



GCS D
GRACE CENTER FOR
SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

STUDY GUIDE





ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This study guide is brought to you by the Grace Center for Spiritual Development (GCSD), an extension ministry of Grace School of Theology. Our desire is to provide non-degree learning opportunities for anyone who wishes to grow in their spiritual walk.

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The Chosen of God

SESSION 1 | Jonah 1:1-3a

"The Book of Jonah is one of the most relevant books for the present time." - R.T. Kendall

Introduction: The Book of Jonah was written by Jonah or transcribed from his words; it is a narrative (story) that is not a record of the prophet's message but a record of the prophet's experience. There is not one single prophetic utterance in the story - it is a prophetic parable. It is perhaps one of the most controversial books of the Old Testament (OT), given the supernatural nature of some of these events.

Many things make the Book of Jonah unique; what stands out to me about it? Do I believe it? Why or why not? Do I see it as relevant today? Why or why not?

Information on Jonah (verses 1-3a)

- *Word of the Lord* - the divine authority of God's word to Jonah.
- *Jonah* - dove, prophet by God's choosing; a real person; He is the only OT prophet on record whom God sent to a heathen nation with a message of repentance.
- He was spoken of in 2 Kings 14:25, which records that Jonah prophesied that Jeroboam II would restore Israel to her former boundaries, which he did, thus, proving the accuracy of a prophet of God. He is contemporary to Hosea and Amos and prophesied in between Elijah and Elisha, as well as Hosea and Amos.
- *Go to Nineveh* - Nineveh was a walled city of Assyrians that stood to the northeast on the banks of the Tigris River. God's command to go signifies the first time that God sent a prophet as a missionary.
- *Great City* - second only to Babylon
- *Cry out against it* - literally to preach that God has taken note of their sins.
- *Wickedness* - relentless and persistent in their sins; evil and characterized by violence (Jonah 3:8); thinking themselves invincible; brutal atrocities to war captives, known for idolatry - According to Nahum - their wickedness included plotting evil against the Lord, cruelty, prostitution, witchcraft, and commercial exploitation.
- *Come up against me* - literally swelling up to confront the Lord - a challenge to Him.
- *But Jonah* - the contrast to God's compassion.
- *Arose to flee* - this prophet, the only one, chose NOT to follow God's command.
- *To Tarshish* - not a slight shift off course but an about-face and run away.
- *From the Presence of the Lord* - In OT times, the promise from God to the nation of Israel was that He would bless them in the land - here Jonah is leaving the Promised Land where His blessing and His presence was but also seems to be trying to get away from the Lord's calling on him.



The Chosen of God

SESSION 1 | Jonah 1:1-3a (Continued)

*How do I respond to the Lord when He asks something of me?
Do I run? Do I say yes?*

Do I see God's compassion for the sinner? For me?

Do I exhibit that same mercy and compassion to others? How?

Jonah is one of four OT prophets whose ministry is spoken of by Christ in Matthew 12:41 and Luke 11:32. He is also the only one Christ compared to Himself directly.

Matthew 12:41 NKJV *The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.*

Luke 11:32 NKJV *The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.*

Is God the main character in my story? How?

Do I see myself as one of God's messengers with His good news of compassion and grace?

Have I seen His patience and persistence with me in my times of disobedience?

Is His word active in me and seen by others?

How relevant is the Book of Jonah to me? Is it as relevant as the life, death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

Does that matter to me? If so, how does that affect me? Be specific?

Importance of Jonah

What does the Book of Jonah convey?

- It is a story whose main character is God.
- It shows God's compassion for His creation. The Hebrew word for compassion is the word "*hus*," which translates as "to spare by sheltering."
- It shows God's sovereignty to accomplish His purposes, for "salvation comes from the Lord."
- shows that God needs messengers because the fields are ripe for the harvest.
- It is a symbol of God's patience and persistence in light of disobedience.
- It teaches us that God loves and graces other nations than our own. Nothing can frustrate God's grace.
- It teaches us that "the Word must become incarnate before it becomes impressive."
- It typifies Christ as the sent one, raised from the dead, and carrying salvation to the Gentiles – that salvation is not by works but by faith.



