”

During interpretation, we ask: *What meaning did the author intend to convey to the original audience?* and *What does this passage teach us about God, God’s ways, and God’s world?* Don’t forget to consult your study tools and free online resources like the [NET Bible](#) and Constable’s Notes.

First use a [Bible map](#) to locate Nineveh and Joppa, and use your Bible dictionary to look up the entries *Tarshish*, *Nineveh*, and *Joppa*. How are each of these significant to the story?

How did the author contrast the clear-minded, religious nature of the sailors with the stiff-necked, rebellious nature of Jonah?

The Prophet and His God

Look at Jonah’s first response regarding his identity.

Jonah answered, “I am a Hebrew, and I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land.” (Jonah 1:9)



Resistance of a Racist Rebel

Jonah 1:1–12

Using Jonah's confession in Jonah 1:9, the author used irony to convey theology. How is God's sovereignty portrayed through the irony in 1:9 compared to 1:3 and in 1:9 compared to 1:4?

You Can Run, But You Can't Hide

"Throw me into the sea," Jonah said, "and it will become calm again. I know that this terrible storm is all my fault." (Jonah 1:12)

How does Jonah 1:12 indicate that Jonah had a moment of clarity after the sailors questioned him? What theological significance did his moment of clarity have? What theological significance do moments of clarity have today?

Jonah actually makes a prophecy here. Jonah reassured them after he had admitted his own guilt. He didn't know what the future held, but he knew for them there would be a calm sea and he'd be out of the picture, off the ship, in the drink, at the mercy of his God. —Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: The Sovereign God of Glory

Since we just studied about God's control of this world, we will make that topic our focus for correlation in this study.



Resistance of a Racist Rebel

Jonah 1:1–12

Psalm 89

This fifty-two-verse psalm extols God for His power and covenant loyalty to David (Psalm 89:1–37); then the author lamented God’s seeming unfaithfulness to His promises (89:38–52).

However, the psalmist knew God wasn’t absent. That’s why he could lament to God. God hears us even when He seems distant. Read the psalmist’s confession of God’s power in [Psalm 89:8–14](#). How does this passage convey God’s abiding presence and control over the world?

Anticipating Jesus

A scene like Jonah 1 occurred during the ministry of Jesus. One man slept on a boat with storm-driven waves crashing all around causing fear in the other passengers. Look at what happened:

Then Jesus got into the boat and started across the lake with his disciples. Suddenly, a fierce storm struck the lake, with waves breaking into the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him up, shouting, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!” Jesus responded, “Why are you afraid? You have so little faith!” Then he got up and rebuked the wind and waves, and suddenly there was a great calm. The disciples were amazed. “Who is this man?” they asked. “Even the winds and waves obey him!” (Matthew 8:23–27)

As a matter of fact, that man is the God-man, who “even the winds and waves obey.” Jesus uses the same power that controls the waves of the sea for the ultimate “good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28)—a lesson in faith that Jonah struggled to grasp.



Resistance of a Racist Rebel

Jonah 1:1–12

Application: Lasting Truths That Matter

Now we will personally integrate, in the Spirit's power, the truths from our passage of study.

Do you find yourself in a storm of suffering and difficulty wondering if God even knows you need help? Take a moment to express your confidence in God's control and record your lament, like the writer of Psalm 89, because God hears you.

In his sermon, Chuck said, "Grace allows us complete freedom to disobey," and, "When we disobey, grace does not cancel the consequences." What ways are you tempted to turn away and induce a storm? Confess that below along with an acknowledgement of your dependence upon Christ to keep you strong in Him.

Spiritual clarity not only leads you to repentance, it can also keep you from doing foolish acts that require you to repent in the first place. Do you need a moment of clarity?

Not until we face and accept reality will grace bring the calm. —Chuck Swindoll



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You are the God who rides on the storm, who feeds the ravens on the mountains, and who protects newborn cubs. Please give me the wisdom that comes from knowing Your power, Your control over this world. In the times I act unwise and turn away, please make me willing to acknowledge more quickly than Jonah whatever is my fault, to turn to You, and to receive forgiveness and restoration that You offer graciously in Jesus Christ. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 10.



JONAH: THE RELUCTANT PROPHET

STUDY THREE

Prayers Onboard—Prophet Overboard!

Jonah 1:9–17

When you read your Bible, never forget about the invisible presence of God.

—Charles R. Swindoll

WHETHER or not we believe it, whether or not we see it, everything in the universe from a carbon atom to the Milky Way Galaxy marches in step to God's command.

Jonah refused to acknowledge God's universal sovereignty, so he comforted himself by hopping a ship headed to Tarshish, assuming he had escaped the presence of the Lord. But he hadn't. Deep down, he probably knew it. Once Jonah fell asleep below deck, God sent a violent storm. So, the frightened sailors awakened Jonah and led him to confess the truth: his God had sent the storm on account of his own disobedience.

Jonah and the mariners came face to face with the power of God. How would each respond? Would they march in step to God's command? In this study, we will examine with Chuck Swindoll Jonah 1:9–17 to understand the meaning of the phrase "God knows what He's about." We'll learn with Jonah and the crew how we should respond when we, in our day, come face to face with that same power.

This isn't ancient theology, for only ancient times. This is for today. This includes the storms in your life and those in mine. —Chuck Swindoll



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Prayers Onboard—Prophet Overboard!

Jonah 1:9–17



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Before we delve into the Word of God, contemplate the prayer below and make it your own as you ready yourself before the Lord.

Father, I open myself to You and pray You will not find my mind closed as I sit before Your Word, Your truth to live by. These words that have been preserved through the centuries are so precious to us. Give me faith to see the invisible, to hear the inaudible, and to realize the incredible that is taking place in my life. In Jesus' name, amen.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

This study will take us to the most iconic scene in the story of Jonah: a gigantic fish swallowing a grown man.



Observation: Storms That Shock Us

Observe *Jonah 1:9–17*. Be sure to jot down what you see. Putting your observations into words on paper clarifies what you identify as significant.

Did the sailors immediately obey Jonah's instructions from 1:12–13? _____

What did the sailors assume and express about God in 1:14?



Prayers Onboard—Prophet Overboard!

Jonah 1:9–17

How did the sailors respond to the Lord when the storm ceased in Jonah 1:16?

What theological significance did the author prescribe to the fish in 1:17?

God is high above us. That's why we hold Him in awe. God prearranges events. That's why He is an awesome God. He brings the great fish. The fish swallows Jonah, and in fact, rather than punishing Jonah, it is a gracious rescue of Jonah. —Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Fears That Bring Us to Our Knees

If you are waiting in line at the movies with a friend and he says, “Hey, my foot!” you easily apprehend the words he uses. You interpret that his foot hurts because you are standing on it. What’s the message he wants you to grasp? *Get off my foot!* You know you have interpreted the Bible well when you understand the author’s meaning *and* what he wants you to do with it.



