



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

# BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

**JONAH, MICAH  
AND NAHUM**

Week 1

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# *Before You Begin Your Journey...*

Who has not heard the familiar story of Jonah and the Whale? Even if you didn't attend Sunday school—even if you were raised as an atheist—you know the story of how the reluctant prophet almost became a part of the aquatic food chain. It is one of the most familiar Old Testament Bible stories.

But Jonah is far more than a fantastic story. It is a significant linchpin of biblical prophecy. In the book of Jonah, we see:

- You can't escape a commission from God.
  - God is concerned about all cultures and nationalities.
  - God is merciful—even to the enemies of his people.
  - An illustration of the death and resurrection of our Lord.
- This last point was the sign that Jesus gave as a confirmation of his Messiahship.

The deep significance of a biblical event or figure is sometimes lost on us. Take Micah, for instance, another minor prophet. His name lacks the charisma of Jonah's, as he was not swallowed by a large fish. Micah spent his career giving the northern kingdom of Israel the unpopular message that she was headed for downfall because of her continued oppression, thievery, violence and idolatry. That prophecy was fulfilled in 722 B.C. with the fall of Samaria to the Assyrians.

Yet Micah also foretells:

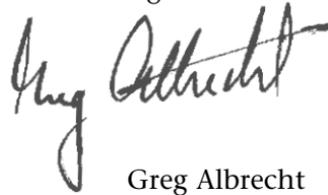
- The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.
- The gospel being preached to the world.
- The peaceful reign of Christ in the fullness of his kingdom: "They will beat their swords in to plowshares and their spears into pruninghooks. Nation will not take up

sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore” (Mic 4:3).

What about Nahum? Few people today would recognize the name of this prophet, name their children after him or even their dog, let alone know what his book is about. Even Bible scholars know little about the prophet himself. But his writings tell us that:

- Nineveh, spared by God after Jonah’s ministry, would finally suffer for its cruel and oppressive crimes against Israel and other nations.
- God will bring peace to Israel, symbolizing the arrival of the eternal Kingdom of God.

These are three minor prophets with major messages that presage the coming of Christ and his kingdom.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Albrecht". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Greg Albrecht  
President, Plain Truth Ministries

# *How to Use the CWR Bible Survey...*

**1**—Read and study at your own pace. This is a devotional. It is designed to help you consider and ponder the great truths of God’s written revelation. It is designed to help you worship and come to know God. We plan to cover the entire Bible in 43 volumes, and while that sounds like a long time, don’t be in a hurry. Take your time! Even though each volume is divided into bite-size daily lessons, you may want to take two days on each “daily” lesson.

**2**—We suggest you set aside a special time for the *CWR Bible Survey* every day. We recommend allowing 30-45 minutes, but even if you can only spare 15 minutes, try to make it part of your regular schedule. You will find that the *CWR Bible Survey* will be an invaluable resource for facing your daily challenges.

**3**—You will need a good Bible. This might be an excellent time for you to consider purchasing a study Bible. Plain Truth Ministries has reviewed many of the study Bibles that are available, and in cooperation with Thomas Nelson and Zondervan, we are pleased to be able to offer two superb study Bibles that will be an excellent resource and help to you. Please see the back pages of this book for more details.

**4**—Always read the assigned passage of the daily lesson in your Bible first. Each daily lesson builds upon the portion of the Bible being covered that day. You may want to begin by praying about what God has in store for you as you read, and then look at the questions and background information.

**5**—Consider the format of each daily lesson. Almost every daily lesson will include:

- **Opening Up to the Word** —a section designed to help you open your mind to the teaching God has inspired.
- **Digging Into the Word**—this section will encourage you to get your nose into the Bible and think deeply about what it says.
- **Living Out the Word**—here you will be challenged to consider the practical implications for your life. How does this passage help you live?

• **Window On the Word**—will offer key insights to help you more clearly understand the daily Bible passage.

**6**—After you finish the daily lesson, take some quiet time. You may simply think, look out the window, take a walk, or even get down on your knees. But use this time to let this daily lesson sink in. Ask God to show you what he wants you to understand from your reading and study.