The Call of God (Part 1)

SESSION 2 | Jonah 1:1-9

Review: Jonah is a story about God, His compassion, His sovereignty, His grace, His patience, His persistence, His love, and His Son. Look for all of these in this next section of the story.

God Calls (Verses 1-3)

- *The Word of the Lord* - again the authority of God's word sent to Jonah.
- *Jonah* - the chosen and called the prophet of God
- *Son of Amittai* - Jonah's father, a real person corroborated with other writings.
- *Arise, go to Nineveh* - the command of God to His prophet
- *Great City* - Great wickedness
- *Cry out against it* - preach against their wickedness under My authority.
- *Come up before Me* - their sin has swelled up to challenge Me so that I have taken notice and must act to save them - this is GRACE out of compassion.

*Do I sense when God is calling me to do something for Him?
How? Am I looking for His call daily?*

- *To Tarshish* - 2500 miles in the opposite direction.
- *The Presence of the Lord* - both His physical presence and His spiritual presence. In essence, "I do not want to do this" is a very different response for all the other prophets.
- *Went to Joppa; found a ship; paid the fare; got on the boat* - all seemed to be going as planned.
- *The Presence of the Lord* - AGAIN - bookends for this statement to reiterate what Jonah was running from.

*What do I do when God calls me to do something for Him?
How do I respond?*

Do I have compassion for others?

How do I show it?

Is the possibility of talking to them about Christ one of the ways?

Jonah Falls

- *But Jonah* - the contrast with God's compassion and grace.
- *Arose to flee* - notice the use of "arise," one out of compassion and the other out of contempt.

God Directs (Verses 4-6)

- *But the Lord* - the contrast between God and Jonah.
- *Sent out a great wind on the sea* - it is supernatural. God uses the wind under His



The Call of God (Part 1)

SESSION 2 | Jonah 1:1-9 (Continued)

control to return the wayward prophet to what the Lord had called him to do.

- *A mighty tempest* - the wind turned into a storm. God will use a storm to save a city.
- *The ship was about to break up* - in Hebrew, the ship knew it was about to break up.
- *The mariners were afraid* - Phoenicians were considered masters of the sea but were Baal worshippers.
- *Every man cried out to his god* - a multitude of deities was present.
- *Threw out the cargo to lighten the load* - they tossed overboard their livelihood and their income.

Am I apathetic toward God's work on this earth?

Do I see my role in it?

When I see people around me in trouble, how do I respond?

asleep, and God created Eve. It shows divine assistance.

- *So the captain* - again, a contrast showing a pagan sea captain who worshiped other gods.
- *Came to him* - sent by God. Can God use even a pagan sea captain?
- *Arise* - in Hebrew, it is the word "*qum lek*," the exact words used by God to Jonah.
- *Call on your God* - The normal reaction to danger even among pagans is to seek divine intervention, but this is what Jonah wanted to avoid - God's intervention.
- *Perhaps He will consider us* - what the pagan captain desired, God did.
- *So that we may not perish* - God shows compassion on the sailors even though Jonah didn't.

Have I ever seen the Lord show up in the lives of those who do not know Him? Share what I have experienced.

How have I responded to this?

Jonah Descends

- *But Jonah* - again, Jonah does not respond in contrast to God.
- *Lowest parts of the ship* - as far away from God as he could get.
- *Fast asleep* - in Hebrew, it is the "*radam*," the same word used in Genesis when Adam fell



The Call of God (Part 1)

SESSION 2 | Jonah 1:1-9 (Continued)

Can I ever escape God?

Is this a positive or a negative for me?

How does that reflect my view of God?

Jonah Confesses

- *I am a Hebrew* - the common name for the Jews
- *I fear the Lord* - the covenant-making and covenant-keeping God of Israel.
- *The God of heaven* - this proclaims Yahweh as the master over all other gods.
- *who made the sea and dry land* - The creator and master over where they travel

Can I relate to Jonah?

