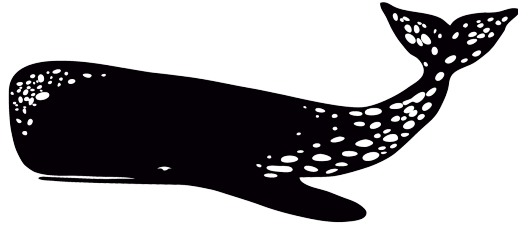




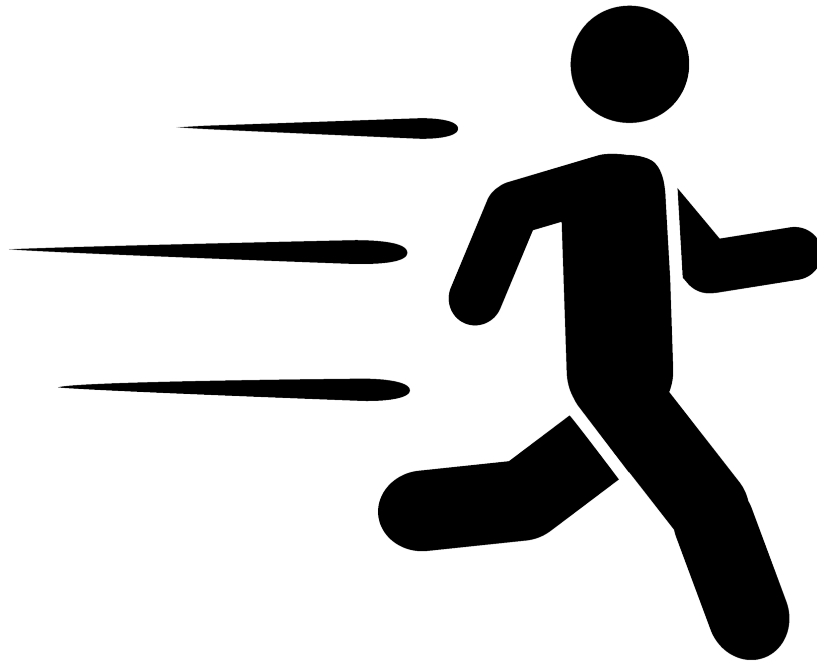
# J O N A H





**J O N A H**

C H A P T E R O N E



## **JONAH 1:1-17**

# **WHEN GOD'S LOVE IS MORE THAN YOU CAN HANDLE**

### **READ:**

“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.” 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.

4 Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. 5 All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. 6 The captain went to him and said, “How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish.”

7 Then the sailors said to each other, “Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity.” They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 So they asked him, “Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?”

### **Jonah is Thrown Into the Sea**

9 He answered, “I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” 10 This terrified them and they asked, “What have you done?” (They knew he was running away from the Lord, because he had already told them so.) 11 The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, “What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?” 12 “Pick me up and throw me into the sea,” he replied, “and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you.”

13 Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before. 14 Then they cried out to the Lord, “Please, Lord, do not let us die for taking this man’s life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, Lord, have done as you pleased.” 15 Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. 16 At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him.

17 Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.”



**WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TEACH YOU ABOUT GOD?**

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**WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TEACH ME ABOUT HUMAN NATURE?**

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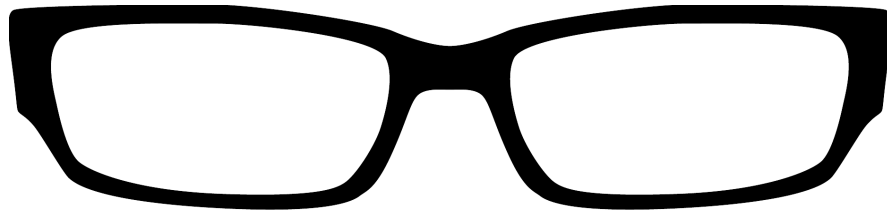
**WHAT STRUCK YOU AS MOST “INTERESTING” IN THIS PASSAGE?**

