

**VBS
2024**

JONAH



**Day 3: Jonah 3
1st-5th Grade**

Jonah 3

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

Each day, the students will learn a memory verse. Students who learn all 5 memory verses this week will receive a prize.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

Objective This lesson will teach the students that God loves all people and calls us to freely share His message of salvation with the people in our lives.

Key Verses

Jonah 3—Main Teaching Passage

2 Peter 3:9

Ezekiel 33:11

Matthew 3:2, 8

2 Corinthians 5:20

Memory Verse - Lamentations 3:22

"The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;
His mercies never come to an end."

Hook

Review Psalm 46:1

Imagine that you woke up in the middle of the night and noticed an orange glow coming through your window from outside. You get out of bed, go over to your window, and see that your neighbor's house is on fire! Would you...

- A. Go back to bed B. Go get what you need to make S'mores
C. Call 911 D. Fill up your water gun and go save the day

Of course the answer is C! If people are in danger, we let them know and call for help! There are people we know and meet who are in danger, and God desires to use us to help them.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

Chapter 3 starts with the same words as chapter 1. Once again, God commands Jonah to bring God's message to the people of Nineveh. This time, Jonah obeys.

Nineveh is described as a very great city. It was so big it would take three whole days to walk through it. On Monday we learned that the message Jonah was to deliver had to do with how wicked the people of Nineveh were. On Jonah's first day walking through the city, he proclaimed God's message: "In just 40 days, Nineveh will be destroyed!"

The people of Nineveh believed God. They took His warning so seriously that they all stopped eating and changed into sackcloth, which was something people wore when they were really sad. All throughout the city people believed God's message and went into mourning: rich people, poor people, famous people, regular people—everyone! Even the king took off his royal robes and dressed in clothes of mourning like the rest of the people in his kingdom. As the king humbled himself, he sent an order through his entire kingdom that no person or animal was to eat or drink, but to turn away from their evil ways and cry out to God. Maybe it wasn't too late. Maybe God would have mercy on them.

God saw them turn away from their sin and turn to Him in repentance. God decided not to destroy the people of Nineveh like His message had stated. Instead, He had mercy on them.

LOOK

Yesterday we looked at Jonah's prayer from inside the great fish. He acknowledged that he was wrong and turned back to God. Do you remember what that's called when you turn away from sin and toward God? Repentance! To repent is more than just saying sorry. To repent is to stop doing what is wrong and to start doing what is right. Just like God had shown Jonah mercy and given him the opportunity to repent, God now wants to use Jonah to provide the people of Nineveh with that opportunity as well.

But Jonah's message wasn't even a call for the people to repent. It was a statement of judgment. The message wasn't, "Nineveh will be destroyed, unless...". It was guaranteed destruction in 40 days! The reason for that judgment was the great wickedness of the people of Nineveh. Therein lies an important truth: sin requires judgment. But sin wasn't a problem unique to Nineveh. The Bible says all have sinned and that the payment for sin (no matter how great or small) is death! However, as we have learned, God is merciful. God would have mercy on anyone and everyone if they would believe in Him and turn away from their sin. God loves everyone, and He never runs out of mercy. Without knowing any of that, the people of Nineveh repent.

The interpretation/exegesis of the passage. What does this passage mean? How does this passage apply to my life?

LOOK (Continued)

God used Jonah to bring His message to the people of Nineveh. That, after all, was a prophet's job! But God calls us to do the same thing. Jesus instructed His disciples after He had risen from the dead, "Go everywhere and tell everyone about the good news of the kingdom of God." Once we believe in God and become His children, we can go and tell others about Him. Our message, unlike Jonah's, isn't "prepare to be destroyed!" Our message is "God loves everyone, including you, and sent His son to pay the price of sin in your place, so you could receive mercy, the gift of eternal life, and all the promises that are in Christ Jesus!"

If God was able to rescue an entire city through the words of a prophet who wanted to see the city destroyed, don't you think He can rescue people through you? It is God who saves. He does it through His word as His people share His word with others. God desires to have you bring His good news to people who will be saved.

Who do you know who needs to be rescued from sin? Who do you know in danger of God's judgment? Maybe it's a parent, a cousin, or some other family member. Maybe it's a neighbor, a friend, or even someone you think of as an enemy. Maybe you think they would never believe or listen to anything you have to say, but remember, it's God who saves. It's God who loves them. It's God who wants them to believe in Him and receive mercy. Our job is just to introduce the people in our lives to God by sharing His message of salvation with them. The rest is up to God. So think about who you can share God's good news with, then pray for an opportunity to talk with them. After you have, continue to pray that God would give them what they need to repent from sin and believe in Him.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

TOOK

As a class, memorize Lamentations 3:22

Review the lesson by writing on the board names of people kids know who they want courage to share God's good news with. Pray for those people to be saved.