Jonah's confession is the central feature of this entire story - is it the central feature of my story?

How do I express that in my life?

God Convicts (Verses 7-9)

- *Cast lots* - a common practice in the Near East.
- *It fell on Jonah* - In this case, God causes the lot to fall on Jonah.
- *Tell us* - five questions now come at Jonah to ascertain why all is happening as it is.

Has God ever put me in a situation where I am in the spotlight for Him?

How did I respond?

Does that mean I trust God or not?



The Character of God

SESSION 3 | Jonah 1:10-16

Review: Jonah finds himself in a real predicament – knowing now that he cannot run from God; he has to face God and what he finds is still a God of compassion for all of His creation. Let's see what Jonah saw – the character of God in full view.

Their Plight (Verses 10-11)

- *Then* - again, a very specific time and place in this particular true story.
- *The men* - Pagan Phoenician sailors
- *Exceedingly afraid* - Feared a great fear - to be in terror -
- *"Why have you done this?"* - they express their disbelief at Jonah's naivete.
- *The men knew; he had told them* - Jonah at some time told them he was fleeing Yahweh.
- *They said to him* - they brought the problem straight to the source.
- *What shall we do to you* - If you are the cause, how do we make right what you have done?
- *More tempestuous* - God was directing the action.

What's my plight?

When I find myself running from God, what do I do?

Is the world watching believers see what we will do?

Why then are we doing what we are doing?

How am I reflecting on God today?

Their Plan (Verses 12-13)

- *He said to them* - notice no remorse, no sorrow; almost a matter of fact amid the tempest.
- *Pick me up and throw me into the sea* - Jonah's answer - get rid of the problem - ME.
- *I know this is because of me* - possibly the first sign of repentance and an admission of guilt?
- *Nevertheless* - despite this confession and suggestion
- *The men rowed hard* - the pagan sailors still tried to save everyone.
- *To return to land* - to get to a place of safety to let Jonah off.
- *The sea grew more tempestuous* - God is still in charge and directing the action



The Character of God

SESSION 3 | Jonah 1:10-16 (Continued)

What's my plan?

Do I recognize what I need to do to get back into fellowship with God?

Do I want that fellowship?

Have I let God know that?

What's my prayer?

How do I pray when I am struggling? Do I acknowledge Him and His characteristics of love and grace and mercy?

Do I see those on display in my situation?

How do they affect my prayer life?

Their Prayer (Verse 14)

- *Therefore* - they resorted to the only thing left to do - they prayed.
- *They cried out to the Lord* - something we have no record that Jonah the prophet ever did.
- *We pray, O Lord* - God has now brought them to the point of depending on Him and Him alone.

I. Part 1 of the prayer

- *Please do not let us perish* - You have that power.
- *For this man's life* - do not hold us accountable for what we are about to do.

II. Part 2 of the prayer

- *Do not charge us* - do not charge to our account the blood of this man.
- *Innocent blood* - Jonah was innocent of doing anything according to their culture that was punishable by death.

III. Part 3 of the prayer

- *As it pleased You* - their attempt to wash their hands of the whole affair.

Their Praise (Verses 15-16)

- *So* - now that they have done everything they could do and have asked for God's mercy.
- *They threw him into the sea* - Following the instructions for Jonah.
- *And the sea ceased from its raging* - the true power of Yahweh was shown -
- *Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly* - the object of their fear - Yahweh.
- *Offered a sacrifice to the Lord* - the object of the sacrifice was no longer their gods but Yahweh.
- *And took vows* - made promises to the Lord.

Let's study God's character in these 7 verses:

- His compassion - on the sailors, and Jonah, and the people of Nineveh
- His sovereignty - over His creation, including the wind, the waves, and the storms



The Character of God

SESSION 3 | Jonah 1:10-16 (Continued)

- His grace - Jonah gets what he does not deserve
- salvation
- His mercy - the sailors and Jonah do not get
what they do deserve - death (wages of sin)
- His patience - God's patience with His wayward
prophet
- His persistence - God's plan for Jonah, the
sailors, and Nineveh will not be derailed
- His love - God's plan for Nineveh and all of His
creation - to know Him and His love for them

What's my praise?

