

## Four studies in Jonah

### Jonah 1

**Jonah was a prophet from 800-750BC. He lived in Israel. Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria, which at this time was an enemy of Israel.**

READ JONAH 1 (p910)

- 1a) What did God ask Jonah to do?
  - b) Why did God want Jonah to go to Nineveh?
  - c) What does this teach us about God?
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- 2a) What did Jonah do?
  - b) Why did he go to Spain? [map]
  - c) Why do you think he wanted to get away from God?
  - d) Why do you think he didn't want to go to Nineveh and speak against the people there?
  - e) Was it difficult for Jonah to leave Joppa?
  - f) What can we learn from this? Is the easy way always the right way? Is it always the wrong way?
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- 3a) Can you think of a time when you knew what God wanted you to do but you did the opposite? Why did you do that? How did you feel? What happened?
  - b) What do you do when you know you've disobeyed God?
  - c) Is it possible to get away from God?

READ PSALM 139:7-12 (p632)

The Hebrew for verse 3 is actually a relational expression rather than a geographical expression. It is saying that Jonah ran away from a relationship with God.

- d) In what ways do we try to get away from a relationship with God?
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- 4a) What did God do when Jonah ran away from him?
  - b) What does this teach us about God?
  - c) What did the soldiers do when the storm started? How do you think they felt?
  - d) What was Jonah doing while the storm took place? How do you think he was able to sleep?

- 5a) How did Jonah describe God to the sailors?
- b) How did they react when Jonah said he was running away from the Lord?
- c) Why were they so surprised? Why were they so worried?
- d) How was Jonah's behaviour different from his beliefs?
- e) In what ways is our behaviour different from our beliefs?
- 6a) What did Jonah say they should do?
- b) Why did he say this?
- c) Why is he so honest with them?
- d) Why is he willing to suffer?
- d) What should we do when we know we have disobeyed God?
- e) Why did Jonah not ask God to forgive him?
- 7a) Why did the sailors not immediately do what Jonah told them to do?
- b) What did they say to God as they threw Jonah into the sea?
- c) Why did they pray like this?
- d) What did they do after throwing Jonah into the sea?
- e) Why did they do this?
- f) Why were they so afraid of God?
- g) Would they have believed in God in this way if Jonah had not disobeyed God?
- h) Does this mean it was right for Jonah to disobey God?
- i) What does this teach us about God?
- j) Does this mean it is okay for me to disobey God if something good comes from it?
- 8a) What did God do when Jonah was in the sea?
- b) Why did God command the fish to swallow Jonah?
- c) What does this teach us about God?
- 9a) How long was Jonah in the fish for?
- b) Can you think of anywhere else in the Bible where someone was left somewhere for this length of time?

## Jonah 2

1a) Can you think of a time when you were in a difficult or dangerous situation?

b) What did you do?

READ JONAH 2 (p911)

2a) How do you think Jonah felt when he was in the water?

b) If you were Jonah what would you be worried about while you were in the water?

c) What was he worried about while he was in the water? (v4)

d) What did he do while he was in the water? (v2, 7-9)

3a) How do you think Jonah felt when he was swallowed by the fish?

b) Why did the fish rescue him? (v2, 7-9)

c) How was Jonah's attitude to God here different to his attitude in Chapter 1?

d) Why did his attitude change in this way?

e) So he was only interested in God when he was in a difficult situation and needed God's help. What do you think about someone who's only interested in you when they think you can help them?

f) But how did God respond to Jonah's change of attitude?

g) What does this teach us about God?

h) Can you think of any times when God showed you this sort of patient kindness?

i) Why do you think God shows us such kindness? When does he want us to cry out to him?

4a) v8 – what would Jonah say to people who don't ask God for help when they are in need?

b) What does Jonah's situation teach us about the reality and power of God?

c) What sort of 'idols' might we worship?

d) How do you think God feels when we worship these things?

e) Why is it so wrong to worship idols?

f) Why should we be loyal to God?

5a) How does Jonah respond to what God has done for him? (v9)

b) Can you think of any ways that God has helped you or saved you?

- c) How should we respond when God helps us?
- d) What sort of sacrifice do you think God wants us to offer him?

READ ROMANS 12:1-2

- e) Why should we offer ourselves as living sacrifices?
  - f) What does it mean to be a living sacrifice?
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- 6a) What do you think Jonah learnt in this chapter about disobeying God?
  - b) What does that teach us?
  - c) From Chapter 2 do you think Jonah was sorry for disobeying God?

## Jonah 3

- 1a) What do you think Jonah has learnt so far about disobeying God?
- b) What does that teach us?
- c) From Chapter 2 do you think Jonah was sorry for disobeying God?