**7**—Consider the *CWR Bible Survey* for small groups in which you may be involved. Tell your friends about it. If you are involved in a small group that meets for prayer and Bible study, introduce your group to it. Many are seeking an easy-to-read guide to help them understand the Bible and to help them know God. The *CWR Bible Survey* can do that!

• **Abbreviations Used in the *CWR Bible Survey***—

Genesis	Ge	Nahum	Na
Exodus	Ex	Habakkuk	Hab
Leviticus	Lev	Zephaniah	Zep
Numbers	Nu	Haggai	Hag
Deuteronomy	Dt	Zechariah	Zec
Joshua	Jos	Malachi	Mal
Judges	Jdg	Matthew	Mt
Ruth	Ru	Mark	Mk
1 Samuel	1Sa	Luke	Lk
2 Samuel	2Sa	John	Jn
1 Kings	1Ki	Acts	Ac
2 Kings	2Ki	Romans	Ro
1 Chronicles	1Ch	1 Corinthians	1Co
2 Chronicles	2Ch	2 Corinthians	2Co
Ezra	Ezr	Galatians	Gal
Nehemiah	Ne	Ephesians	Eph
Esther	Est	Philippians	Php
Job	Job	Colossians	Col
Psalms	Ps	1 Thessalonians	1Th
Proverbs	Pr	2 Thessalonians	2Th
Ecclesiastes	Ecc	1 Timothy	1Ti
Song of Songs	SS	2 Timothy	2Ti
Isaiah	Isa	Titus	Tit
Jeremiah	Jer	Philemon	Phm
Lamentations	La	Hebrews	Heb
Ezekiel	Eze	James	Jas
Daniel	Da	1 Peter	1Pe
Hosea	Hos	2 Peter	2Pe
Joel	Joel	1 John	1Jn
Amos	Am	2 John	2Jn
Obadiah	Ob	3 John	3Jn
Jonah	Jnh	Jude	Jude
Micah	Mic	Revelation	Rev

JONAH,  
MICAH &  
NAHUM

Major Messages  
From Three  
Minor Prophets

# Introduction to Jonah

**Authorship:** Probably the greatest question regarding the book of Jonah deals with whether the book should be regarded as history or parable. Was Jonah a real person? *Jonah*, meaning “dove,” is identified as the son of Amittai, giving us an indication that the Bible regards him as a historical figure. He is mentioned in 2 Kings 14:25 as being from the town of Gath Hepher in Zebulun, and prophesying during the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel. Jonah has the distinction of being the only prophet in the Bible who tried to run from God.

Some have suggested that, since the book is written in the third person, Jonah may not have written the book. However, Moses, author of the Pentateuch often used the third person, as did Isaiah and Daniel.

More importantly, Jesus quotes the story of Jonah (Mt 12:39, 40). Some argue that Jesus’ words were meant as a parable, and that he didn’t mean them to be taken literally. Yet, as J. Sidlow Baxter writes in *Explore the Book*, “Will anyone dare to maintain that the Son of God was here teaching that imaginary persons who at the imaginary preaching of an imaginary prophet repented in imagination, shall rise up in that day and condemn the actual impotence of those, his actual hearers, that the fictitious characters of a parable shall be arraigned at the same bar with the living men of that generation?”

**Date:** The book of Jonah was probably written between 793-753 B.C. It is likely that Jonah was a contemporary of both Hosea and Amos.

**Setting and purpose:** The city of Nineveh was on the east bank of the Tigris River, about 550 miles from Samaria, capital of the Kingdom of Israel. Nineveh was an ancient city, mentioned in Genesis 10:11. It was a principal city of Assyria, and at one time was its capital. The walls surrounding Nineveh were 50 feet high and 100 feet wide.

Jonah is sent to preach to the Ninevites, who receive his message

and repent. As a result, God forestalls the destruction he had planned for them. Jonah is displeased by this turn of events.

This story has traditionally been understood as teaching that God's salvation is offered to all people—not just Israel. We also learn about the importance of human repentance and about the depth of God's compassion. Finally, we are struck with the contrast between the human weakness of the prophet, and the divine power of his message (consider Jer 1:4-10).