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## **DIGGING DEEPER**

### **THOUGHTS 'N' STUFF ABOUT THIS PASSAGE**

1. Nineveh was a city in Assyria (north of present-day Baghdad, Iraq).
2. The Assyrian army was notorious for its brutality (Even modern day military tacticians recognize their methods as some of the worst forms of torture the world has ever seen).
3. The prophet Nahum also thinks they're awful, "What sorrow awaits Nineveh, the city of murder and lies! She is crammed with wealth and is never without victims. 3b...There are countless casualties, heaps of bodies — so many bodies that people stumble over them. 4 All this because Nineveh, the beautiful and faithless city, mistress of deadly charms, enticed the nations with her beauty. She taught them all her magic, enchanting people everywhere." (Nahum 3:1-4)
4. Jonah resents the Ninevites.
5. Jonah also fled because he understood that God's judgment in verse 2 was conditional; as in, if the Ninveites heeded his preaching and turned from their sins, God would forgive them and extend His compassion to them.
6. Jonah is very likely convinced that the Jews alone have a monopoly on God's compassion and cannot stomach the idea that God might love a pagan nation
7. Jonah forgot that God's loving compassion runs deep (Psalm 103:8-14) and He is the God of the nations, not just Israel. (Psalm 47:8).

8. Jonah endangers the life of the sailors by fleeing from God, for it was God Himself who “hurled a great wind to the sea that threatened to break the ship.” (Jonah 1:4)
9. There is a stark contrast between the compassion the pagan sailors demonstrate to Jonah and the lack of compassion Jonah is showing towards the Ninevites.
10. Although Jonah got on the ship in disobedience, God used the opportunity to bring saving faith to pagan sailors. Verse 16, “At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him.”
11. Charles Spurgeon once said, “Charles Spurgeon once said, “God’s mercy is so great that you may sooner drain the sea of its water, or deprive the sun of its light, or make space too narrow, than diminish the great mercy of God.”
12. After Jonah is tossed overboard, he sinks and begins to drown, but right before the breath of life leaves him, verse 17 says, “Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.”
13. The fish was not an act of judgment from God, it was a rescue operation! Had God not sent the fish, Jonah would very likely have died.
14. The very thing about God that was eating away at Jonah (love with no ethnic boundaries) is the very thing about God that saved His life at the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea.







## **QUESTIONS**

**FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION**

Jonah had to have known it was impossible to run from God's presence? What do you think was going through his mind as he boarded the ship?

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Was there a time when you tried to run away from God? What happened?

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What areas of your life might you still be trying to hide from God? Is Hebrews 4:13 and Psalm 33:13 scary or encouraging for you? Why:

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Why do you think God sent a storm that threatened to break up the ship? (Dig deeper than the most obvious answer)

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What is the most dramatic way God has tried to get your attention? Did you “snap out of it” and heed His warning?

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Why do you think Jonah asked the sailors to throw him overboard? (Wouldn't it have been much easier for him to just jump?)

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What or who is a “Nineveh” in your life? (Someone or something you would rather avoid than address?)

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How might God be calling you to engage your Nineveh?

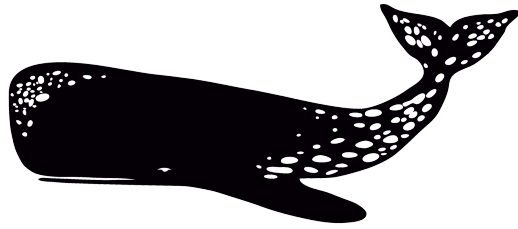
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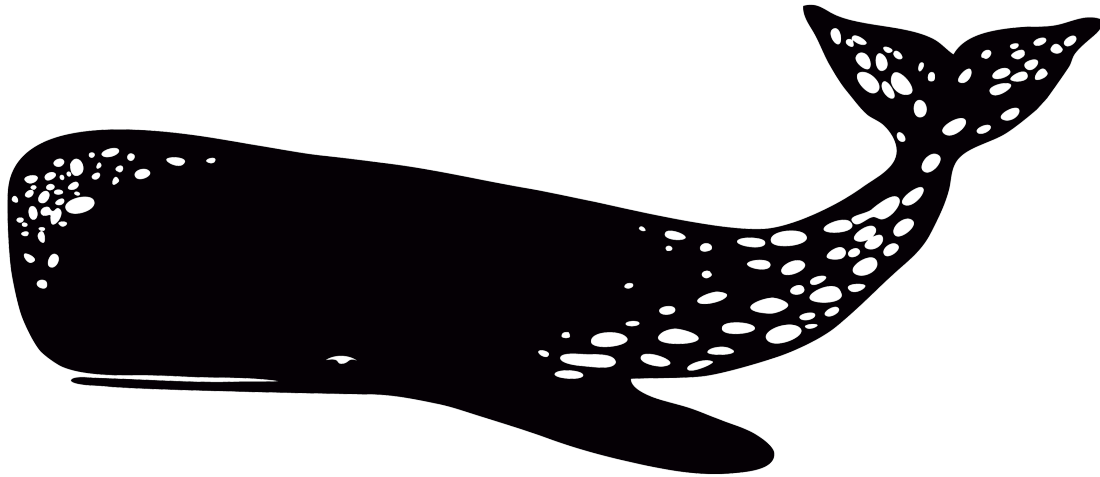
When will you follow through? Date: .....