*Do I see God's character in full view even in challenging
circumstances?*

Do I praise Him for it?

Do I thank Him for it?

What do I need to say to God today?



The Cry to God

SESSION 4 | Jonah 1:17 - 2:10

Review: God continues His miraculous dealings with Jonah to bless all involved.

Jonah's Psalm (Verses 2-9): Jonah knew the Psalms

- Now Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the fish's belly - the first thing he should have done; notice HIS GOD - massive shift in his perspective; you can pray from anywhere!!!

Jonah's Plight (Verses 1, 3-6)

- *Now the Lord prepared* - for the 2nd time, God takes the initiative to turn his wayward prophet; this time, Jonah turns to the Lord instead of away from the Lord.
- *A great fish to swallow Jonah* - God controlled the traditionally uncontrollable to spare Jonah's life - the loving act of a loving God.
- *In the belly of the fish* - the very depths.
- *Three days and three nights* - in Ancient Near East times, a three-day journey was the length of time for a trip to the underworld of the dead and back - a foreshadowing of Christ.
- *You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas; floods surrounded me; Your billows and Your waves passed over me* - a description of being thrown overboard.
- *Cast out of Your sight* - the worst possible place to be (sounds like Jesus?).
- *Waters surrounded me; even to my soul; Deep closed around me; Weeds wrapped around my head; down to the mornings of the mountains; the earth with its bars closed behind me forever.* - Inside the fish.
- *How will I ever look upon your holy temple?* - in the Hebrew Lament Psalm, this fits the proper view of the statement - it is Jonah's cry of hopelessness.

Jonah's Plan (Verses 6b, 7)

Step 1 - Recognition

- *Yet You have brought up my life from the pit* - the very bottom at the gates of the end. Nevertheless, or

Notes



The Cry to God

SESSION 4 | Jonah 1:17 - 2:10 (Continued)

with God, there is always hope.

- *You have brought me up* - where human deliverance is hopeless; with Yahweh, it is never hopeless.
- *O Lord, my God* - notice now the strong declaration - Lord and God.

Step 2 - Remembrance

- *I remembered the Lord* - who brings salvation and deliverance.

Step 3 - Request

- *My prayer went up to You* - Ask Him for His forgiveness and deliverance.

Jonah's Prayer (Verses 2, 7)

- *I cried out to the Lord* - again that deep heartfelt emotional cry - but it is mainly a prayer for deliverance from drowning, not the deliverance from the fish.
- *And He answered me* - the Lord responded to his cry of deliverance by placing him in the fish!
- *Out of the belly of Sheol, I cried* - Sheol is the place of the departed souls under the surface of the earth - literally to join the dead.
- *And You heard my voice* - God answered but not in the way Jonah wanted him to - this was to bring Jonah to the place of brokenness and repentance and dependence - a great place to be for healing.
- *My prayer went up to You* - very personal prayers.
- *Into Your holy temple* - to the very throne room of God.

Christ's Plight - Crucifixion - Broken Body and Shed Blood

- In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus knew what was coming. He was facing beatings, humiliation, pain, and horrible death. More than that, He was facing what Jonah experienced - to be cast out of His Father's sight because He was going to be sin for us.

Christ's Plan (Mark 14:36)

Step 1 - Recognition

Notes



The Cry to God

SESSION 4 | Jonah 1:17 - 2:10 (Continued)

- *Abba Father* - the personal reflection of His relationship with His Father

Step 2 - Remembrance

- *All things are possible for You* - recalling who His Father is and what He can do.

Step 3 - Request

- *Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will but what You will* - the Lord's Prayer request - Thy will be done.

Christ's Prayer

- Christ offered up this prayer three times - for the Father's will to be done.