It may be that God prepared the people of Nineveh for His message before Jonah's arrival. Two plagues had erupted in 765 and 759 B.C. On June 15, 763, a total eclipse of the sun occurred. These were anciently interpreted as signs of divine anger, which may help to explain the Ninevites' sense of urgency in accepting Jonah's prophecy as true.

### **Reading outline:**

#### **I. THE DISOBEDIENT PROPHET, 1-2**

- A. You Can Run, but You Can't Hide, 1:1-7
- B. Man Overboard! 1:8-17
- C. Prayer From the Deep, 2:1-6
- D. Oh, What a Relief It Is! 2:7-10

#### **II. THE OBEDIENT PROPHET, 3-4**

- A. The God of Second Chances, 3:1-5
- B. Unconditional Surrender, 3:6-10
- C. The Pouting Prophet, 4:1-4
- D. Turning Up the Heat, 4:5-10

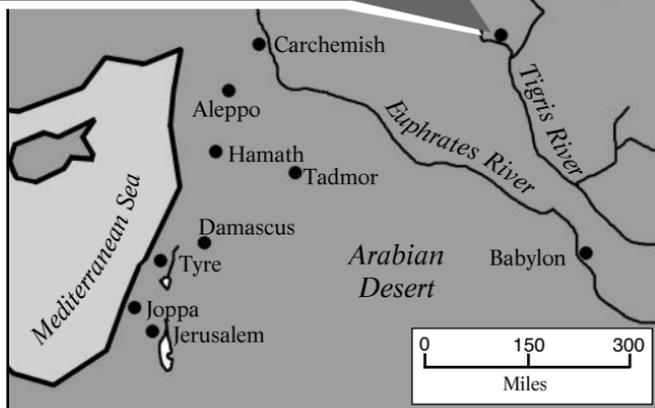
# NINEVEH

## A GREAT CITY

Nineveh was a major Assyrian city located on the east bank of the Tigris River approximately 280 miles north of Babylon. It was originally founded by Nimrod (Ge 10:8-11), with the cities of Rehoboth Ir, Calah, and Resen. These eventually grew to form a metropolitan area 60 miles across.

### Nineveh

*Capital city of the  
Assyrian Empire*



Nineveh can be compared to Babylon with its magnificent royal palaces, gardens and temples. It boasted a library containing over 26,000 clay tablets—one of the largest that has been discovered in the ancient world.

Its water was supplied by the Khasr river, harnessed by a dam built by king Sennacherib. An aqueduct carried additional water from a second dam 30 miles away.

Nineveh was the focus of prophecies by Zephaniah and Nahum, who warned of the city's destruction.

It was defended by a outer wall and a massive inner wall 100 feet high and 50 feet wide.

The city was destroyed in 612 B.C., besieged by an alliance of Babylonians, Scythians and Medes.

# You Can Run, but You Can't Hide

DAY 1

Jonah 1:1-7

Why do you think many people suddenly “get religion” when they feel they are going to die?

1. Where did God tell Jonah to preach, and why was this preaching necessary (v. 2)?
2. Instead of obeying God and going to Nineveh, Jonah took a ship headed for Tarshish. What do you think Jonah was trying to accomplish (v. 3)?
3. In the middle of a great storm that threatened to sink the ship, Jonah was (v. 5): (a) praying, (b) steering, (c) sleeping, (d) crying.
4. What did the sailors assume had caused this storm (v. 7) and why do you think they so quickly jumped to this conclusion?

1. Have you ever tried to avoid something you knew God wanted you to do? What was it?
2. Why would God ask you to do something that he knew you didn't want to do?
3. If you could do it again, would you respond differently to God's direction, or the same? Why?
4. How do you know that God wants you to do something?

**Tarshish** (v. 3) comes from a Semitic word meaning “to smelt.” There were several places involved in the mineral and metal trade on the Mediterranean coast with this name. The farthest one was the town of Tartessus in Spain, and this may have been Jonah's destination. **“Flee from the Lord”** (v. 3) does not necessarily indicate that Jonah thought he could escape God's influence, since he speaks of God's universal power in verse 9. More likely, Jonah was trying to escape the task at hand. He knew there were other prophets that God could use. Assyria was the historical enemy of Israel. Jonah may have been disturbed that God intended to call Assyria to repentance, and perhaps spare them.