**J O N A H**

C H A P T E R T W O



## **JONAH 2:1-10**

### **WHEN GOD'S LOVE SINKS TO LOW PLACES**

**READ:**

“1 From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. 2 He said:

“In my distress I called to the Lord,  
and he answered me.

From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help,  
and you listened to my cry.

3 You hurled me into the depths,  
into the very heart of the seas,  
and the currents swirled about me;  
all your waves and breakers  
swept over me.

4 I said, ‘I have been banished  
from your sight;  
yet I will look again  
toward your holy temple.’

5 The engulfing waters threatened me,

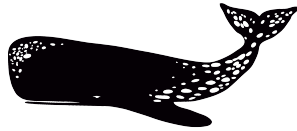
the deep surrounded me;  
seaweed was wrapped around my head.  
6 To the roots of the mountains I sank down;  
the earth beneath barred me in forever.

But you, Lord my God,  
brought my life up from the pit.  
7 “When my life was ebbing away,  
I remembered you, Lord,  
and my prayer rose to you,  
to your holy temple.  
8 “Those who cling to worthless idols  
turn away from God’s love for them.  
9 But I, with shouts of grateful praise,  
will sacrifice to you.

What I have vowed I will make good.

I will say, ‘Salvation comes from the Lord.’”

10 And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.”



**WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TEACH YOU ABOUT GOD?**

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**WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TEACH ME ABOUT HUMAN NATURE?**

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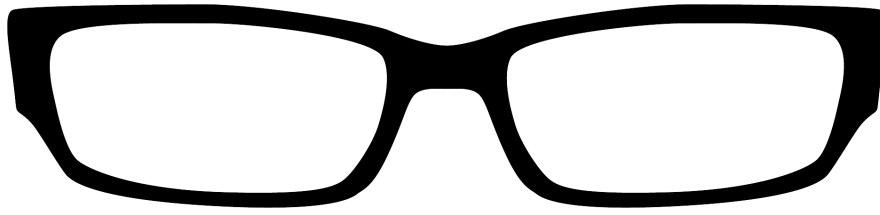
**WHAT STRUCK YOU AS MOST “INTERESTING” IN THIS PASSAGE?**

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## **DIGGING DEEPER**

### **THOUGHTS 'N' STUFF ABOUT THIS PASSAGE**

1. Due to the fantastical nature of Jonah's account, many have chosen to re-imagine it as a fairy tale, or a cautionary tale to tell kids. That will NOT be my approach. Church history testifies that Jonah's story is a factual historical account that took place in the ancient Middle East 3000 years ago.
2. Jesus Himself, in Matthew 12:40-41, references it like it were an actual historical event. "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here."
3. We must approach this story for what it is, a miracle! Trying to explain the timely swallowing by the fish and Jonah's 3-day preservation in its belly is tantamount to trying to explain how Moses was able to split the Red Sea in two, or how Jesus walked on water, or how Elijah called down fire from heaven. We can't because it was an act of God where He stepped into time and space and bent the natural laws of nature for His purposes.
4. As we look back on Jonah's account three millennia later, we might say, "Oh, God graciously rescued him by sending the fish to swallow him!" Sure that's true, but you can be certain that was not the first thought that occurred to Jonah when he saw this mammoth of a sea creature swimming towards him. If he thought he was dead when the seaweeds were choking the life out of him, imagine how much more dead he thought he was when that fish started to swallow him.