Jonah's Praise (Verse 9)

- *But* - I will not regard worthless idols by contrast.
- *I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving* - because, at the time, he could not offer an animal sacrifice; he offered his thanksgiving as that sacrifice.
- *I will pay what I have vowed* - His vow to return and do what the Lord had called him to do.
- *Salvation is of the Lord* - a lesson Jonah has learned through experience the hard way - Hebrew for salvation is "Yeshua." It is the translation of the Greek name Jesus from Joshua - Yeshua is from Yeshua!
- *The Compassion of God is seen in Jonah's statement - "Salvation is of the Lord!"*

Have I ever felt trapped like Jonah did both in the sea and the fish? Share my story.

Have I experienced recognizing God, remembering Him, and making my request in prayer during my distress? How did that work out?

When I pray in times of distress, can it be described as crying out? Why or why not?

Do I see Christ clearly in the Jonah story?

How does that affect me daily?

Do I praise Him even amid my distress?

Do I trust Him to deliver me? Why or why not?

Do I believe that salvation is of the Lord?

Have I experienced that in my life?



The Call of God (Part 2)

SESSION 5 | Jonah 3:1-10

Review: In the Book of Jonah, so far, we have witnessed God move miraculously seven times: He caused a violent storm (1:4); the casting of lots fell on Jonah (1:7); the sea was calmed when Jonah hit the water (1:15); commanded the fish to swallow Jonah (1:17); commanded the fish to transport Jonah safely and to put him on dry land (2:10), and perhaps the greatest of all miracles – He melted the heart of the disobedient and uncaring prophet..

The Re-Call of Jonah (Verses 3:1-2)

- *The word of the Lord* - on His authority - with His word
- *Came to Jonah a second time* - God sovereignly gives Jonah a second chance.
- *Arise and preach the message I tell you* - Jonah was to communicate the Lord's words.

Have I ever asked God for a second chance? A third?

When has God given me second chances?

What have I done with them?

God gave to Jonah – a message of grace and mercy: forty days to turn around; Jonah proclaimed this message for three days throughout Nineveh; forty (40) days is the biblical period of testing.

When God's call is clear, how have I responded?

When He calls me to talk to others about Him, how do I respond?

The Repentance of the People (Verse 3:5)

- *So the people believed* - when faced with destruction, they believed. What did they believe? That Jonah's God would destroy them for their wickedness in forty days. What was offered was physical deliverance. First, Jonah repents, and now the people of Nineveh repent.
- *Fast, sackcloth* - signs of self-affliction - symbols of humility.

Do I see evidence of God's miracles around me?

How does that make me feel? Does it grow my faith? Do I marvel at His works? Do I praise Him?

The Response of Jonah (Verses 3: 3-4)

- *So Jonah arose* - the look of repentance and obedience in Jonah.
- *According to the word of the Lord* - the standard under which Jonah now operated
- *Nineveh a great city* – three-day journey - the walled city and the surrounding four suburbs
- *Jonah entered and cried out; Yet forty days; Nineveh was overthrown* - here is the message



The Call of God (Part 2)

SESSION 5 | Jonah 3:1-10 (Continued)

The Repentance of the King (Verses 3:6-9)

- *The word came to the king* - once again, the Word of the Lord, the message of deliverance. It is where many believe Jonah went first and that the King received him and heard his message.
- *He arose from his throne* - the same word as that used for Jonah.
- *Laid aside his robe* - denoting his recognition of a higher authority in God
- *Sackcloth and ashes* - He sets the example for the city - humility
- *Public decree* - the king sends out his word for all to follow.
- *Man or beast* - the animals in that culture represented the spirit of their owners, so the King and his nobles wanted all to humble themselves.
- *Do not taste, eat, or drink anything* - let nothing deter them from trying to appease God.
- *Cover in sackcloth* - display humility.
- *Cry mightily to God* - reminds us of the sailors who cried out to God for their deliverance.
- *Turn from evil ways and violence* - clearly, they connected their impending doom with their behavior.
- *That God may relent; His fierce anger* - Fierce anger - "the burning of his nose."
- *That we may not perish* - this was their hope and prayer.