## OPENING

up to the Word

## DIGGING

into the Word

## LIVING

out the Word

## WINDOW

on the Word

## DAY 2

# Man Overboard!

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Jonah 1:8-17

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Have you ever been in rough water in a boat or ship? What was that experience like?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

1. What four pieces of information did the sailors ask of Jonah? Why do you think they asked (v. 8)?
2. One piece of information Jonah gave the sailors terrified them. What was it, and why do you think it frightened them so (vs. 9-10)?
3. Why do you think the sailors hesitated to throw Jonah overboard (vs. 12-14)?
4. When God stilled the storm, the sailors were so affected that they did what three things (v. 16)?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

1. Can you think of an example where our rejection of how God might use us in his service can adversely affect the lives of other people?
2. Can you recall choices you made that at least initially caused you to “flee from the Lord”? Can you see, in hindsight, how God didn’t give up on you even though you determined to run away from him?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

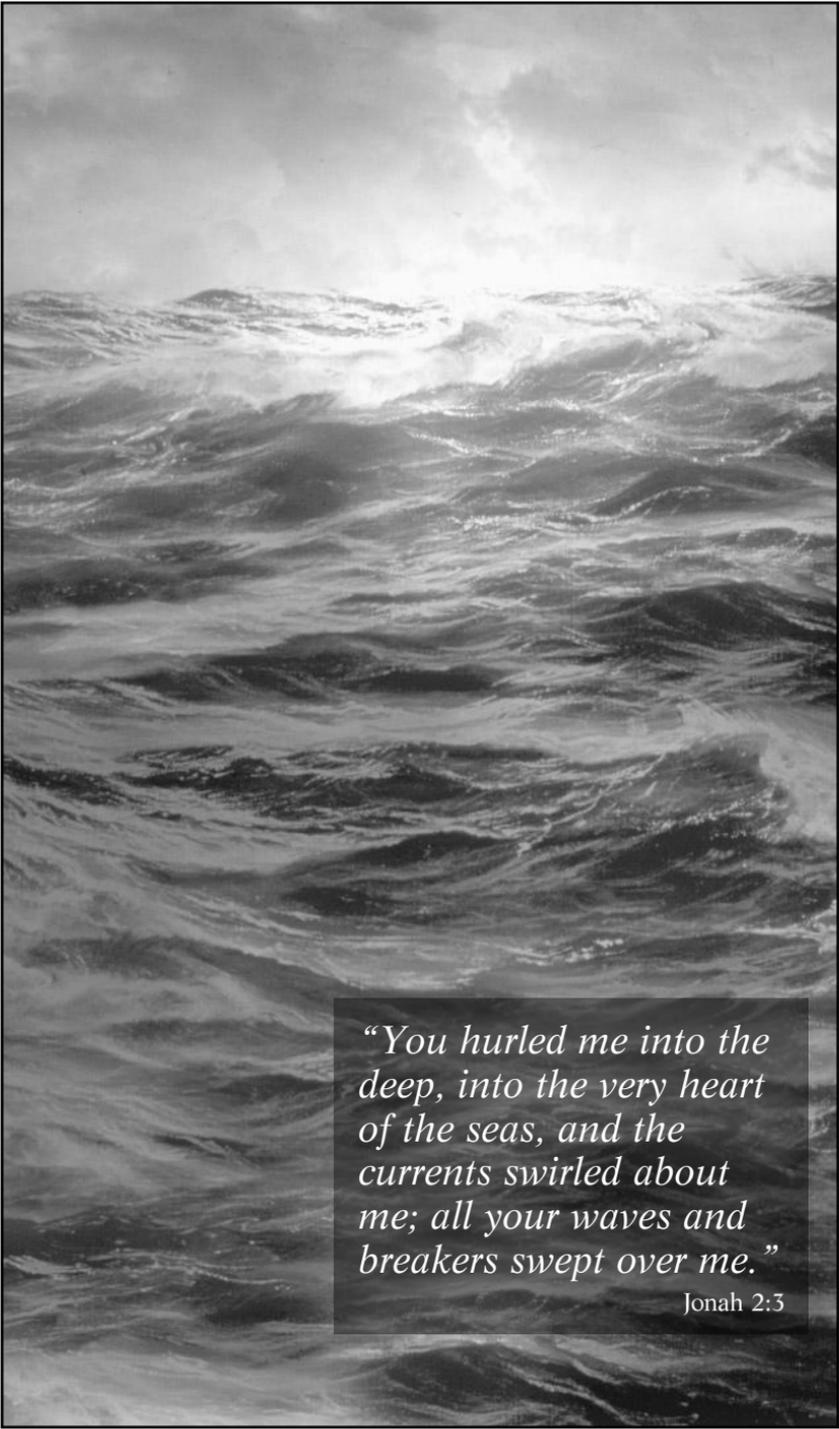
*“A great fish...swallowed Jonah”(v. 17). A similar event is recorded as happening in 1891. The ship Star of the East was near the Falkland Islands hunting whales, when a man named James Bartley accidentally fell overboard during an encounter with a whale, and was presumed dead. The whale was finally killed and the crew worked all day and part of the night removing the blubber. The next day they saw signs of movement inside the whale’s stomach. Inside, they found Bartley alive, but unconscious. Three weeks later he regained his mental health and gave a full account. It is known that a sperm whale can swallow lumps of food eight feet in diameter. When a sperm whale is dying it often ejects the contents of its stomach, which fits Jonah’s account of being vomited up (2:10) by the “fish” (the Hebrews were not a sea-faring people and did not have a precise vocabulary for sea creatures).*