Searching the Scriptures Tip: Interpretation

As Jesus is truly divine and truly human, two natures in one person, so is the Bible, two natures in one book. This means God used the personalities, languages, cultures, and education of the biblical authors when He deposited His Word among us. So we should study the text’s genre and literary devices during interpretation. A genre follows a certain style or pattern of writing while literary devices create special effects for the audience, emphasizing certain points. The book of Jonah contains two genres: narrative and poetry, and it employs irony as a literary device which serves to contrast expectations and reality.



Prayers Onboard—Prophet Overboard!

Jonah 1:9–17

Irony One: Hurl/Throw

In Jonah 1, the author used the Hebrew word *tul* in four locations to draw an ironic contrast between God, Jonah, and the sailors. It can mean “hurl,” “throw,” or “cast.” King Saul threw [*tul*] a spear at David (1 Samuel 18:11).

*But the LORD **hurled** [*tul*] a powerful wind over the sea, causing a violent storm that threatened to break the ship apart. (Jonah 1:4, emphasis added)*

*Fearing for their lives, the desperate sailors shouted to their gods for help and **threw** [*tul*] the cargo overboard to lighten the ship. But all this time Jonah was sound asleep down in the hold. (1:5, emphasis added)*

*“**Throw** [*tul*] me into the sea,” Jonah said, “and it will become calm again. I know that this terrible storm is all my fault.” (1:12, emphasis added)*

*Then the sailors picked Jonah up and **threw** [*tul*] him into the raging sea, and the storm stopped at once! (1:15, emphasis added)*

The author could have used alternative words to describe the four actions, but he chose the same in each. Determine what theological emphasis the author’s repetition conveys. Remember to use your Bible study tools.

Irony Two: Fear/Worship

In Jonah 1, the author used the Hebrew root *yare* six times. It can mean “fear,” “afraid,” “worship,” “honor,” or “revere.”

***Fearing** [*yare*] for their lives, the desperate sailors shouted to their gods for help and threw the cargo overboard to lighten the ship. But all this time Jonah was sound asleep down in the hold. (Jonah 1:5, emphasis added)*



Prayers Onboard—Prophet Overboard!

Jonah 1:9–17

*Jonah answered, “I am a Hebrew, and I **worship** [yare] the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land.” (Jonah 1:9, emphasis added)*

*The sailors were **terrified** [yare] when they heard this, for he had already told them he was running away from the LORD. “Oh, why did you do it?” they groaned. (1:10, emphasis added) (The word yare is mentioned twice for emphasis.)*

*The sailors were **awestruck** [yare] by the LORD’s great power, and they offered him a sacrifice and vowed to serve him. (1:16, emphasis added) (Yare is mentioned twice for emphasis.)*

What theological emphasis or emphases did the author communicate through this repetition of *yare*?

Concluding Interpretation

In the last *Searching the Scriptures* study, we noted God’s control over this world. How did the author further develop this theme in Jonah 1:13–17?

If you’ve been brought to your knees and your limitations have been revealed to you, learn from the sailors. Learn from the sailors that it’s time to be awestruck. —Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: “I Want the Wicked to Turn and Live.” —God

God’s judgment against Jonah prompted the sailors to turn from their false gods. In Jonah 1:16, the Phoenician sailors made a sacrifice in gratitude to Israel’s God and vowed to Him in faith. Repentance—it’s what God desires of all: “Do you think that I like to see wicked people die? says the Sovereign LORD. Of course not! I want them to turn from their wicked ways and live” (Ezekiel 18:23).



Prayers Onboard—Prophet Overboard!

Jonah 1:9–17

First Thessalonians 1:2–9

Around AD 50, Paul wrote from Corinth to the Thessalonian church. He began his letter with a beautiful image of the Thessalonians' repentance. Take a moment to read *1 Thessalonians 1:2–9*, noting especially 1:9. How did Paul describe the event and outcome of the Thessalonians' turn to God?

Anticipating Jesus

In the next verse, Paul said:

And they speak of how you are looking forward to the coming of God's Son from heaven—Jesus, whom God raised from the dead. He is the one who has rescued us from the terrors of the coming judgment. (1 Thessalonians 1:10)

What the sailor's experienced in part—the deliverance and mercy of God—Jesus offers in full. Jesus received the storm of God's wrath, which is against all evil, that we might be more than conquerors through Him because He loves us. Now we await our full deliverance from all the storms of this world. He will appear one day. Maybe soon!



Application: Releasing Your Grip

Storms that shock us remind us of who is in charge. They have a way of helping us release our grip on what we have been clinging to too tightly. —Chuck Swindoll

Is there something in your life that you now realize you have clung to too tightly? What do you need to do to release your grip on it?



Prayers Onboard—Prophet Overboard!

Jonah 1:9–17

Sometimes, God sends the storm when we need to rearrange our priorities. Do your priorities need rearranging? Do you worship with God's people regularly? Do you share your resources with others? Do you meet with friends and build them up?

We don't always need a storm to remind us to march in step with God. Sometimes the Lord whispers His presence to us in a gentle reminder that He is with us. Cup your ears to hear your Savior, and when you sense His loving call, don't hesitate. Obey the One who has the universe at His command.



A FINAL PRAYER

Reflect upon Jonah 1. Consider what you learned about God and His ways. Write a prayer below expressing your gratitude to Him and making your requests known before Him.



JONAH: THE RELUCTANT PROPHET

STUDY FOUR

Finally . . . Jonah Connects the Dots

Jonah 2:1–10

Prayer is the most natural thing in the world.

—Charles R. Swindoll

WHY do we even study the Old Testament? After all, it consists of documents written thousands of years ago, in languages you and I don't speak, and to people who have never heard of a lightbulb. It discusses strange events like an ax head that floated in water (2 Kings 6:1–7), a Babylonian king whose hair grew “as long as eagles’ feathers” (Daniel 4:33), and two million people who walked through an aquatic corridor (Exodus 14:21–22). In fact, the apostle Paul tells us why we still study this book:

For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. (Romans 15:4 NASB)

In this study, we will focus on one of those strange events—written for our instruction and hope—in which God taught Jonah how to pray in the strangest of chapels: *the belly of a fish!* We will join Chuck Swindoll to see Jonah's divinely inspired epiphany which will teach us how to pray no matter the place or time . . . because God is everywhere, always.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Speaking of prayer, it is best to pray before communing with God through His Word. So take a moment to quiet your mind and ask Jesus to incline your heart to His and to increase your understanding of His will for you as you study His Word.



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Finally . . . Jonah Connects the Dots

Jonah 2:1–10



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

As you may recall, we ended our last study of Jonah with this verse:

Now the LORD had arranged for a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights. (Jonah 1:17)

What would you do if you found yourself inside a fish for three days and three nights? *Pray!* That is exactly what Jonah did, and it is recorded for us in the second chapter of the book that bears his name. The gastric juices made Jonah connect the dots about God and our universe: “Actually, I can’t run from the presence of the Lord because He’s everywhere. I think I’ll see if He can hear me.” And God did hear him.

