



SUMMARY | Jonah begins with a familiar biblical phrase, “The word of the LORD came to Jonah . . .”

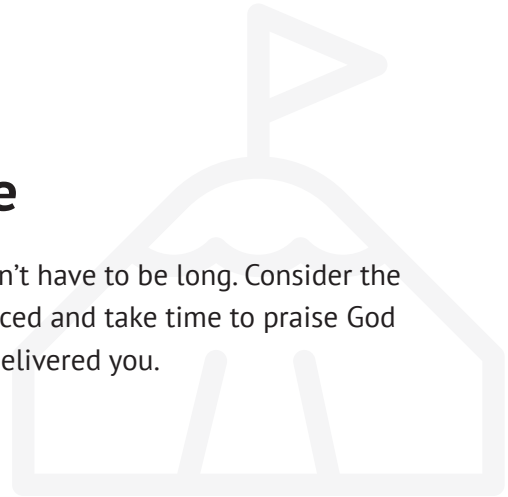
In Bible times, prophets often received a message from God, and the most common response was for the prophet to do whatever it was God asked him or her to do. Not Jonah! He ran away from God, got on a boat, and tried to sail to the other side of the known world. In this conversation, we discuss whether or not Jonah was a real dude, and we explore the repetition of the word “great” (a great city, a great wind, a great storm, a great fish, etc.) and the greater God who rescued Jonah and used his disobedience to draw a ship full of sailors to himself.

Discussion Questions

1. The book of Jonah begins, “The word of the LORD came to . . .” Where else have you seen this phrase in the Bible? How do prophets normally respond? What does Jonah do?
2. One of the themes in Jonah is the repetition of the word “great” (a great city, a great wind, a great storm, a great fish, etc.). All of these “greats” relate to things that are scary and/or inspire fear. One of the messages of Jonah is there’s an even greater God who holds these scary things in his hands. Do you experience any great fears? In these moments of fear, how can you lean into an even greater God?
3. In [Jonah 1:16](#), sailors who served pagan gods are introduced to the one true God of Israel. God used Jonah’s disobedience and a scary storm to draw the sailors to Himself. How has God used your failures to draw others to Himself? How has He used failure to draw you to Himself?
4. Read [Jonah 2](#) aloud. What sticks out to you? How does the song strike you as you consider what Jonah has already experienced? Where’s Jonah when he writes this song?
5. Jonah praises God from the belly of the whale. When life is not going the way we want it to and things are tough, sometimes the best way to find encouragement is to praise God for who He is and what He has provided. Have you ever praised God during a rough patch in your life? How did that change your perspective?

Challenge

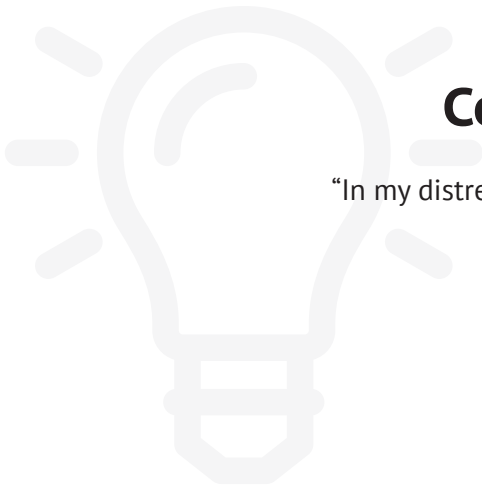
Write a psalm/poem/song of praise to God. It doesn't have to be long. Consider the unique aspects of God's character you've experienced and take time to praise God for the ways in which He has delivered you.



Commit To Memory

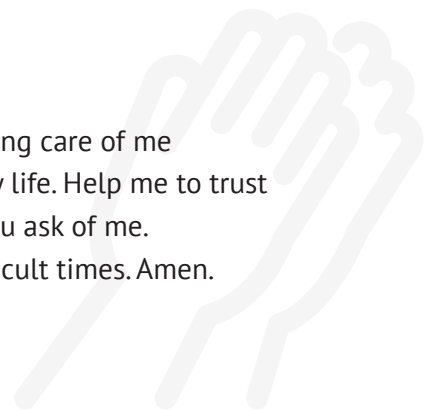
"In my distress I called to the LORD, and he answered me"

[Jonah 2:2](#)



Prayer

Father, thank You for always loving me and taking care of me even when I don't understand what is happening in my life. Help me to trust that You know what is best and obey what You ask of me. And give me a heart of praise even during the difficult times. Amen.





SUMMARY | We ended the first part of this episode with Jonah praising God from the belly of a giant fish. Now, we explore how the story starts over. The same phrase that began the book is repeated at the beginning of [Jonah 3](#), and God gives Jonah a second chance—a do-over—to obey. The question is: did Jonah learn from all of the crazy experiences he had in [chapters 1 and 2](#)? The short answer is “No!” Jonah still hated the idea that God would show mercy to Israel’s enemies. Jonah would rather see an entire city of men, women, children, and cows (yes, cows!) destroyed than for God to show them mercy.

Discussion Questions

1. Jonah’s primary fear was that a loving God would be gracious to Israel’s enemies and show them mercy. What examples can you think of in Scripture where grace and mercy are shown to an enemy? What happens with the Ninevites? ([Jonah 3](#))
2. What does it mean that God is “gracious” and “merciful” and “slow to anger”? ([Jonah 4:2](#))
3. What does it mean that God is “abounding in steadfast love”? ([Jonah 4:2](#))
Can you think of any other Bible passages that describe God’s love?
4. Jonah ends with a funny question, “and much cattle?” Read God’s final comment to Jonah ([4:9–11](#)). Why do you think the book ends with a question?
5. Read [Matthew 12:38–41](#) and [Luke 11:29–32](#). How does the story of Jonah point us forward to Jesus?

Challenge

Jonah had a problem with the idea that God would show mercy to one of his enemies. If Jonah was a prophet of the Most High God and a human being like us, I think it's possible we may have a similar struggle. Think about this: Who are the people you've decided are not deserving of God's mercy and grace? Who are the people you don't want to see in heaven? How can you go out of your way this week to love your enemies and show them the same grace and mercy that God does?

Commit To Memory

"I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity"

[Jonah 4:2](#)

Prayer

God, help me to see all people the way you see them—as your children whom you love. If there are any people whom I look down on, please forgive me and help me to love them and care for them through the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

