



## Jonah

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### RECALL

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**ASK THIS:**

Would you describe yourself as a considerate driver? Are you pitiless or merciful behind the wheel? Do you ever take time to consider the people in the other vehicles? In your decision making process how often does the phrase, "what would Jesus do" cross your mind?

**SERMON RECAP:**

Many of us recall learning the story of Jonah as a child due to the imagery of a man being swallowed by a whale. Following Sunday's message, how has your view of the story of Jonah changed? What did you originally remember as being the main point of the story? What is your current view?

**READ ALOUD:**

The book of Jonah is the fifth of the Minor Prophets. While Jonah was a prophet of the Lord he was also a man of flawed character. He rebelled against God's will for his life. This disobedience led to Jonah experiencing trouble. Fortunately, the story reveals that Jonah served a gracious and loving God who is merciful to all of His people.

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### REVEAL

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**PRAY TOGETHER:**

Take a few moments and ask God to help you discern, understand and apply the spiritual truth(s) of this week's lesson.

**READ TOGETHER:**

Read through these key passages from the book of Jonah as a group.

Jonah 1:1-3 (HCSB)

"1 The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: 2 'Get up! Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because their wickedness has confronted Me.' 3 However, Jonah got up to flee to Tarshish from the LORD's presence. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. He paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish, from the LORD's presence."

Jonah 2:1-2 (HCSB)

"1 Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from inside the fish: 2 'I called to the LORD in my distress, and He answered me. I cried out for help in the belly of Sheol; You heard my voice.'"

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Jonah 3:4-5 (HCSB)

“4 Jonah set out on the first day of his walk in the city and proclaimed, ‘In 40 days Nineveh will be demolished!’ 5 The men of Nineveh believed in God. They proclaimed a fast and dressed in sackcloth—from the greatest of them to the least.”

Jonah 4:1-2 (HCSB)

“1 But Jonah was greatly displeased and became furious. 2 He prayed to the LORD: ‘Please, LORD, isn’t this what I said while I was still in my own country? That’s why I fled toward Tarshish in the first place. I knew that You are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to become angry, rich in faithful love, and One who relents from [sending] disaster.’”

Jonah 4:10-11 (HCSB)

“10 So the LORD said, ‘You cared about the plant, which you did not labor over and did not grow. It appeared in a night and perished in a night. 11 Should I not care about the great city of Nineveh, which has more than 120,000 people who cannot distinguish between their right and their left, as well as many animals?’”

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## REFLECT

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### READ ALOUD:

Briefly review the key contextual points about the book of Jonah to help you better understand and apply the message. These facts can be found in your HCSB Study Bible.

1. The book of Jonah is an anonymous narrative about the life of this authentic prophet. 2 Kings 14:25
2. There is some debate whether this story is history or parable; however, Jesus spoke about these events as if they were real (Matthew 12:38-42). Therefore, we consider the story to be an accurate historical account.
3. Jonah was asked to deliver a message from God to the city of Nineveh. Nineveh was a major city of the Assyrians, a cruel and warlike people who were longtime enemies of Israel. This explains Jonah’s reluctance to preach to the people of Nineveh.

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## RECOGNIZE

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### READ THIS:

Keeping in mind the context of the book of Jonah, carefully take note of the truth(s) and/or promises God provides.

1. God loves all of His people and seeks to grant them mercy. This is evident in God’s treatment of the Gentile sailors, in the compassion he showed to the sinful people of Nineveh, and in his patience with Jonah.
2. God reveals His sovereignty through control of natural events such as storms (1:4), utilizing a great fish to swallow and save Jonah (1:17), and raising up a plant then subsequently using a worm to destroy it (4:6-7).
3. God gave Jonah the specific task of spreading His word to a people who were in need of redemption. While Jonah found this task daunting, his attempt to escape God’s will for his life was futile.

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# RESPOND

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## **DISCUSS:**

Discuss the following questions as a group in order to help apply the truths of the book of Jonah to your life.

1. Describe a situation in your life where you sensed God's leading to take a particular path, but you turned away and took a different route due to personal insecurities.
2. The morality of the Gentile sailors initially kept them from fulfilling Jonah's (a believer's) request to throw him to his death in the sea (1:12-13). Only after they had prayed to Yahweh, a God they had not previously known, to spare them for their actions did they do so (1:14-16). In what ways do we see non-Christians upholding an equivalent or even higher standard than Christians? What affect does this have on God's message?
3. Jonah was upset at God for showing mercy to the people of Nineveh (4:1-2). What are some situations in life where we tend to question God's mercy toward individuals and their actions? How does God intend for us to respond to these people?
4. In Matthew 12:38-42 we see Jesus compare His ministry to that of Jonah. What parallels can be drawn from the two texts? Utilize the study notes found in the HCSB Study Bible for guidance.
5. Read Acts 15:6-11. How did God's treatment of Gentiles in Jonah's story align with God's treatment of Gentiles in the time of Peter? Who is eligible to receive the grace and mercy of God?
6. God uses Jonah's emotional reaction to the death of a plant to rebuke him for his lack of compassion for the people of Nineveh (4:9-11). We cannot say we truly love God without being burdened for those who do not know Him. What are you doing to reach out to those far from God? If you are not being contagious for God what is standing in your way?
7. Take a moment individually or with your spouse to list out the names of five people or families that you know are far from God. Pray for them now and commit to a time each week that you can pray together for the people on this list.
8. From your previous list, take a moment now make a concrete plan to connect (have dinner, go to the park, see a movie) with at least two of these individuals or families over the summer. Make plans now. Don't run from the opportunity! Once you feel comfortable, invite them to church.