Prayer is always reassuring. It reminds us that we’re never alone. Never. It results in our being less fearful as boldness replaces weakness and reluctance. —Chuck Swindoll



Observation: Jonah Prayed

Begin with a slow reading of *Jonah 2*. Perhaps read it a few times in multiple translations.

While it is easy to discover twenty, fifty, or even two hundred observations, we should eventually prioritize them. So take a moment to list your top ten observations below. Look for contrasts and comparisons, metaphors, vivid descriptors, and words or thoughts that repeat.



Finally . . . Jonah Connects the Dots

Jonah 2:1–10

What actions did the Lord perform according to:

- 1) *Jonah 2:2* _____
- 2) *Jonah 2:3* _____
- 3) *Jonah 2:4* _____
- 4) *Jonah 2:6* _____
- 5) *Jonah 2:10* _____

How is the Lord related to Jonah according to:

- 1) *Jonah 2:1* _____
- 2) *Jonah 2:6* _____

What does the Lord possess according to:

- 1) *Jonah 2:3* _____
- 2) *Jonah 2:4* _____
- 3) *Jonah 2:7* _____

What two benefits do humans receive from God according to:

- 1) *Jonah 2:8* _____
- 2) *Jonah 2:9* _____

How valuable it is that we can call on God for whatever may be our need. —Chuck Swindoll



Finally . . . Jonah Connects the Dots

Jonah 2:1–10



Interpretation: God Listened to Jonah

During interpretation, we discover the passage's meaning by studying the passage's historical context, literary features, and theological teaching. The poetry of Jonah 2 states explicitly what the narrative of Jonah simply implies.

Hebrew writers commonly used a poetic device called *parallelism*—a method that connects one statement with the preceding one. Parallelism helps us discern the author's meaning because it shows us how he connected his ideas. Parallelism frequently occurs in three ways:

- 1) *Synonymous*: two statements of the same idea or image
- 2) *Contrasting*: two statements with contrasting ideas or images
- 3) *Synthetic*: two statements where the second develops the first

*You threw me into the ocean depths,
and I sank down to the heart of the sea. (Jonah 2:3)*

Notice in verse 3 how the author's second statement developed the thought of the first. It is synthetic parallelism.

Reread Jonah 2 and record the parallelisms you can find. Then review them and explain how the connections enhance the meaning of the text.



Finally . . . Jonah Connects the Dots

Jonah 2:1–10

Lastly, research and explain the theological significance of Jonah 2:8–9. Consider how these verses relate *Jonah 1:5, 7, and 16*. Remember to consult your *Bible study helps*. God has worked through countless men and women across the centuries who have helped make His Word clear for His people.

Anytime you are in great trouble, prayer fits. —Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Something Greater Than Jonah Is Here

Did you realize that Jesus mentioned Jonah to teach about His own identity and purpose. Read carefully the two paragraphs from the gospel of Matthew.

One day some teachers of religious law and Pharisees came to Jesus and said, “Teacher, we want you to show us a miraculous sign to prove your authority.” But Jesus replied, “Only an evil, adulterous generation would demand a miraculous sign; but the only sign I will give them is the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights. “The people of Nineveh will stand up against this generation on judgment day and condemn it, for they repented of their sins at the preaching of Jonah. Now someone greater than Jonah is here—but you refuse to repent.” (Matthew 12:38–41)

One day the Pharisees and Sadducees came to test Jesus, demanding that he show them a miraculous sign from heaven to prove his authority. He replied, “You know the saying, ‘Red sky at night means fair weather tomorrow; red sky in the morning means foul weather all day.’ You know how to interpret the weather signs in the sky, but you don’t know how to interpret the signs of the times! Only an evil, adulterous generation would demand a miraculous sign, but the only sign I will give them is the sign of the prophet Jonah.” Then Jesus left them and went away. (16:1–4)



Finally . . . Jonah Connects the Dots

Jonah 2:1–10

Based on what Jesus said in the two paragraphs above, how do the events of Jonah's life and his role as a prophet anticipate and explain the person and work of Jesus Christ?

The great fish that swallowed Jonah symbolizes the specter of death that glides like a shadow beneath the surface of our lives. When Jonah entered the cold, dark tomb of the fish's stomach and descended to the depths of the sea, he had no hope for survival. But this watery grave was not the end for Jonah, and neither was the rocky tomb the end for our Lord Jesus. Like Jonah, Jesus emerged from the grave after three days. And in the name of Jesus, we cry out to God in our darkest hour—the only One who has the power to come to our aid when we have nowhere else to run.



Application: Connecting with God

Even though we are not encased in the stomach lining of a living creature, we still have reason to pray. We have reason to give thanks, to make our requests known, to intercede for others, and to exalt our Lord with the words of our mouth from the depths of our heart.

Reflect on your prayer habits. Record below where they have been strong and where they have been weak.

Remember that we pray not to earn God's favor or to place Him in our debt. Rather, we pray because it is the channel through which God has ordained to bless us, to shower His grace upon us. It strengthens us spiritually and makes our heavenly Father smile.



Finally . . . Jonah Connects the Dots

Jonah 2:1–10

Regarding prayer, Chuck would like us all to consider these four principles:

- 1) Prayer is always appropriate.
- 2) Prayer is always a priority.
- 3) Prayer is always beneficial.
- 4) Prayer is always reassuring.

Know someone enduring a trying season who may prefer to be in the belly of a fish? Take a moment to record a prayer for that person in need. Send a text message or e-mail stating you are praying for him or her.



A FINAL PRAYER

In light of Jonah's thanksgiving hymn of deliverance, it seems fitting that we close in the same spirit. Record your own prayer of praise to Jesus for delivering you from the judgment you have earned and giving you eternal hope no one can take away.



JONAH: THE RELUCTANT PROPHET

STUDY FIVE

God of the Second Chance

Jonah 3:1–4

My hope today is that you who need a second chance will hear of the mercy of God in such a way that you will avail yourself of it.

—Charles R. Swindoll

AWESOME! Have you ever considered how often this word is used? Sadly, it saturates so much of our everyday language that it has lost its meaning. We'll say, "That fried chicken was awesome!" or "Steve has an awesome dog!" or "Last night's movie was awesome!"

Then we'll enter the pew Sunday morning, lift our hands in worship, and sing, "Our God is an awesome God!" But wait, can we equate God with fried chicken? Fried chicken didn't create the stars. Chuck Swindoll recommends that we restrict our use of *awesome* so that it's used only of God.

In today's study, we will join Chuck as we embark into Jonah chapter three, which reveals just a few of the many reasons—namely, invigorating grace and pardoning mercy—we worship a God who alone can be called *AWESOME!*



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Jonah 3:1–4 demonstrates God's mercy and relentlessness in accomplishing His divine plan in and through us—in spite of our frailty and fallenness.