5. People don't come back from where Jonah was ("deep in the realm of the dead"), they die there! Jonah WAS NOT expecting to be rescued. Were it not for the compassion and grace of God, that would have been the end of his story! But remember who God said He is in Psalm 103:8-14, "compassionate, slow to anger, He doesn't harbor anger forever.."
6. If an act of disobedience in your life, (or the cumulative result of several foolish decisions) have ever landed you in an ugly situation where it literally feels like you've crossed the line of no return and have been cast away from God's presence, remember this, "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, MINE!" (Dutch Theologian, Abraham Kuyper).
7. FACT: There is no depth of sin to which you can sink where God's mercy does not reach.
8. When we insist on our will over God's (like Jonah did), He'll lovingly intervene to rescue us, but His rescue operation might not be a convenient or comfortable experience. Jonah's 3-day experience in the belly of the fish would have been a nasty experience! (Ever smelled bad fish? Imagine what it must smell like inside one).
9. We should be careful about living in blatant rebellion to God's will, and simply justify it by saying, "Well, God is love, and He loves everybody." Yes that's true, but God's love also means that HE WILL discipline those He loves (Hebrews 12:6), and will do whatever it takes to save you from your own foolishness! [Sometimes, that discipline process will hurt!]
10. Take comfort though, when God is pruning/disciplining you, He's actually delighting in you, bringing you back on track so you may be more fruitful in life!
11. When your relationship with God feels "strained" as a result of sinful choices in your life, confess your sin to God (1 John 1:9). The light of the Holy Spirit that points out our sin also shines on the blood of Jesus Christ that covers our sins. After confession to God, confess your sin to one another (James 5:16). Practically speaking, for some of you, this

means you have one or two brothers and sisters in Christ that you need to sit with and admit your failures. Then the scripture instructs them to pray for you and over you so you may be healed. For others, it means you need to track down the person you sinned against and confess your sin to them. Don't justify it, don't rationalize it, don't spiritualize it, simply confess and ask for forgiveness.... And the scripture says you do this so you may be healed.





## **QUESTIONS**

**FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION**

How can you explain Jonah surviving 3 days and night in the belly of the fish? Three days is a long time to live in a smelly watery tomb. What do you suppose that nasty experience was like?

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Have you ever had an experience where your “life flashed before your eyes”? What happened?

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When have you felt farthest from God? What happened? How did you find your way out of the darkness?

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What does God’s ability to hear Jonah’s prayer at such a low point (belly of a fish at the bottom of the Mediterranean sea) tell you about God’s global reach?

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Do you think Jonah is truly repentant at this point? Why? Why not? (Hint: Jonah 4:1-3)

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Jonah clearly didn’t begin to pray till he was “inside the fish.” Perhaps on day 1 or day 2, more than likely on day. Why do you think Jonah waited so long to pray? Does it even make a difference?

Why do we tend to allow ourselves to sink low before we lift our voices and cry out to God?

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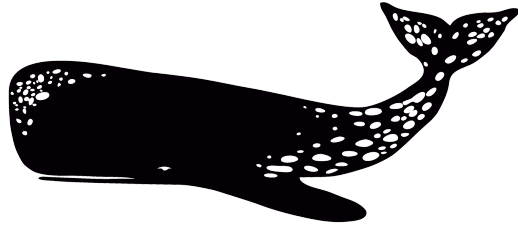
Is there is a sin in your life you're convinced is too "ugly" for God to forgive? Why might you be wrong? (Psalm 103:8-9, Hebrews 12:5-6 & Proverbs 3:11)

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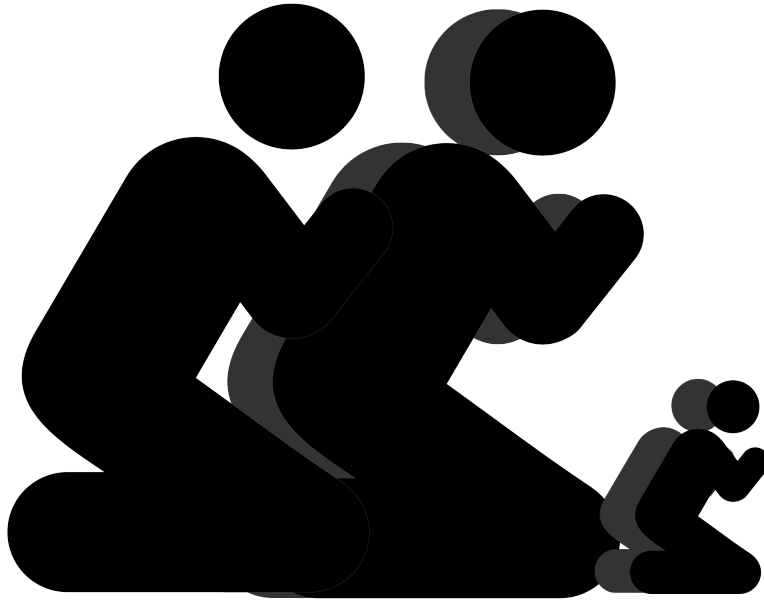
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**J O N A H**