When I am convicted to repent (to change my mind and my actions) - how do I deal with it? Do I humble myself and seek Him, or do I act as if it is no big deal?

Is repentance a big deal to God? Why?

Do I see His compassion in wanting me to change my mind (and my actions) about what I am doing and return to Him?

The Response of God (Verse 3:10)

- *Then* - the next series of events
- *God saw their works, relented* - compassion, mercy, faithfulness to His word.
- *He did not do it* - a statement from man's point of view.

What are the obstacles I have put in front of God so that I don't have to respond to His call?

Do I see and share God's compassion for others?

What will I do about it now?

Am I being convicted of those obstacles right now? Do I see God's compassion for my good?

How will I respond?



The Compassion of God

SESSION 6 | Jonah 4:1-11

Review: As chapter 4 opens, Nineveh is saved, and many would like to see this little story stop at the end of chapter 3 - but the story is not ultimately about Nineveh - it is about God, and God is not yet through with Jonah.

Jonah's Ironic Anger (Verse 1-3)

- *It displeased Jonah exceedingly* - Nineveh turned to God, which was not what Jonah wanted.
- *He became angry* - literally translated - it was evil to Jonah, with great evil.
- *He prayed* - had a conversation with God - and Yahweh allows Jonah to be angry.
- *Is this not what I said?* - I KNEW IT - see God - I knew I was right.
- *I know You are* - he does know God well.
- *Gracious* - grace toward those who do not deserve it - but don't be gracious to them.
- *Merciful* - withholding what they did deserve - but don't be merciful to them.
- *Slow to anger* - long of the nose - but be swift to anger.
- *Abundant in lovingkindness* - *hesed* - loyal love - but don't show them, love.
- *Relents from doing harm* - but harm them; all of God's things were expressed to Jonah.
- *Therefore* - earlier, he had prayed to live (2:2), now he prays for God to take his life.

God's Inquisitive Answer (Verse 4)

- *Is it right?* - Are you seeing this from the right perspective, Jonah?

Jonah Pouts (Verse 5)

- *Jonah went out and sat* - he goes out to pout and to try to prove that he is right about them.
- *Made himself a shelter* - he gets comfortable while he is out there.

- *To see what would become of the city* - he still wanted to see them destroyed.

God Prepares (Verses 6-8)

- *Lord God prepared a plant* - Notice the name change again - Elohim - this is a miraculous move of God (just like the wind and the fish and the repentance of Nineveh).
- *Come up over Jonah* - He wanted comfort and protection.
- *Deliver him from his misery* - can be translated as "rescue him from his moral evil or evil attitude."
- *God prepared a worm* - He has now prepared a wind to turn Jonah, a fish to save Jonah, a plant to change Jonah, and a worm to show Jonah the contrast between his heart and God's heart; God prepared an east wind.
- *Jonah wished death for himself* - because of his circumstances.

God's Compassionate Love (Verses 9-11)

- *Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?* - God is trying to get Jonah to see his error.
- *Jonah says* - yes, it is right for me to be angry - God - you are not fair.
- *Should I not have pity* - compassion on the Great city versus the little plant.
- *God says* - you have more pity on a plant than on people.

Jonah's Convicting Lesson (Verse 9)

- Frank Gabelein says, "*It is not only the unbelievers of the Nineveh's of today who need to repent; it is also we who are modern Jonahs. For no one begins to understand this profound and*



The Compassion of God

SESSION 6 | Jonah 4:1-11

(Continued)

searching little book unless he discovers the Jonah in himself and then repentantly lays hold upon the boundless grace of God."

Do I see God's compassion toward me?

Is God calling me to be compassionate toward others?

How will I respond?

OUR VISION

Developing spiritual leaders in every nation who can teach others about the love of Christ – a love that cannot be earned and cannot be lost.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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