With that remarkable truth in mind, take a moment to prepare your heart for this study. Write a thoughtful prayer asking Jesus to enlighten your understanding of Him and to strengthen your walk with Him.



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God of the Second Chance

Jonah 3:1–4

God's mercy has a wonderful way of covering our shame and offering us full forgiveness.
—Chuck Swindoll



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Let's begin by summarizing the story of Jonah so far. Think of Jonah 1 and 2 in terms of what Jonah did and what God did.

Chapter	What Did Jonah Do?	What Did God Do?
One		
Two		



Observation: Reading Slowly

Using Chuck's *Searching the Scriptures* study method, observe *Jonah 3:1–4*.



God of the Second Chance

Jonah 3:1–4

The author emphasized three important components in this passage. How are each described?

Jonah's Call

City of Nineveh

Jonah's Message

God will never block you out of His family once you have entered His family through faith in Jesus.
—Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Understanding Clearly

The original language of the biblical passage and the historical context in which it was written serve as the foundation for understanding its theological truths. Theology proper is the study of God while theology in general is the study of divinely revealed truth that pertains not only to God Himself but also to truth from God about this world and our existence. A biblical passage's theology builds the bridge between the ancient text and the current day.



God of the Second Chance

Jonah 3:1–4

Remember to consult your Bible study resources during interpretation. These resources include a Bible dictionary, Bible atlas, and commentaries. The *NET Bible* offers excellent online helps like translation notes and Constable's Notes.

God's second chance for Jonah displays qualities of God's nature that we can only describe as *awesome*. What does Jonah 3:1–4 teach us about God's persistence?

What does Jonah 3:1–4 teach us about God's mercy?

How and why is this teaching from Jonah 3:1–4 about God's persistence and mercy significant for us today?



Correlation: Comparing Carefully

In addition to disobedient Jonah, God also displayed His compassion for the lost Ninevites. God insisted that Nineveh have a chance to avoid destruction, that they hear His warning of doom. He also insisted that Jonah himself, who benefited from God's mercy, deliver that message. As His image bearers, God chooses to use us as instruments that extend to others the new life He offers. After we connect with God, He uses us to connect others to Him.



God of the Second Chance

Jonah 3:1–4

It wasn't Jonah's message to be proclaimed. It was God's. And every preacher, every evangelist, every missionary, every musician who delivers the message of God must remember it is God's message. His message is to be proclaimed. It is not mine. It is not ours. —Chuck Swindoll

Enclosed in a dark Roman prison, Paul composed a letter to the church at Ephesus to strengthen them with gospel theology and direct them in gospel living. Ephesians 2:1–10 contains the same divine pattern we find in Jonah 3:1–4, in which God mercifully saves us and then powerfully uses us. He raises us to life to give us a second chance in the most profound sense.

Carefully study *Ephesians 2:1–10* using multiple Bible translations. Then answer the following questions.

How does this passage portray God's mercy and grace when He saves His children?

How did our identity change when God saved us?

What will be the outcome of our lives on this earth after God makes us alive in Christ?

So, if you've blown it, seek His forgiveness. Come to Him just exactly as you are. Don't wallow in your misery or shame. He knows fully what you've done and why you've done it. Say, "Here I am—fallen, broken, miserable—and I need what only you can give." —Chuck Swindoll



God of the Second Chance

Jonah 3:1–4

Application: Receiving Personally

Now it's your turn to consider ways Jonah 3:1–4 might help us follow Jesus today. Consider the season of life you are in. Below you will develop three principles and three ways to pray based on what you have learned.

Principles may be truths you need to remember during happy days or while enduring a dark storm. Principles may also be actions to do or habits to form. List below three principles you would like to take from Jonah 3:1–4.

Principle One

Principle Two

Principle Three



God of the Second Chance

Jonah 3:1–4

How might Jonah 3:1–4 lead you to pray? What truth did we learn about our awesome God which leads us to praise Him? Did the text mention a need that humans have which only God can satisfy? List the three ways to pray below.

Prayer One

Prayer Two

Prayer Three



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I pray You touch my life since, though I am sinful, You have provided me with a second chance . . . and a third and a fourth and an infinite number. How grateful I am for that! Because of Your mercies, I have not been consumed; Your compassions fail not. Remind me that my need for You is total, not partial, and You have more than sufficiently provided for all my needs in Jesus, my Lord. In His name I pray, amen.



JONAH: THE RELUCTANT PROPHET

STUDY SIX

Proclamation, Transformation, Compassion

Jonah 3:3–10

God is pleased whenever and wherever His message is proclaimed. He has promised to bless His Word and to use it in our lives and in the lives of others. That means God's messengers have one major task: to teach His Word, to preach His Word, to proclaim His Word, and then to live that truth in their lives, step back, and watch Him work.

—Charles R. Swindoll

THE Lord of glory could have dispatched one of His angelic hosts, robed in white and poised with power, to warn the wicked Ninevites of their incurred destruction. Seeing a lightning flash and hearing a thunderous voice—that would have taught them the meaning of fear and caused them to take God seriously. But it seems God rarely sends trumpeting angels to proclaim His Word. The Bible teaches us that God mainly uses people—dirt fashioned in His divine image—to deliver His divine message.

No one, certainly not Jonah, could have guessed how the Ninevites might react to his short message: “Forty days from now Nineveh will be destroyed!” (Jonah 3:4). How did they respond? For now, let’s just say the number of converts was of *biblical proportions*.

In this study, we will join Chuck Swindoll in Jonah 3:2–10 to examine Jonah’s proclamation, discover the meaning of repentance, and witness the compassion of our God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.



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Proclamation, Transformation, Compassion

Jonah 3:3–10



PREPARE YOUR HEART

In the book of Isaiah, we read an astonishing statement about the spirit of the person to whom God responds.

Thus says the LORD,

“Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool.

Where then is a house you could build for Me?

And where is a place that I may rest?

For My hand made all these things,

Thus all these things came into being,” declares the LORD.

“But to this one I will look,

To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.”

(Isaiah 66:1–2 NASB)

Where can we find God’s presence on this earth? Where can we see the work of God upon this planet? Not in the buildings or high places which we build for Him. *He’s the creator of all!* Rather, we see Him in those who have humble and contrite spirits—in those who tremble before His Word.

Before we study the Ninevites’ miraculous act of contrition, take a moment to record a prayer. Ask Jesus to soften your heart so that you humbly receive His Word and walk by its light. From Isaiah 66:1–2, we know our Savior delights in this.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Remember: effective Bible study must not be rushed. It should be methodical. We slowly savor the spiritual meal to enjoy it rather than scarf it down without receiving any hint of the flavors. In *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, Chuck wrote, “Discipline and diligence are required when we prepare our own meals from the Bible, just as time and effort are required when we cook physical meals.”¹



Proclamation, Transformation, Compassion

Jonah 3:3–10



Observation: Walking the Streets of Nineveh

Begin observation with a slow read through of *Jonah 3:1–10*. We'll include the last study's passage for context. Note important observations you find as you walk the streets of Nineveh with Jonah.

