

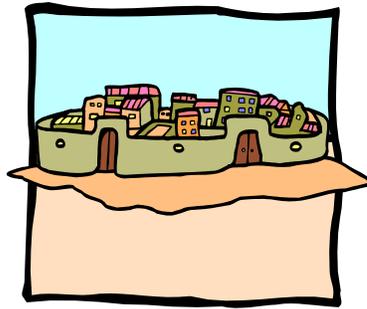


# Jonah Runs from God

FAMILIES IN TRUTH

Jonah 1 - 2

When God called on Jonah to preach the truth in Nineveh, Jonah ran in the opposite direction. But God pursued Jonah because God loved the Ninevites, and God loved Jonah. God gave Jonah another opportunity to share God's amazing grace with the people of Nineveh.



## Day #1: Special Messenger

God's rescue plan for Jonah was a big fish that carried him right back to shore and spit him out onto dry land. Jonah was still squeezing the salt water out of his beard when the Lord spoke to him again.

† *A message came to Jonah from the Lord a second time. He said, "Go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce to its people the message I give you." - Jonah 3:1-2*

Jonah had learned his lesson about trying to run away from God. So this time, Jonah obeyed!

We may wonder why God even bothered with the rebellious Jonah. Why would God give Jonah a second chance? Why didn't God speak directly to the Ninevites? The Bible says that God's people are co-workers with Him (2 Corinthians 6:1). God sends believers to tell His good news to others so they will understand the message and be brought back to Him.

Jesus, Himself, came in human form to tell lost people the truth of God's plan (Luke 11:30). Jesus said, "I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth." (John 18:37)

\* If you have received Jesus' free gift of eternal life, you, too, are a co-worker with God! Read the verse below out loud. (It has been altered to be read in first person.)

*So **I am** Christ's official messenger. It is as if God were making His appeal through **me**. Here is what Christ wants **me** to beg **them** to do. Come back to God! - 2 Corinthians 5:20 (modified)*

## Day #2: Stop the Violence

The message that God wanted Jonah to tell was very serious. Nineveh was so full of wickedness that God was about to destroy it.

Day #2 continued:

† *The Lord said, "Go to the great city of Nineveh. Preach against it. The sins of its people have come to my attention." - Jonah 1:2*

God is very patient and He wants everyone to come to Him (2 Peter 3:9). But there were times in history when the wickedness became so bad that God had to remove it from the earth (Genesis 6:3). This is what happened in the days of Noah, and in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 6:1-13, 18:20, 19:24-25).

The Bible says that Nineveh was full of violence (Jonah 3:8). God absolutely hates violence (Psalm 11:5). In the days of Noah, the entire earth was full of violence (Genesis 6:11). Violence is the act of harming another person. One reason that it is so wrong to hurt someone is that each person is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Jesus made it clear that whatever you do to another person is the same as doing it to Him (Matthew 25:40).

Be certain that our loving, patient God always sends a warning for those who are willing to hear it (Amos 3:7). Jonah was that warning for the people of Nineveh.

\* In our day, thousands of movies and video games are centered on violence. You must be very careful what you expose yourself to. You have to ask the question - If God hates violence, can I sit through a two-hour movie, or sit and play hours of video games that are filled with violence?

## Day #3: Rejoicing

What is the largest city you have ever visited? Jonah went to the huge, gated city of Nineveh. Jonah didn't waste any time sightseeing. He started proclaiming God's message right away.

† *On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He announced, "In 40 days Nineveh will be destroyed." **The people of Nineveh believed God's warning.** - Jonah 3:4-5a*

Everyone in Nineveh decided to stop eating and wore dark colored clothes because they were so sad about their sin. Even the King joined his people in mourning over the sin of the city. The Ninevites had truly repented! (Matthew 12:41)

When God saw that all the people had turned from their sin, God had compassion on them (Psalm 145:9).

### Day #3 continued:

God did not destroy the city as He had threatened! God had created each person in Nineveh, and each one was valuable to Him.

*The Lord is good to all. He shows deep concern for everything He has made. - Psalm 145:9*

When was the last time you heard people cheer and shout for joy? Maybe it was at a football game or a school assembly. The Bible says that God rejoices each time a person repents from their sin and turns to Him (Luke 15:10). What do you think the celebration sounded like in heaven when approximately half a million people repented that day? (Give your best shouts - this is better than any ball game!)

 Be sure to attend baptisms whenever you get the opportunity. We should REJOICE with every person who chooses to show their community that they have put their trust in Jesus.

## Day #4: Once an Enemy

God cheered and the angels rejoiced when the Ninevites repented. But, when Jonah saw that God did not destroy the city full of people, Jonah was furious. He did not want the people to be saved!

Jonah truly did not understand God's grace. Jonah thought that he was special because he was an Israelite, one of God's chosen people. But God had not chosen the Israelites because they deserved it! He chose them because of His great love (Deuteronomy 7:7-8). Jonah did not understand that he was a sinner - no better than the worst Ninevite.

Is there anyone that you are unwilling to pray for? Maybe someone who has hurt you, or someone on an opposing team? Is there a different culture or country that seems like an enemy to you? Sometimes believers become so angry at the sin of non-believers, that we consider those people our enemies. "But they are not the enemy; they are the prize!" (Buddy Hoffman) What a victory it is when someone who has been living in sin turns from their sin and follows the one true God (1 Timothy 1:15-17).

We must realize that **we had sinned** against the holy God. **We were once enemies** of the Lord. But by His grace, we have been saved.

 *At one time you were separated from God. You were enemies in your minds because of your evil ways. But because Christ died, God has brought you back to Himself. Christ's death has made you holy in God's sight. So now you don't have any flaw. You are free from blame. - Colossians 1:21-22*

We did NOTHING to deserve Jesus' free gift of forgiveness and new life. We were not better than the

### Day #4 continued:

person (or people) who offends us now.

 PRAY. Pray for anyone whom you consider an enemy - especially those who are enemies of God (as you once were). Pray that they will be overwhelmed with the love and grace of God, and they will put their trust in Jesus.

## Day #5: Q & A

Jonah told God that he was angry. He admitted that he ran away from Nineveh in the first place because he was sure that God would forgive the Ninevites. Jonah told God:

 *"I knew that you are gracious. You are tender and kind. You are slow to get angry. You are full of love. You are a God who takes pity on people. You don't want to destroy them." - Jonah 4:2b*

Certainly, God could have scolded Jonah. But, instead, God asked Jonah, "Do you have any right to be angry?" God asked a question to make Jonah think about his sinful attitude.

God uses questions to teach and lead His people all through the Bible. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, God came after them with questions (Genesis 3:3:9, 11). When Cain killed his brother Abel, God asked Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" (Genesis 4:9). When Jesus came, He asked questions such as "What did Moses command you?" (Mark 10:3) and "Who do you say I am?" (Matthew 16:15)

God certainly does not ask questions to gain information! He already knows the answer to every question. The all-knowing God asks questions so the person will have to come up with an answer. God wants man to face his own sinfulness, so he will see his need for repentance and forgiveness.

 When you are talking with someone who does not believe in God, or who has an incorrect understanding of God, try asking questions. Asking a question is a great way to share truth with someone without any arguing at all.

Let's practice. Think of a question you could ask to make someone really think about God, if they said this:

"I think there are lots of ways to heaven."  
(What do you think of Jesus who He said He was the only way? John 14:6)

"I think that people are basically good."  
(Why do people do bad things? 1 John 2:16, Proverbs 20:9, James 3:16-17)

"I don't believe in God because bad things happen to good people."  
(Where does the good in the world come from? Genesis 1:31, Psalm 34:8)