### READ JONAH 3

- 2a) Jonah has already disobeyed God once, why do you think God asked him a second time?
- b) What does this teach us about God and his attitude to us when we disobey him?
  
- 3a) How did Jonah respond when God told him to go to Nineveh this time?
- b) Why do you think he did this?
- c) It seems very cruel to leave Jonah in a fish for 3 days. Why did God do this to him? What did God want to teach him?
- d) What can we learn from this?
  
- 3a) What was the message Jonah preached?
- b) Why would God destroy Nineveh? (1:2)
- c) What will happen to us if we disobey God?
- d) What do we learn from this about God's attitude to sin?
- e) How do you feel about this?
  
- 4a) How did the Ninevites respond to Jonah's message?
- b) Why did they respond in this way?
- c) Jonah had told them they had 40 days, but how quickly did they respond?
- d) Why did they respond so quickly?
- e) How can we hear God's message today?
- f) When we hear God's message, how should we respond?
  
- 5a) What 4 things did the king tell the Ninevites to do?
- b) Why did he ask them to do these 4 different things?

- c) How can we show that we are sorry for our sin? Should we do the same things?
- d) How do you think the Ninevites felt when they did what the king told them to do in v7-9? Do you think they found it easy?
- e) Why were they willing to do this? (v9)
- f) What are you willing to do to receive God's forgiveness? Are you willing to admit that you've sinned and to ask for forgiveness? Are you willing to give up your sin? Can you think of any specific ways you have needed to change your life since you became a Christian?
- g) Is it possible for us to change ourselves? So how can we change?
- 6a) How did God respond to their repentance?
- b) What does that teach us about God?
- 7a) Did the Ninevites know that God would forgive them if they did the things the king told them to?
- b) What about us? Do we know that God will forgive us if we genuinely repent? How can we be sure?
- c) Is there anything specific you need to repent of?

## Jonah 4

- 1a) What was the relationship between Israel and Nineveh?
- b) How did Israel see themselves in relation with other nations?

READ JONAH 3:10-4:3 (p912)

- 2a) How did Jonah feel when God forgave the Ninevites?
- b) In Chapter 2 he was glad to be alive and now he wants to die – why?
- c) In Chapter 2 he had been forgiven by God for his disobedience – why was he angry when God forgave the Ninevites?
- d) So why had Jonah run away when God originally told him to go to Nineveh?

3a) Was it reasonable for Jonah to be angry when God forgave the Ninevites? (Remember Israel and Nineveh were enemies and Israel were God's special people).

- b) How would you feel?
- c) Are there people we think don't deserve God's love and forgiveness?
- d) Are there people you hope won't repent and become Christians?

- 4a) How did Jonah deal with his anger?
- b) What do we do when we are angry with God?

- 5a) How is God different to Jonah? (v2)
- b) What does this teach us about God?

READ JONAH 4:4-11

- 6a) What did God think of Jonah's anger? (v4)
- b) How did Jonah respond to God's question?
- c) What does this show us about Jonah at this point?
- d) Are we willing to listen to God even when he's saying things we don't like?
- e) Are there some parts of the Bible we try to avoid reading (or thinking about)?

- 7a) Why did the plant grow?
- b) How did Jonah feel when the plant grew?

- c) Did he recognise where it came from?
- d) How did he feel when it died?
- e) Why?
- f) What are some of the good things God gives us?
- g) Do we recognise where they come from?
- h) How often do we thank him for them?
- i) But how do we react when they are taken away from us?

8a) Jonah didn't want to talk to God – why not?

It seems he's saying he wants nothing to do with God until God does what he wants.

- b) When did he start talking to God again?
- c) So why did God make the plant grow and then die again?
- d) What does God want for us?

9a) What does this chapter show about how God feels about Nineveh?

- b) Why does he feel like that?
- c) We saw that Jonah was angry when God forgave the Ninevites, but why did God want to forgive them?
- d) What do we learn from this about how God feels about us?
- e) How does God feel about us when we sin?
- f) Why?
- g) How do you feel about the idea that God cares about us this much?

10a) What was Jonah's main concern in v6-9?

- b) What was God's main concern?
- c) We, like Jonah, are often more concerned about our own comfort than about sinful people being forgiven – what does this say to us?
- d) How can it help us to see things from God's perspective?
- e) What should our priorities be?

11a) Why did God send Jonah to Nineveh



b) What was Jonah's role?

c) What is our role if we're Christians?

d) Jonah was offended by the fact that God wanted to bless not only the Jews but also other nations. Is there anything about the Christian message that we find offensive and don't want to tell people or we want to pretend it's not true?

e) What does this story say to us?