You'll observe that Jonah didn't hold back when he declared his extremely confrontive message to a city that was known for violence. He didn't mince words. —Chuck Swindoll

How does Jonah 3:5 relate to 3:6–9?

Sometimes, writing a verse in our own words helps us draw out its substance phrase by phrase. Do that below with Jonah 3:10.



Proclamation, Transformation, Compassion

Jonah 3:3–10



Interpretation: Nineveh, Meet God

Three themes thread the surface of Jonah 3. Let's look at each one.

Necessity of a Bold Declaration

In what way does Jonah 3 reveal the importance of speaking truth—even when that truth might be difficult for the hearers?

In what way does Jonah 3 illustrate that the *message* of God is greater than the *messenger* of God?

The Marks of True Repentance

During observation, we noticed that Jonah 3:5 summarizes the events in 3:6–9. So what additional understanding would we miss if the author had chosen not to include the details of 3:6–9?



Proclamation, Transformation, Compassion

Jonah 3:3–10

The Relief of Divine Favor

How did God respond? “He changed his mind and did not carry out the destruction he had threatened” (Jonah 3:10). What attributes of God do you see on display in God’s response to the Ninevites’ repentance?

Compassion replaced destruction. There it is. It all begins with a proclamation which leads to transformation and which results in compassion. The proclamation from the messenger, the transformation of the human heart, and the compassion of the living God to come into a life and bring about a change. God not only changed His mind regarding the destruction, He changed them from within.
—Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Never Turning from the Gospel

The good news of Jesus we proclaim today has the same power as Jonah’s message to transform the hearts of the lost “Ninevites” in our world. With similar brevity as Jonah, Paul proclaimed the simple basics of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1–4.

Gospel Basics

According to *1 Corinthians 15:1–4*, what are the most important components of the gospel?

God’s Word will never return empty. . . . The messenger isn’t that significant. The messenger doesn’t have to be clever or super creative. The messenger certainly doesn’t have to be perfect or profound or, for that matter, all that persuasive. The messenger doesn’t have to be eloquent or impressive or brilliant, but the messenger needs to be faithful. . . . I never think before Sunday arrives about what you want to hear. It never dawns on me. . . . My job is to deliver what God has written and what you need to hear. —Chuck Swindoll



Proclamation, Transformation, Compassion

Jonah 3:3–10

Gospel Power

According to 1 Corinthians 15:1–4, what consistent response should we have to the gospel, and what does the gospel do for believers as they continue walking by the light and power of the gospel?



Application: No One's Too Far Gone

Considering the power of God's Word and God's delight to use it in us, take a moment to consider one truth from Jonah 3 that you need to consistently preach to yourself over the next few weeks. Write this truth from God's Word below, keep it before you, and let it sink deeply in you so it might accomplish its perfect work in your life.

No one is too far gone into sin for us to stop hoping for their salvation. If we could swear off anyone as being outside the bounds of grace, it would be the Ninevites, who brutally enslaved and mutilated their foes. But God's message cut them to the quick so that they received His mercy. So also, the gospel can penetrate even the hardest hearts of the people we know.

Can you think of someone in your life who seems too far gone? How should you pray for him or her? Take a moment to pray to God on his or her behalf. Then write down how you can display God's love to that person. Sometimes it takes acts of selfless love to soften hardened hearts so they receive a gospel word.



Proclamation, Transformation, Compassion

Jonah 3:3–10

Just as in the days of Jonah, when we proclaim God’s message, hearts transform, and God pours out His compassion. Don’t give up hope on those you love who seem distant from God. In truth, God’s mercy is nearer than you . . . or they . . . can imagine.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for Your power that ignites truth in my life, even in those times when I am not necessarily expecting it or looking for it. I don’t ever want to take for granted that tremendous mercy: to be able to hear from You, the living God. How amazing it is that You call me friend! Please don’t let me be a fleeing Jonah, hesitant to share Your Word, but let me be Your mouthpiece for those who need good news. In Jesus’ name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 57.



JONAH: THE RELUCTANT PROPHET

STUDY SEVEN

The Grumblings of an Angry Prophet

Jonah 3:10–4:5

Our desire is that the Lord would open our eyes to see what is written, what was meant to those to whom it was written, and what it means to us who live centuries later.

—Charles R. Swindoll

YOU know when you're in the presence of a mature person—one who stands strong like a deep-rooted tree during a hurricane. In fact, often, it's the winds of inconvenience or storms of disappointment that reveal a person's maturity . . . or lack thereof.

When little Jimmy or Susie throws a temper tantrum, we understand; they're children. But how pitiful it is to see adult James or grown-up Susan whine and stamp their feet when they don't get their way. Sadly, it's that very reaction we see in Jonah. Adult Jonah became pouting Jonah when life didn't go as he wanted it to go. Simply put: he was a man disappointed with God, and he let God know it! Jonah bellyached like a four-year-old when he saw the Ninevites repent and avoid destruction.

But no matter how much we grumble or pout, we all must endure disappointments, even trials. It's the Bible's *promise*. Yet, God does not leave us in the chains of ruin. The God of free redemption promises to strengthen us and teach us wisdom during tough times—whether our disappointments result from our own selfishness or from the pains of this world.



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The Grumbings of an Angry Prophet

Jonah 3:10–4:5

Until the day of restoration when Jesus returns, we do well to heed what God says about how to respond to life's disappointments. So, in this study, we join Chuck Swindoll in the fourth chapter of Jonah to glean divine wisdom and encouragement for responding to life's trials, not as a spoiled child, but as a child of the living God.

Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing. If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. (James 1:2–5)



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Take a moment to internalize Chuck's prayer below.

Father, thank You for bringing me to the end of myself. I acknowledge the fact that I am by nature a sinful and selfish person. I want what I want when I want it. And when it doesn't come, I lash out and fight back. I know peace and relief are available, but they're only found at the cross where light replaces darkness, and life replaces death, and peace replaces chaos, and hope replaces desperation. Thank You for all of those benefits which we find in Christ. —Chuck Swindoll

Now write your own prayer expressing your need for the Spirit's aid as you study God's Word.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Before implementing Chuck's four-step Bible study method on Jonah 3:10–4:5, review the details of each process in the chart on the next page. A mastery of these steps will help you have a joyous Bible reading experience so you can foster a deep connection with our Lord, Jesus Christ.



