



The Jonah In Us

“Jonah: A Story About a Big (Not Fish), but God!” - Week 1

Jonah 1:1-3

Introduction: As we begin our journey with Jonah, let’s note this: The most important character in this story is not the whale or even Jonah. The most important character in this story is God. The fish is mentioned four times, Jonah is mentioned 18 times, but the Lord is mentioned 38 times. The book is about a great God who has a great love for those who don’t know Him and for His prodigal sons and daughters when they stray away from Him.

Jonah - Fact or Fable?

Some of the events in Jonah’s story, especially a great sea creature swallowing Jonah and Jonah surviving it, have prompted some to identify the book as a fable. However, the Bible presents the story of Jonah as a historical account, as seen in 2 Kings 14:25, when Jonah is described as a real historical prophet. Additionally, Jesus spoke of Jonah as a real person and a real prophet who was in the real belly of a huge fish for three days and nights (Matthew 12:39-40).

Scripture text: Jonah 1:1-2

1 The word of the LORD came to Jonah, son of Amittai:

2 “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it because its

wickedness has come up before me.”

→ **Note this:** For Jonah and for us, “going to Nineveh” represents God telling us something to do that we really don’t want to do. When God said to Jonah in verse 2, “Go to Nineveh,” we would expect verse 3 to read, “And Jonah went to Nineveh.” However, that’s not what verse 3 says. Verse 3 starts with “But Jonah,” which indicates, “I prefer my will to be done.”

Scripture text: Jonah 1:3

Jonah 1:3: But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.

→ **Note this:** What are the chances that a boat would be going where Jonah wanted to go to run from God? Since it was a very long journey from Joppa to Tarshish they would not have a boat going to Tarshish every day. But when we decide to disobey God, there will always be a boat going to Tarshish. And there will always be room for one more passenger.

Today’s Takeaway Truths from God’s Word

Truth #1 - God will sometimes ask us to do things we don’t want to do.

Truth #2 - We will always be able to find a ship sailing in the wrong direction.

Truth #3 - Every step out of the will of God is a downward step.

Truth #4 - We can get away from God quickly, but we usually recover slowly.

Truth #5 - We are always moving in some direction, either away from God, behind God, ahead of God, or with God.



How God Pursues Prodigals

"Jonah: A Story About a Big (Not Fish), but God!" - Week 2

Jonah 1:4-17

Introduction: The story of Jonah is one of the best-known stories in the Bible. One of the reasons for this is that it's not the story of a man who caught a big fish but the story of a big fish that caught a man! However, we will miss most of the meaning of Jonah if we primarily think it is a story about a man swallowed by a whale who lived to tell about it. The bigger story of Jonah is about a great God who has a great love for people and the distance this God of second chances will go to bring people to Him.

Section 1 - God interrupts Jonah's getaway. (Jonah 1:4-10)

→ **Note this:** "Then the Lord sent ..." This may sound unusual to us, but the most caring thing God could do for Jonah at that moment was to send a storm into his life. The Bible tells us in places such as Hebrews 12:6 that the Lord disciplines "those He loves." God is too caring not to adjust our circumstances when we are living a harmful, disobedient life. Like a caring parent, God is a caring Heavenly Father who will lovingly correct His children in order to help us avoid future failures and live out His best for us.

Section 2 - Prophet Overboard! (Jonah 1:11-17)

→ **Note this:** God could have rescued Jonah in any number of ways. God chose this specific way because of the effect He knew being in a whale's belly would have on Jonah's heart.

Today's Takeaway Truths from God's Word

Truth #1 - Our disobedience always affects others. (Jonah 1:4-5)

Truth #2 - God will sometimes send storms to break us from our harmful self-reliance. (Jonah 1:10)

Truth #3 - Storms do not come to pay us back FOR our sins but to bring us back FROM our sins. Storms are not designed for RETRIBUTION from God; they are designed for RESTORATION with God. (Jonah 1:12)

Truth #4 - The belly of a great fish is not a happy place to live, but it can be a helpful place to hear God. (Jonah 1:17-2:1)

Truth #5 - Even if the world thinks it doesn't want our "religion," it does want our prayers, and that's a start. (Jonah 1:6)

Truth #6 - God cared about the people in Nineveh, but God had not forgotten about the people in Tarshish - everyone matters to God and should to us, too. (Jonah 1:16)

Truth #7 - It is possible to try to help a prodigal too soon. (Jonah 1:13)

Truth #8 - Even though Jonah had tried to forget about God, God had not forgotten about Jonah. (Jonah 1:17a)



You Can't Keep A Good Man Down

"Jonah: A Story About a Big (Not Fish), but God!" - Week 3

Jonah 2:1-10

Introduction: We will miss most of the meaning of the story of Jonah if we think it is primarily about a man swallowed by a whale who lived to tell about it. The bigger story of Jonah is about a great God who has a great love for people and the distance this God of second chances will go to bring people to Him.

Section 1 - In a pit, Jonah begins to pray. (Jonah 2:1)

→ **Note this:** It took being inside the belly of a whale for Jonah to look inside his heart. God knows the situation it takes to get us to look inside our hearts and to look up to Him.

Section 2 - Jonah tells of his troubles and God's faithfulness. (Jonah 2:2-7)

→ **Note this:** Jonah uses many phrases from the Psalms in this verse and the rest of chapter 2. Eight times in this prayer, he quotes from the Psalms. This is noteworthy because it shows us that Jonah was a man who not only knew God's Word, but he knew God's Word by heart.

Section 3 - Jonah renews his commitment to the Lord.