# JONAH

AND THE

# SAILORS

JONAH	SAILORS
Israelite prophet with a knowledge of God. Using contemporary religious terminology, Jonah was probably regarded as “saved.”	Gentiles with seemingly little or no knowledge of the true God. Contemporary religious terminology would identify the sailors as “lost.”
Monotheist, believing in one true God (Jnh 1:9).	Polytheists, worshipping many false gods (Jnh 1:5).
Spiritually insensitive and indifferent toward God’s will despite outwardly knowing him.	Spiritually sensitive and concerned about God’s will in spite of being seen as not knowing him.
Little compassion toward people of Nineveh (1:3; 4:1-3).	Great compassion toward Jonah (1:11-14).



*“You hurled me into the deep, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me.”*

Jonah 2:3

# Prayer From the Deep

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DAY 3

Jonah 2:1-6

Have you ever been in a place where all light was absent, for example, a cave, cavern or mine? What was most frightening about the total absence of light?

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1. From where did Jonah pray to God (v. 1)?
  2. How did Jonah describe the moments before he was swallowed, as he was drowning in the ocean (vs. 3-5)?
  3. Though Jonah knew God was disciplining him through this terrible experience, what was he confident he would see once again (v. 4)?
  4. Read verses 4 and 5 carefully. What was happening to Jonah in these desperate few moments (vs. 5-6)?
  5. Though we often view the great fish swallowing Jonah as a tragedy, how did Jonah describe it in verses 6 and 7? What did the great fish rescue Jonah from?
- 

1. What is the scariest moment you've ever experienced?
  2. When that moment occurred, did you think to pray to God for help? If you prayed, how was your prayer answered?
  3. How has God shown you his mercy and love even when he has allowed you to reap the rewards of a bad decision? What do you think was his goal for you during this disciplining experience? Did you learn your lesson?
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*After reviving and realizing he had not drowned, **Jonah prayed**. It is clear from verse 2 that while Jonah was drowning, he feared he would die and was headed to the grave himself.*

## OPENING

up to the Word

## DIGGING

into the Word

## LIVING

out the Word

## WINDOW

on the Word

## DAY 4

# Oh, What a Relief It Is!

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Jonah 2:7-10

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Were you ever rescued from a dangerous situation? What almost happened to you?