The Grumbings of an Angry Prophet

Jonah 3:10–4:5

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES Bible Study Review	
OBSERVATION	
<i>Read the passage thoroughly.</i>	When we observe our passage, we examine: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The who, what, where, when, why, and how 2) What we can see, touch, taste, hear, and smell 3) The logical connections, flow of thoughts, and range of subjects 4) What's repeated, emphasized, related, alike, and unlike
INTERPRETATION	
<i>Understand the passage deeply.</i>	When we interpret our passage, we study: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The author's language and literary genre 2) The author's culture 3) The historical events 4) The biblical context 5) The author's beliefs about God and life
CORRELATION	
<i>Compare the passage carefully.</i>	When we correlate our passage, we compare: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Our passage's history with biblical texts addressing the same event 2) Our passage's theology with biblical texts addressing the same core truths 3) Our passage's application with biblical texts addressing the same principles
APPLICATION	
<i>Internalize the passage personally.</i>	When we apply a passage, we: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Look for ways to pray in light of what the passage teaches 2) Ask specific questions about thoughts and actions we may need to change 3) Heed our Lord's warnings 4) Obey our Lord's commands 5) Believe our Lord's promises
<p><i>This habit is indispensable for life and ministry. There is no substitute! Searching the Scriptures yields a richness in life unlike anything else.¹ —Chuck Swindoll</i></p>	



The Grumbings of an Angry Prophet

Jonah 3:10–4:5



Observation: The Anger of Jonah

Begin by reading *Jonah 3:10–4:5*, then write down anything you think worth noting.

Why did Jonah get upset (*Jonah 4:1–2*)?

What qualities about God did Jonah express, and why did he do so (*4:2*)?

What did Jonah request in his prayer (*4:3*)?

How did God respond to Jonah's request (*4:4*)?



The Grumbings of an Angry Prophet

Jonah 3:10–4:5

How does the scene close (Jonah 4:5)?

God lets the complaint continue. He doesn't slap the man across his face. God doesn't do that. He's patient and gracious, even with an angry, pouting adult prophet named Jonah who acts more like a spoiled child. —Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: The Patience of God

Don't forget to consult your resources during interpretation. A Bible dictionary and commentary can be great places to start only after you have thoroughly read the text and asked the questions. We recommend grabbing a copy of *The Swindoll Study Bible* if you don't have it already.

You can also access excellent tools at NETBible.org:

- 1) The New English Translation Bible, produced by the faculty at Dallas Theological Seminary with more than fifty-eight thousand explanatory footnotes
- 2) The complete set of updated Constable's Notes on the Bible, written by Thomas L. Constable, former senior emeritus professor of Bible Exposition at Dallas Theological Seminary

As we have seen, the author of Jonah used wordplay and irony to convey his meaning. We will look at two usages of irony now.

Irony One: Destruction/Anger

Seven times in Jonah, the author used the Hebrew word *raah* to connote “destruction,” “disaster,” “upset,” or “anger.” It occurs three times in this study's passage.



The Grumblings of an Angry Prophet

Jonah 3:10–4:5

*When God saw what they had done and how they had put a stop to their evil ways, he changed his mind and did not carry out the **destruction** [raah] he had threatened. This change of plans **greatly upset** [raah] Jonah, and he became very angry. So he complained to the LORD about it: “Didn’t I say before I left home that you would do this, LORD? That is why I ran away to Tarshish! I knew that you are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. You are eager to turn back from **destroying** [raah] people.” (Jonah 3:10–4:2, emphasis added)*

What did the author emphasize by saying that Nineveh’s avoidance of calamitous destruction (*raah*) became for Jonah a kind of emotional destruction (*raah*)?

Irony Two: Death

Jonah’s prayer in chapter two praised God for saving his life. Jonah’s prayer in chapter four requested that God give him death because he was angry at God for saving the lives of the Ninevites. Jonah’s words are poetic:

*“And, now, O Lord,
Take my breath from me,
For greater is my death than my life.” (Jonah 4:3, author’s translation)*

Why is it significant, ironically speaking, that Jonah prayed for death?



The Grumblings of an Angry Prophet

Jonah 3:10–4:5

The Divine Response and Jonah's Refusal

Imagine hearing an audible response from the voice of the Almighty immediately after you pray. That's what Jonah got. What theological significance did God's question convey to Jonah, and how is this theological significance relevant in our day?

And what does Jonah say? Like a spoiled child, he zips it. Jonah has nothing to say. He gives God the silent treatment. Really, Jonah? You're being asked a question by the living God who gives you breath in your lungs, a heartbeat, a brain wave, and the ability to walk and talk. A little respect please. In Jonah's refusal to answer, he decides to build a place to sulk. —Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Suffering for Being a Christian

Jonah did not get what he wanted, so he shook his fist and wagged his head against the great I Am. Even though we know it isn't true, Christians often assume this life should go well for us because we follow Jesus. Trials surprise us. But they shouldn't. We all must face them.

Jesus even tells us we may endure trials and disappointments *because we are Christians*.

The New Testament has much to say about the trials and disappointments of Christians, so we should take notice of these teachings because we never know when we might suffer for our faith. For this reason, we will review [1 Peter 4:12–19](#).

According to Peter, how should we interpret suffering as a Christian?



The Grumbings of an Angry Prophet

Jonah 3:10–4:5

How should we respond to God if we suffer as a Christian?

How should we respond to the situation or to persecutors if they hurt or revile us for being Christians?



Application: Considering a Better Alternative

Grumbling makes life worse for everyone—the grumblers as well as those who hear the grumbling. Let's consider four of Chuck's takeaways in light of our study of Jonah 3:10–4:5.

- 1) Start each day remembering, *"I'm not in charge."*
- 2) Live each day remembering, *"I'm really blessed."*
- 3) End each day remembering, *"I did not get what I deserved."*
- 4) Before you drop off to sleep, pray, *"I leave it all in Your hands."*

Take a moment to reflect on your life, and jot down an area or two that most tempts you to grumble.



The Grumbings of an Angry Prophet

Jonah 3:10–4:5

Taking it a step further, write down what aspect of those areas you are thankful for. How can Chuck's take-aways help you in those areas?

In the belly of the fish, Jonah prayed to live. At Nineveh, Jonah prayed to die. God granted Jonah's first request but not his second—such is the nature of our wise and compassionate Father. He accepts us in whatever stage of maturity we may be, and He always does what's best to help us grow.



A FINAL PRAYER

Our first response to God after we close our study of a passage should always be prayer—be it praise or petition, confession or contemplation. Use these last minutes of your study to write down that prayer.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 16.



JONAH: THE RELUCTANT PROPHET

STUDY EIGHT

Ticked Off to the Bitter End

Jonah 4:5–11

God's love and mercy were far greater than Jonah's hatred and prejudice.

—Charles R. Swindoll

WHEN Adam and Eve overstepped the divine boundary, eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they birthed into the world a cataclysmic chaos just after God finished establishing a blissful order. That single overstep disrupted all relationships: human to human, human to beast, human to habitat, human to self, and human to God. It catapulted humanity into spiritual isolation—void of knowing the true God and the blessing His unhindered presence brings.

From that spiritual isolation, we further distance ourselves from each other, not only inciting hatred, prejudice, anxiety, depression, and paranoia but also rape, suicide, and mass murder. This godlessness bankrupts us spiritually.