C H A P T E R T H R E E



## **JONAH 3:1-10**

### **WHEN REVIVAL TAKES PLACE IN AN UNEXPECTED CITY**

**READ:**

“1 Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: 2 “Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.”

3 Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. 4 Jonah began by going a day’s journey into the city, proclaiming, “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” 5 The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

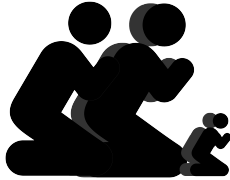
6 When Jonah’s warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. 7 This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh:

“By the decree of the king and his nobles:

Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. 8 But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let

everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. 9 Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.”

10 When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.”





**WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TEACH YOU ABOUT GOD?**

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**WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TEACH ME ABOUT HUMAN NATURE?**

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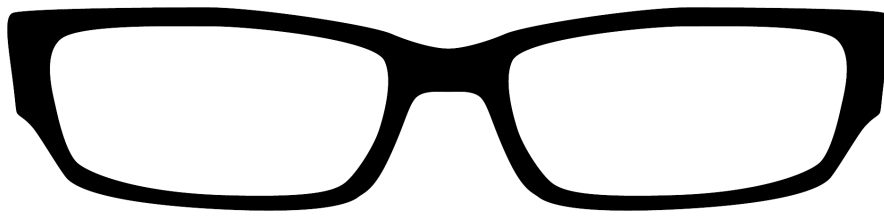
**WHAT STRUCK YOU AS MOST “INTERESTING” IN THIS PASSAGE?**

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## **DIGGING DEEPER**

### **THOUGHTS 'N' STUFF ABOUT THIS PASSAGE**

1. This chapter starts with God sending Jonah on the same assignment he refused to go on in chapter one. The next chapter (4:1-3), however, indicates that Jonah's attitude towards the Ninevites hasn't changed much. He'd still prefer their destruction, yet God graciously continues to use him. Why?
2. Romans 11:29 may hold the answer, "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." [ESV]. In His great love, God has chosen that He will finish the good work He began in each of us. He does not give up on us as often or as easily as we give up on ourselves, no matter how much we try to derail his plans. The reality is, our rebellion and disobedience may very well delay what He wants to do in our lives or through our lives, and even put us through unnecessary pain, but God has determined that His will, will be done!
3. The Ninevites were the most unlikely candidates for a spiritual revival. They ruled with a gruesome tyranny. Reports show that maimed and tortured their captives and seem to revel in bloody butchery. The prophet Nahum (3:1-4) describes the city as "the beautiful and faithless city; mistress of deadly charms, enticed the nations with her beauty. She taught them all her magic, enchanting people everywhere."
4. Morally, the Ninevites were corrupt. Spiritually, they were in pitch-blackness. Think of ISIS in the Middle East or Boko Haram in Nigeria, but worse and pagan!

5. However, what none of us ever considers, and what Jonah certainly didn't think of, was the fact that the VERY reason most of us would avoid a place like Nineveh is the VERY reason it was so open to the preaching of God's word. Nineveh was ripe for a spiritual revival because it was such a spiritually dark place. The faintest of light shines incredibly bright when the darkness is heavy.
6. Jonah's sermon is the shortest sermon in recorded history that resulted in a city-wide revival.
7. This tells us that long before Jonah was swallowed by a fish, long before Jonah fled Jerusalem, and even long before God called Jonah to go to Nineveh, the Spirit of God had already been at work in the hearts and minds of the men and women of the spiritually dark city of Nineveh.
8. Unless God first sends His Spirit into the darkness to prepare men and women to turn back to Him by faith, we are all lost in sin. John 6:44, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day.
9. This story makes me ask several questions,
  - a. "Where are the spiritually dark corners of the world where the Spirit of God is presently stirring the hearts of men and women?
  - b. What city around me is God's Spirit prepping men and women to come to faith in Jesus Christ?
  - c. Lord, could it be my city? Is it possible that the next great move of God is on the horizon in a city close to me?
  - d. And is it possible that the eyes of the LORD is searching to and fro the earth, looking for a man, or woman, or group of people, whose hearts are fully committed to him that He can send on a similar mission?
10. Perhaps our prayer then should be like Isaiah's when God asked Him who would go deliver His message, and He said, "Lord, here I am. SEND ME!"