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**DIGGING**  
into the Word

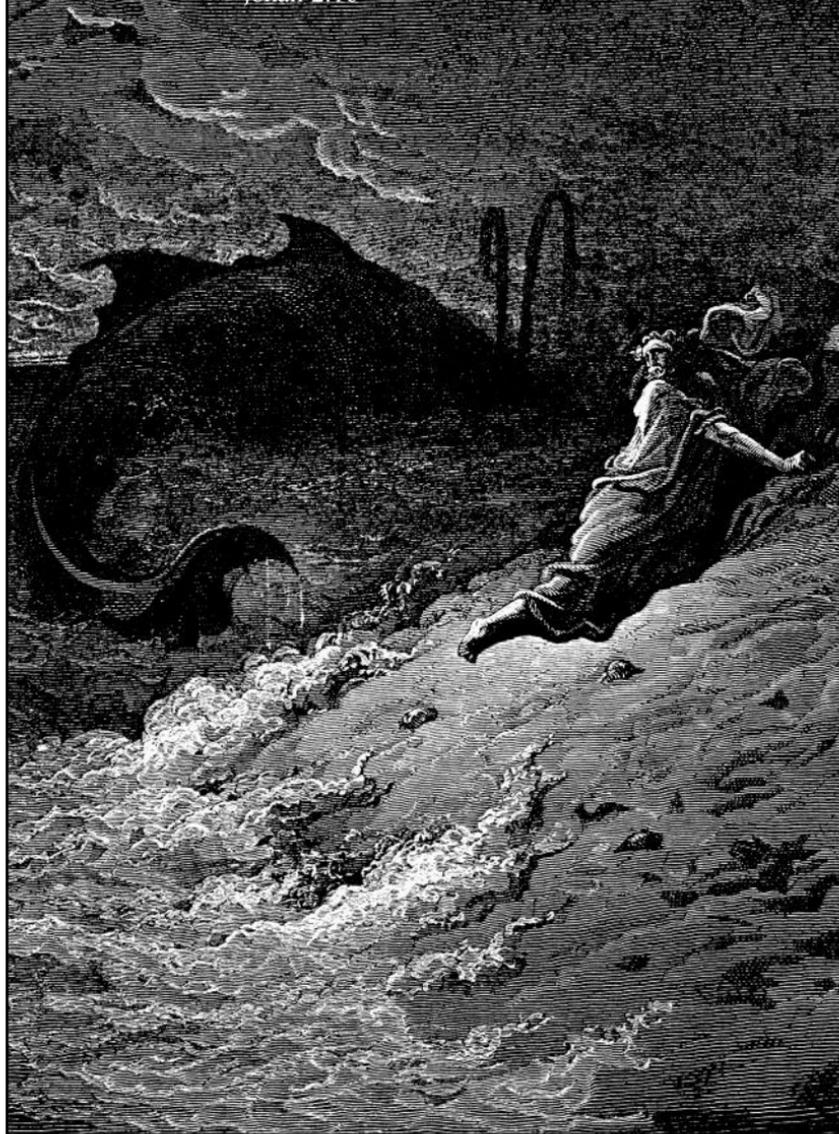
1. Though he did several things wrong, in the most frightening experience in Jonah's life, what did Jonah do right that we could learn from (v. 7)?
  2. Believing in idols has many dangers, but what is one of the worst (v. 8)?
  3. In the belly of the great fish, Jonah promised the Lord two things (v. 9). What were they?
  4. What caused the great fish to vomit Jonah up (v. 10)?
  5. If Jonah had been vomited up in the deep ocean he probably would have drowned. What last gracious act did God command the great fish to do (v. 10)?
- 

**LIVING**  
out the Word

1. It is not unusual for God to deliver us from danger and then for us to fail to thank him for his deliverance. What is your typical response when God delivers you? (a) say "Phew, that was close!" (b) shake your head and say, "I'll never do that again! I was really lucky!" (c) stop everything and sincerely thank God for his protection.
2. When people are in danger, they often make God promises about what they will do if he rescues them. Have you ever made God such a promise when you were in danger? Did you keep your promise?
3. What kind of change did your encounter with danger produce in you? (a) radical, (b) significant, (c) mild, (d) temporary.

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

Jonah 2:10



Artwork by Gustav Doré

## The God of Second Chances

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Jonah 3:1-5

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

If you've ever failed at something important, did you get a chance to redeem yourself?