Thankfully, isolation does not have the final word because God sent His Word to get our attention. He intervened to awaken us, so we can connect with Him and live as we are made to live.

Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe. (Hebrews 1:1–2)

It's that kind of grace-driven, divine intervention that we will explore with Chuck Swindoll as we study Jonah 4:5–11.

We'll not only view Jonah's stubborn heart but also God's fatherly heart that compelled Him to speak a word to enlighten Jonah's mind and appoint a plant to shade Jonah's head. As we will see, that same fatherly heart compelled Him to send us His Son at just the right time.



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Ticked Off to the Bitter End

Jonah 4:5–11



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Read the prayer below and make it your own as you prepare to engage the last passage of Jonah. Because the Bible is God-breathed, we always pray before, during, and after our study that God might soften our hearts, transform our minds, and renew our lives.

Father, this passage comes as an indirect rebuke to all who live lives of selfishness and self-serving motivations. So please deliver me from my own agenda, my own plan, and my own desires caused by my own narrow-mindedness. There is none better to restore my life than You, none better to guide me in life than You, and none better to satisfy my life than You.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

The Lord has preserved His Word to make us aware of who He is, and then by way of reflection on that, of who we are. And the beautiful thing about Scripture is that there is nothing like it. I hope you never take for granted the privilege of having the Bible in your own language. —Chuck Swindoll



Observation: An Isolated and Raging Prophet

Begin this first step, observation, in your Bible study method by reading *Jonah 4:5–11* several times and taking a few notes on what you see.



Ticked Off to the Bitter End

Jonah 4:5–11

God's Intervention

You'll remember from the last study that Jonah prayed to die because he hated to see the Ninevites avoid God's calamity. Then God reached out to Jonah: "The LORD replied, 'Is it right for you to be angry about this?'" (Jonah 4:4).

What additional ways did God reach out to get Jonah's attention in 4:5–11?

Jonah's Response

How did Jonah respond to God's attempts at getting his attention?

Observing the Emphases

If you read the New Living Translation, then you probably noticed the author used "God arranged" three times. What three objects did God arrange in this passage?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



Ticked Off to the Bitter End

Jonah 4:5–11



Interpretation: A God Abounding in Mercy and Steadfast Love

During interpretation, we discover the biblical author's intention, so we can better understand God's ways and God's will, which, in turn, helps us discern how to appropriately respond to God's Word.

Irony: "Arranged"

As we have seen previously, the author used wordplay to emphasize his point. The last bit of irony we will examine comes from the author's use of the Hebrew word *manah*, which means "arrange" or "appoint." Above, we noted that God arranged, *manah*, the "leafy plant" (Jonah 4:6), "worm" (4:7), and "scorching east wind" (4:8). Previously, God had arranged one other significant object:

*"Now the LORD had **arranged** [manah] for a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights." (1:17, emphasis added)*

Throughout this account of Jonah, God used both words and nature to get Jonah's attention. What did God want Jonah to learn from His arranging the natural world?

Unlike his God, who is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance, Jonah was not willing that any of the Ninevites should live by coming to repentance.
—Chuck Swindoll

The Character of God

To teach Jonah what he should've already known, God compared Jonah's relationship to the plant with His own relationship to the Ninevites. What does the last statement in this book teach us about the character of God?



Ticked Off to the Bitter End

Jonah 4:5–11



Correlation: The Mind of Christ

Jonah's sails followed the winds of his selfishness. His hardened heart had no room for the welfare of the Ninevites. But God's heart did, and it's that same heart of compassion and mercy we see, on greater display, through the person and work of Jesus Christ. For this reason, we will correlate this last passage of Jonah with a portrait of Jesus, which Paul put before the saints at Philippi that they might emulate the One who perfectly lived in the divine image.

Take a moment to read *Philippians 2:1–11*. What did Paul say about the nature of Jesus?

As Christians, how do we share in that divine nature, and how should we embrace it (*bearing in mind that Jonah did not embrace it*)?

When God gave His son, He gave us the gift that is too wonderful for words. And we, who would otherwise be sitting in darkness, because we have faith in the Savior, can trust in Him and know a life we could never otherwise know . . . and live a life we could never otherwise live. —Chuck Swindoll



Application: Getting Rid of the Jonah in Us

All of us have a bit of Jonah lingering in our hearts. Some have a lot of Jonah. We're fallen creatures with the propensity to be selfish. But through the Holy Spirit, we have the mind of Christ who loves us and gave Himself for us.



Ticked Off to the Bitter End

Jonah 4:5–11

Take a moment to reflect on your life—the innerworkings of your heart and the habits of your mind. Note the ways you are tempted to be a Jonah.

Let me be direct. It's easy in this day and age to become that selfish. It's easy. Just follow the direction of the majority. Plan for yourself, live for yourself, think of yourself. Work for yourself in the sense of your plans, your future, your salary. Care little about those who are lost and press right on in that lifestyle, and I will tell you, little by little your world will revolve around only you. How empty it is to live that way. —Chuck Swindoll

Now in reflection upon Christ—His love for you and the power He has already worked in your life—how can you develop a more selfless mind-set and a more caring heart, even for someone you might despise?



A FINAL PRAYER

To close this study, reread Jonah 4:5–11 and Philippians 2:1–11. Based on how God moves your heart, write a prayer below exulting the character of God according to these passages and asking for the grace to do what glorifies Him.



JONAH: THE RELUCTANT PROPHET

STUDY NINE

Lessons Learned from a Stubborn Preacher

Selections from Jonah

The Bible stabilizes us by teaching us that we can have a relationship with the One who made us and who stays with us all through our lives. We discover what's essential about our God.

—Charles R. Swindoll

THE Bible contains the divine deposit of information, spiritual gold, stored nowhere else on the planet—nor the universe for that matter. No other piece of literature, no human mind, no leaf, no star, and no mountain can convey what God teaches us through His Word. In it, we learn:

- 1) What's essential to know about God
- 2) What's essential to know about others
- 3) What's essential to know about ourselves

From these, we gain inner-security, self-awareness, and discernment. That's why we immerse our minds in God's Word, anchor our hearts to His promises, and set our highest affection on the Lord Jesus Christ. By doing this, we obey the psalmist's command: "Forget none of His benefits" (Psalm 103:2 NASB).

In this final study of Jonah, we will reflect upon the lessons we have learned from a stubborn preacher, Jonah, who wanted to withhold from the Ninevites those benefits he had enjoyed from God's Word and God's presence.



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Selections from Jonah



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Begin by reflectively praying with Chuck Swindoll.