## **QUESTIONS**

**FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION**

Jonah 4:1-3 indicates that Jonah's heart attitude towards the Ninevites hasn't changed. Why do you think God is still choosing to send Jonah on the same assignment?

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Were you in Jonah's shoes, how would you feel when the word of God came to you a second time?

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Have you had an experience where you failed at something, but were offered a second chance to redeem yourself?

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Why do you think the Ninevites responded so quickly and with such deep repentance, to Jonah's surprisingly short sermon?

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Are there any indicators in the passage that the Ninevites were sincere in their repentance?

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Can you think of people who have committed horrible atrocities against you (or society in general) that you would find it next to impossible to preach a message of God's loving compassion to them?

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What would it take for you to extend mercy and grace towards that individual (or people group)? How might God speak into your situation to give you a more Biblical perspective on compassion?

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1 John 1:9 says “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” Is it enough to simply verbalize this truth and be completely forgiven? What else may need to follow in order for a person to demonstrate the sincerity of their repentance? (Check James 1:22-25 for further insight)

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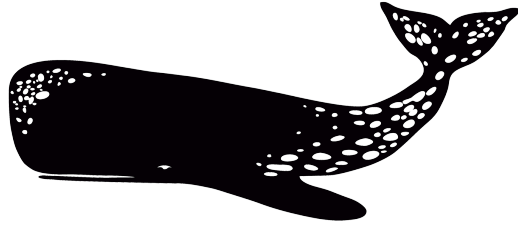
What area(s) of your life might God be calling you to repent sincerely? (Not only in words, but also in deeds).

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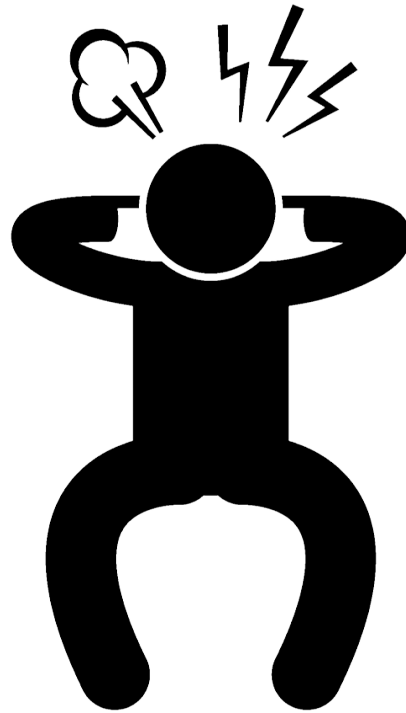
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**J O N A H**

C H A P T E R F O U R



## **JONAH 4:1-11**

### **WHEN YOU CAN'T SEE PAST YOUR ANGER**

**READ:**

“But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. 2 He prayed to the Lord, “Isn’t this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. 3 Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.”

4 But the Lord replied, “Is it right for you to be angry?”

5 Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. 6 Then the Lord God provided a leafy plant[a] and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant. 7 But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. 8 When the sun rose, God



provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live."

9 But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?"

"It is," he said. "And I'm so angry I wish I were dead."

10 But the Lord said, "You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. 11 And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?"



**WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TEACH YOU ABOUT GOD?**

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**WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TEACH ME ABOUT HUMAN NATURE?**

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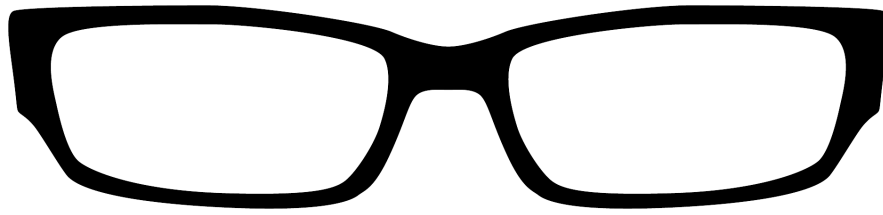
**WHAT STRUCK YOU AS MOST “INTERESTING” IN THIS PASSAGE?**

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## **DIGGING DEEPER**

### **THOUGHTS 'N' STUFF ABOUT THIS PASSAGE**

1. This story has the worst ending ever. I would have preferred it ended in Jonah 3:10 where it says, “When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.”
2. Jonah’s response to the greatest revival history has ever seen is resentment and deep anger! He would rather die than see the Ninevites embraced by God. “Now, O LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.”
3. God graciously tries to reason with Jonah, “...the Lord replied, “Is it right for you to be angry?” but like a 5-year-old, he stomps to his corner to mope. By making a shade outside the city walls “to see what would happen to the city”, Jonah was hoping that God would still hold up his end of the deal by destroying Nineveh in 40 days. He’s more than likely waiting for God to do to Nineveh what he did to Sodom and Gomorra in Genesis 19:24.
4. Jonah wins the award for worst prophet ever!
5. Though the Ninevites are not without their faults (Nahum 3:1-4), Jonah chose to ignore the truth that “The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever;..” (Psalm 103:8-14).
6. Jonah preferred a god of his own making, a god who judged all evil instantaneously. What Jonah didn’t consider however is that if God were to judge ALL evil (including potential evil), Jonah, along with Israel

would be swept away in judgment also, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23”

7. Even our best efforts still fall short. “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.” Isaiah 64:6
8. To reveal the ugliness of his heart, God gives Jonah three illustrations to demonstrate how compassion works, a plant, a worm, and scorching heat.
9. God at first provides shade (a leafy plant) for Jonah where he can rest his head. Interestingly, verse 6 is the only time in the whole book where we see Jonah “very happy”. It were as if God was trying to point out to Jonah, “Ok, so you do get it Jonah, when good things happen to people, the natural reaction is rejoicing, right? Great! I’m glad you got that lesson.”
10. But when God sends a worm to destroy the plant the next morning, and follows it up by sending a dry hot wind so Jonah became faint, Jonah emotions turn mercurial. Once again, like a bratty little kid, Jonah would rather die than live in a world where God takes away his comforts and Ninevites are forgiven.
11. God’s illustrations were intended to convey a profound truth to Jonah – “God’s loving compassion is to be extended to the PEOPLE in our lives, not the THINGS in our lives. God explains to Jonah that there were over 120,000 children in Nineveh who would have been swept away in judgment had He not relented from His judgment, yet Jonah showed more compassion towards the temporary “stuff” in his life than towards, those lost souls.
12. This story ends in the worst of ways. Jonah still doesn’t get it.
13. I’m inclined to think this may have changed years later. Though the author of the book never identifies himself/herself, the foundational source for the book was more than likely Jonah’s own telling of the story after his experience in Nineveh. Only he would have had such intimate detail about his running, his sinking, his time in the belly of the fish, and

his preaching in Nineveh. Therefore, there's reason to believe that if Jonah had humbled himself enough to write this story (laying out his prejudice for all to see), then perhaps he recognized the hypocrisy in his actions and wrote it so others may learn from him.

14. This is of course, is my hope. At the end of the day, God's word about himself triumphs, "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. 9 He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; 10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. 11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; 12 as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. 13 As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; 14 for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust." (Psalm 103:8-14)





## **QUESTIONS**

**FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION**

What do you think is really bothering Jonah? Why did he want so badly to see the Ninevites destroyed?

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Do you think Jonah lacked understanding about the way God's grace and mercy works? (verse 2).

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Do you think Jonah was serious in verse 3 when he asked God to take his life away? Or was he just being a drama queen?

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Has there ever been a time when you became angry with God because He didn't respond in the way that you wanted?

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Who do you have the hardest time forgiving? If you dug deeper, what about their actions most bothered you?

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Do you believe your sins have been completely forgiven? Look up Colossians 2:13-14. Why and how might your answer to this question speak to the previous question?

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By relocating to “a place east of the city [of Nineveh], what do you think Jonah was really hoping for? Genesis 19:1-19 may be telling.

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What was God trying to convey through the illustration of the leafy plant, the worm, and the scorching east wind?

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Do you think Jonah got the lesson?







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