1. Why do you think God gave Jonah a second chance instead of simply sending a more obedient prophet (v. 1)?
2. God gave the Ninevites 40 days to repent (v. 4). Why so many—why not three days, or seven? See note below.
3. We are told that the Ninevites didn't challenge or ridicule the message—they instantly believed (v. 5). Why do you think they were so ready to believe such an amazing prophecy (see the introduction)?
4. Can you think of any reasons why the repentance of the Ninevites was unanimous (v. 5)? It doesn't say that *most* of them believed, but *all* of them.

**LIVING**  
out the Word

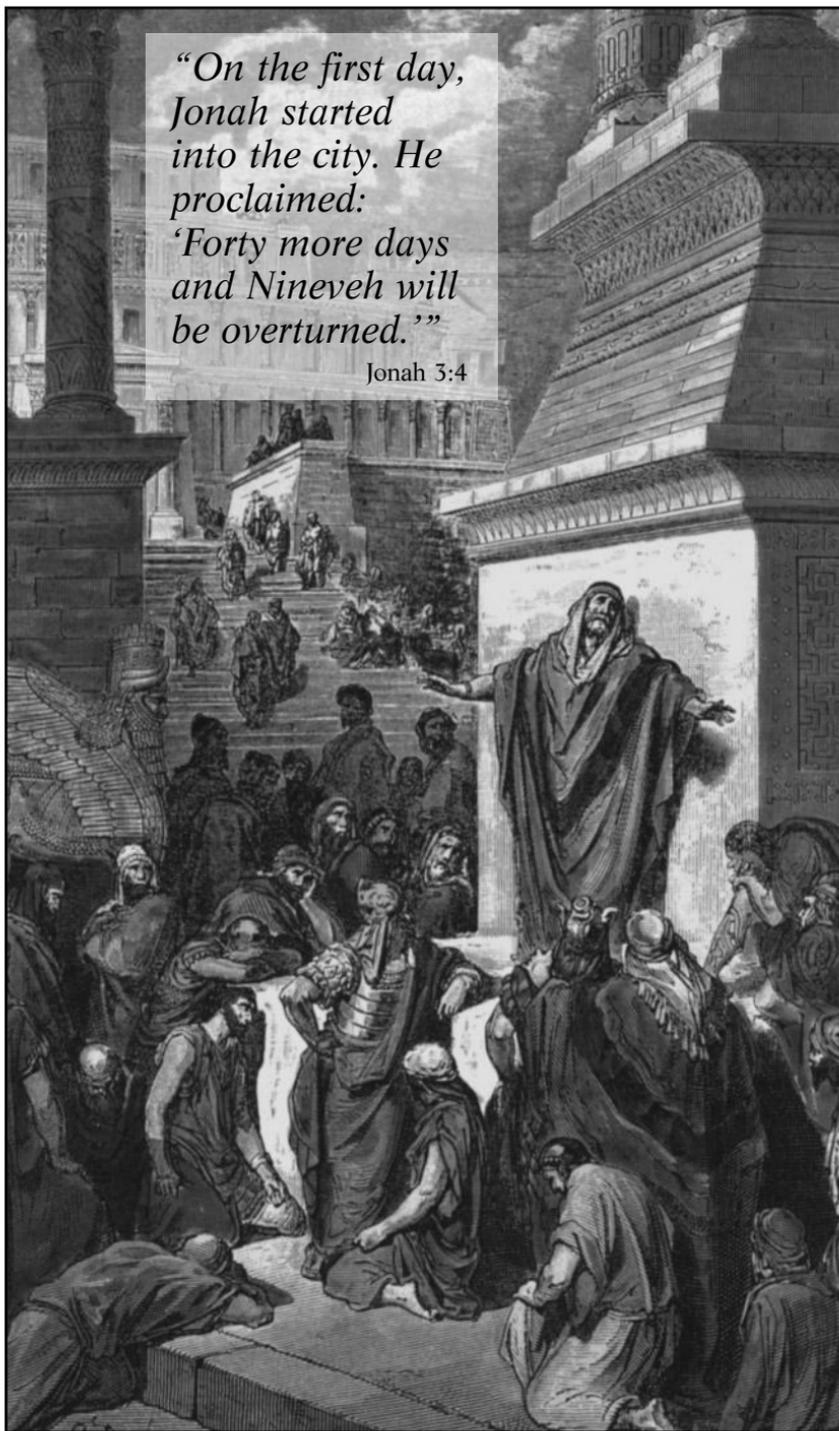
1. It is often said that God is a God of second chances, and the story in Jonah certainly bears that out. There were two repentances recorded in Jonah, first the prophet's repentance, then the Ninevite's repentance. Is your repentance more similar to that of the prophet or that of the Ninevites? Why?
2. Repentance is not something that we need to do only once, but it is actually a way of life. How willing are you to turn and change, whenever the need arises?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*Nineveh was surrounded by a huge inner wall and a smaller outer wall. The inner wall surrounded the city proper, about two miles in diameter. The outer wall went around the surrounding towns and villages. At each part of the city Jonah would need to stop and preach, taking him at least three days (v. 3). "Forty more days" (v. 4). It is thought by some commentators that this was one last period of grace extended to Nineveh before judgment would fall.*