Father, if ever we love You, we love You now. Now in this treacherous time in which we live. Now, when our world is a dangerous and difficult place to serve Christ. Now, when we face challenges and threats. Lord, if there's ever been a time we've loved You, we want You to know we love You now. And because of that we set apart this time that's before us. We pray that our walk with You will be consistent. That our relationship with You will be real. That our time with You will be meaningful. That our response to You will be obedience. All this we pray in Jesus' name that You may have the glory. Amen.
—Chuck Swindoll



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

First, we will complete our study of the book of Jonah by perusing Chuck's overview chart once more.

JONAH

	Running from God	Running to God	Running with God	Running against God
	First commission of Jonah	Prayer of Jonah	Second commission of Jonah	Prejudice of Jonah
	Results of disobedience	Communication with the Lord	Results of obedience	Lessons from the Lord
	CHAPTER 1	CHAPTER 2	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTER 4
Theme	God's infinite mercy for all people; our reluctance to share His mercy			
Key Verses	2:9; 4:11			
Christ in Jonah	Jonah's three days in the fish anticipates Christ's death and resurrection. The Ninevites' salvation represents the salvation available to all people in Christ.			

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Lessons Learned from a Stubborn Preacher

Selections from Jonah



Observation: A Verse to Treasure

Through our studies, we've walked through the book of Jonah, gathering principles for our lives from the life of God's reluctant prophet. By now, we have examined the author's wordplay, discovered the author's theology, and witnessed the blatant shenanigans of Jonah against God. It's fitting that we should end with one more *read-through* of this forty-eight verse book. Do that now and record one verse below that you have come to treasure from your study of the book of Jonah.

In this book, we learn who God is. We learn what He does, and we get a little glimpse of why He does what He does, though some of the mystery remains. The Scriptures are like a vault of truth that is profound. —Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Truths to Live By

During interpretation, record three important truths as well as their significance for your life—truths which you would like to remember from the book of Jonah. During the application step, we will examine Chuck's four takeaways, but for now, create your own below.

Important Truths

Truth One

Truth One's Significance



Lessons Learned from a Stubborn Preacher

Selections from Jonah

Truth Two

Truth Two's Significance

Truth Three

Truth Three's Significance

Anticipating Jesus

Now, reflect on the way in which the book of Jonah anticipates the person and work of Jesus Christ, God incarnate. Record one example in which this book anticipates the coming of our Lord and Savior.



Lessons Learned from a Stubborn Preacher

Selections from Jonah

Any person who is willing to deliver God's message is a messenger God is willing to use. Even Jonah. In spite of the battle that raged within him. In spite of his own prejudice against the people of Nineveh. He used the words that God gave him, and he delivered those words to the Ninevites. God graciously looked past all the things Jonah was not in his person, and He used the message to grip the hearts of the hearers, and the Ninevites turned to God. —Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: The Benefits of God's Word

We began this study with a meditation upon the benefits of God's Word. For this step, simply read a section of Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the Bible. In 176 verses, it reflects on the life-giving and life-enriching nature of God's Word. Let the selection below affirm what you already know about God's Word and inspire you to let its work continue in you.

*Oh, how I love your instructions!
I think about them all day long.
Your commands make me wiser than my enemies,
for they are my constant guide.
Yes, I have more insight than my teachers,
for I am always thinking of your laws.
I am even wiser than my elders,
for I have kept your commandments.
I have refused to walk on any evil path,
so that I may remain obedient to your word.
I haven't turned away from your regulations,
for you have taught me well.
How sweet your words taste to me;
they are sweeter than honey.
Your commandments give me understanding;
no wonder I hate every false way of life. (Psalm 119:97–104)*



Lessons Learned from a Stubborn Preacher

Selections from Jonah



Application: Chuck's Four Takeaways

Chuck provided four lessons—one per chapter—for us to review as we end our study of the prophet Jonah, that stubborn preacher of old. Review each lesson and write a brief reflection on their relevance for your spiritual journey.

- 1) *Jonah 1: Any attempt to escape from the Lord is an act of futility.* Jonah fled west to escape God's presence, but God was waiting for him . . . because God is everywhere. We labor in vain to run away from the Lord's notice or reach. If God has called you to go and speak, He will make sure you go and speak.
- 2) *Jonah 2: Any time and any place we call on the Lord is an acceptable time and place.* That's good news for us because, no matter where we are or when we are, it's God's mercy that can keep us from continuing down the wrong road and His grace that can restore us to the right one. Who can receive that mercy and grace? Those who ask.
- 3) *Jonah 3: Any person who is willing to deliver God's message is a messenger God is willing to use.* God does not rely on our ability to persuade and woo, nor does He depend upon our eloquence and infinite learning. You have the simple message. The Spirit has given you the divine power. As an ambassador of Christ, deliver His message and trust in the work of God.
- 4) *Jonah 4: Any desire we have that conflicts with God's plan requires a change in our desire.* Immoveable and unshakable, God in His infinite wisdom connects with us—not to confer with us on what He should plan or do but to convey to us what we should plan or do. It's to His calendar we adjust and according to His directions we travel. After all, He's the one who made the sun and moon, the land and sea.



Lessons Learned from a Stubborn Preacher

Selections from Jonah



A FINAL PRAYER

In light of God's mercy toward the Ninevites and toward Jonah, it's fitting to close with a hymn that extols the mercy of God. Meditate on the hymn below, then close with your own prayer exalting God for His mercy toward us in Jesus Christ, who did not rebel when God said to go but came to purchase us as His own.

There's a Wideness in God's Mercy

*There's a wideness in God's mercy,
like the wideness of the sea.
There's a kindness in God's justice,
which is more than liberty.
There is no place where earth's sorrows
are more felt than up in heaven.
There is no place where earth's failings
have such kindly judgment given.
For the love of God is broader
than the measures of the mind.
And the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.¹*

Prayer

ENDNOTE

1. Frederick William Faber, "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy," Hymnary.org, https://hymnary.org/text/theres_a_wideness_in_gods_mercy.



JONAH: THE RELUCTANT PROPHET

STUDY NINE

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

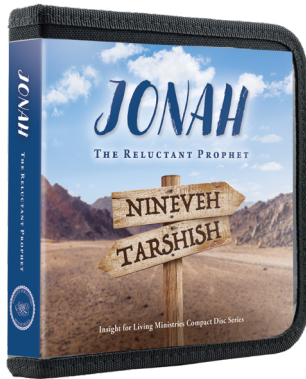
STUDY

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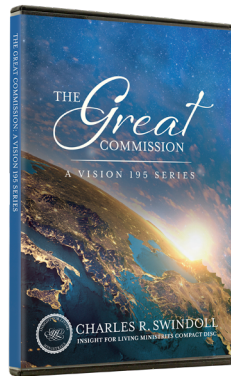
Selections from Jonah



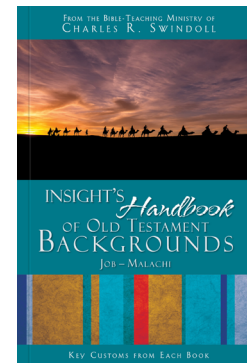
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2019 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Aaron Massey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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