(Jonah 2:8-9)

Marks of real repentance

Mark #1 - Instead of covering up his sin - Jonah now confesses his sin. (Jonah 1:10)

Mark #2 - Jonah took responsibility for his rebellion. (Jonah 1:12)

Mark #3 - Jonah went from running from the Lord to talking with the Lord. (Jonah 2:2)

Mark #4 - Jonah's heart went from feeling a grudge to being filled with gratitude. (Jonah 2:9a)

Mark #5 - Jonah renewed his commitment to the Lord. (Jonah 2:9b)

Mark #6 - Jonah acknowledged that any saving, whether from a whale or wickedness, would have to come from the Lord. (Jonah 2:9c)

Section 4 - The fish that caught the man throws the man back. (Jonah 2:10)

Important Reminder: We get to choose whether to obey God or not, but we do not get to choose the consequences of those decisions. Although forgiveness wipes clean our hearts, it does not always wipe away the consequences of our choices.

Today's Takeaway Truths from God's Word

Truth #1 - Whatever it takes to get us on our knees is always for our ultimate good. (Jonah 2:7)

Truth #2 - There is an invaluable benefit to spending time alone with the Lord. (Jonah 2:9a)

Truth #3 - The Lord delights in delivering us from bad situations. (Jonah 2:10)

Truth #4 - Salvation starts with the Lord and is provided by the Lord. (Jonah 2:9b)



The God of Second Chances

"Jonah: A Story About a Big (Not Fish), but God!" - Week 4

Jonah 3:1-10

Introduction: Jonah was someone going the wrong way in life. Whenever we choose to go the wrong way in life, we will experience the consequences of our choices. Just look at Jonah. Jonah had been thrown from a ship, thrown into the belly of a whale, and then just thrown up by the whale! But just at the moment when it looked like Jonah had made a major mess out of his life, God gave Jonah another chance. That's one of the wonderful truths we will see today from the 3rd chapter of Jonah.

Lessons about God's second chances

Lesson #1 - God doesn't give up when we mess up.

(Jonah 3:1)

→ **Note this:** If all God cared about was Nineveh, He could have gotten someone else to preach to the people. But God wanted Jonah to see that He was not only a God of might but also a God of mercy.

Lesson #2 - Second chances start when we do our part.

(Jonah 3:2-9)

→ **Note this:** A second chance starts when we do our part of confessing our sins. Real repentance has its hope in the compassion of God. God doesn't change his mind about sin, but in His compassion, He does give us second chances to be forgiven. Second chances happen when we confess what we have done and can sincerely say, "*God, you were right in what You said about this, and I was wrong.*"

Lesson #3 - The right response to a second chance will lead to blessings.

(Jonah 3:10)

→ **Note this:** God was blessed because He did not desire destruction for the people of Nineveh but salvation. Jonah was blessed because the whale spit him out, and he was singing, "Love lifted me!" And the people of Nineveh were blessed to find salvation from the God of Jonah. Disobedience blocks God's blessings but obedience brings God's blessings.

Today's Takeaway Truths from God's Word

Truth #1 - If Nineveh can repent and be forgiven, anyone can repent and be forgiven. (Jonah 3:7-8)

Truth #2 - No matter how many times we have ignored God on something - sometimes a message from God hits home. (Jonah 3:6)

Truth #3 - With the God of second chances, we can begin again. (Jonah 3:9)



Two Steps Forward and One Step Backward

"Jonah: A Story About a Big (Not Fish), but God!" - Week 5
Jonah 4:1-11

Remember this: We will miss the meaning of the story of Jonah if we think it is primarily about a man swallowed by a whale who lived to tell about it. The bigger story of Jonah is about a great God who has a great love for people and the distance this God will go to bring people to Him.

Signs of Resentment

Sign #1 - Anger. (Jonah 4:1)

→ **Note this:** Before we write Jonah off as being a selfish, stubborn person for not wanting to see forgiveness in action, we need to ask ourselves, "Have I ever been burning mad at someone? If so, did I hold on to that anger, or did I forgive and let it go?" It is one thing to experience feelings of anger and to go to God for help with those feelings. It is something different to keep holding on to anger that can lead to resentment. One sign of resentment in our life is when we have a burning anger toward someone and won't let it go.

Sign #2 - Bitterness. (Jonah 4:2)

→ **Note this:** If Jonah is going to bring up the topic of God being a compassionate God, he should not be **RESENTFUL** about God's grace - he should be

THANKFUL for it! What character in this story has received great grace from God from the beginning of the story? Jonah! But the reason Jonah is resentful is that he doesn't see himself in "the category" of those who really need God's grace. It's a big mistake not to see our need for grace.

Sign #3 - Self-Centeredness. (Jonah 4:3)

→ **Note this:** One more result of resentment is that it makes everything about me. "MY feelings were hurt." "Things didn't go MY way." It is one thing to experience hurt and give it to God to help get over it. It is something very different to hold on to that hurt and let it become anger, bitterness, and self-centeredness.

Results of Resentment

Result #1 - Resentment can distort our perspective. (Jonah 4:4-8)

Result #2 - Resentment can destroy our peace. (Jonah 4:9)

Result #3 - Resentment can distract us from the most important matters in life. (Jonah 4:10-11)

Today's Takeaway Truths from God's Word

Truth #1 - Even when we have taken positive steps forward in our faith journey, we must consistently check the condition of our hearts, or we will slide spiritually away from God.

Truth #2 - God loves everyone, including people far from Him, like the spiritually lost people of Nineveh.

Truth #3 - People far from God still need someone to tell them about God. If you are a believer - you are a "someone."

Truth #4 - God won't make us go against our will, but He can make us willing if we ask.

Truth #5 - The story of Jonah was never about a big fish but about a big God and the distance He will go to bring people to Him.