*“On the first day,  
Jonah started  
into the city. He  
proclaimed:  
‘Forty more days  
and Nineveh will  
be overturned.’”*

Jonah 3:4



Artwork by Gustav Doré

## Unconditional Surrender

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Jonah 3:6-10

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

In World War II, the United States pressed Japan for an unconditional surrender, which Japan continually rejected. What final terrible event broke through their hesitancy and made them agree to surrender unconditionally? Why do you think nations and people balk at surrendering unconditionally?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

1. What four things did the king of Nineveh do in response to Jonah's message (v. 6)?
2. According to the decree of the king, who was commanded not to eat or drink (v. 7)? (a) men, (b) adults only, (c) all people and animals, (d) women only.
3. Why do you think the Ninevites would put sackcloth even on their animals (v. 8)?
4. What sliver of hope did the king cling to (v. 9)?
5. What caused God to change his mind and not to destroy Nineveh (v. 10)?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

1. As you consider how the Ninevites repented, how does your own repentance compare? (a) similar, (b) less impressive, (c) more impressive, (d) different.
2. When was the last time you genuinely repented before God? (a) last week, (b) last month, (c) last year, (d) don't ask, (e) don't remember.

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

**King of Nineveh** (v. 6). It is likely this king was Ashur-dan III. Nineveh didn't become the capital of the Assyrian Empire until the reign of Sennacherib, but some of the kings resided in Nineveh. **"Do not let any man or beast...taste anything"** (v. 7). While it seems strange to us to include the animal kingdom in an act of repentance, this was not unknown in the Middle East and served to accentuate the people's repentance. **"He...did not bring upon them the destruction he had promised"** (v. 10). Though the Ninevites escaped punishment this time, the repentance wasn't permanent, and the city was destroyed in 612 B.C.

# The Pouting Prophet

DAY 7

Jonah 4:1-4

When was the last time you really felt sorry for yourself?

1. At the sight of the whole city repenting before God (v. 1), Jonah responded with: (a) satisfaction, (b) joy, (c) displeasure, (d) confusion.
2. What was the real reason Jonah tried to flee to Tarshish before coming to Nineveh (v. 2)?
3. Before he went to Nineveh, Jonah lists five things he knew about God that concerned him (v. 2). What are those five things and why did they bother Jonah?
4. What is Jonah's request to God in verse 3? What do you think led Jonah to ask this from God?
5. What question did God ask Jonah (v. 4)? What do you think he was asking Jonah to consider?

1. Have you ever felt that God has been unfair to you, and felt sorry for yourself? Do you feel this way (a) seldom, (b) all the time, (c) never, (d) too often.

2. Do you feel God is treating you unfairly now? Are you sure God is causing the situation? Exactly how is he being unfair to you?

3. If you were a friend of yours, how would you counsel yourself to change your opinion of God?

*"Jonah...became angry" (v. 1). A more literal translation is, "it was evil to Jonah with great evil." Evidently Jonah understood, probably from Amos and Hosea's prophecies, that Assyria would eventually become Israel's destroyer, so he wanted to see them destroyed. It is also possible that he was embarrassed that what he had prophesied had not come to pass, and that he could be labeled a false prophet.*

## OPENING

up to the Word

## DIGGING

into the Word

## LIVING

out the Word

## WINDOW

on the Word