Pray: Praise God for giving mercy to all who turn from sin and believe in Him. Pray for courage to share God's good news with others and pray that they would be saved.

Family Question: Who does God want you to share His good news with?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on Jonah 3 by David Guzik

JONAH PREACHES REPENTANCE IN NINEVEH, THE CITY REPENTS

A. Jonah's ministry in Nineveh.

1. ([Jonah 3:1-2](#)) The second call to Jonah.

Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you."

a. **Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time:** This shows the amazing love of God to His wayward people. Though Jonah did everything he could to resist the first call of God, after Jonah repented God called him again — though God was under no obligation to do it. He did it out of mercy and grace.

i. "By paralleling here the book's opening remarks, almost word for word, the author skillfully conveys the idea that Jonah is being offered a new beginning." (Alexander)

ii. "How many of us who have been called to deliver the word of Jehovah, would still be doing it, if it were not for this patient and perfecting grace of God? Surely not many! How have we failed Him, and broken down in our ministry; and often not on ground so high as that of Jonah's failure." (Morgan)

iii. God was determined to do the work through Jonah, so He did not give up on the reluctant prophet. God is often just this committed to doing His work through a man. "Suppose that the problem had been given to us to solve - how shall this city be moved to repentance? How shall its vice be forsaken and the God of Israel worshipped by all its inhabitants from the highest to the lowest? If we had not been paralyzed with despair, which is the most probable, we should, nevertheless, have sat down carefully to consider our plans. We should have parcelled it out into missionary districts; we should have needed at least several hundreds, it not thousands, of able ministers; at once, expenses would have to be incurred, and we should have considered ourselves bound to contemplate the erection of innumerable structures in which the Word of God might be preached. Our machinery would necessarily become cumbrous; we should find that we, unless we had the full resources of an empire, could not even begin the work. But what saith the Lord concerning this? Putting aside the judgments of reason, and all the plans and schemes which flesh and blood so naturally do follow, he raises up one man. By a singular providence he qualifies that one man for his mission." (Spurgeon)

b. **Preach to it the message that I tell you:** Instead of telling Jonah to *cry out against* Nineveh, this time God simply tells Jonah to go there and wait for further instructions. God often works this way, and our flesh often finds it irritating that He does.

i. The story of Jonah demonstrates *why* God so often leads us one step at a time without telling us more. When God told Jonah what he would say in Nineveh, Jonah rejected the call. God often only tells us what we can handle at the time.

2. ([Jonah 3:3-4](#)) Jonah preaches in Nineveh.

So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey *in extent*. And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

a. **Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD:** Having learned the lesson that resisting the will of God is both futile and counter-productive, Jonah now obeys the call and goes to Nineveh.

b. **Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent:** The idea behind this statement probably refers to how long it would take to walk around the city of “Greater Nineveh” — the metropolitan area around the city.

c. **Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!** Jonah emphasized to the people of Nineveh what would happen if they did not repent — the city would be **overthrown** in judgment. Undoubtedly, this was not Jonah’s *whole* message to the people of Nineveh; but clearly it was his emphasis.

i. **“Overthrown”** is a word applied to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah ([Genesis 19:25](#), [Lamentations 4:6](#), and [Amos 4:11](#)).

ii. We see that Jonah preached this message with earnestness. “And such earnestness becomes a ministry that has to do with immortal souls, asleep and dead in sin, hanging on the brink of perdition, and insensible of their state. The soft-speaking, gentle-intoned, unmoved preacher, is never likely to awaken souls ... But this earnestness is widely different from that noisy, blustering, screaming rant, that manifests more of the turbulence of disorderly passions, than of the real inspired influence of the Spirit of God” (Clarke).

B. The response of the people of Nineveh to Jonah’s message.

1. ([Jonah 3:5-9](#)) The response of the people: repentance.

So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying,

Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?

a. **So the people of Nineveh:** The *word* “repentance” isn’t in this passage; but repentance isn’t really a word, it is something you *do* — and these people *did* repentance. One can have repentance without the word itself being spoken, and one can say the word “repentance” and never truly repent.

b. **The people of Nineveh believed God:** Repentance begins with believing God. As we believe Him and His Word, we have the power to transform our lives as He wills. You can do many other things associated with repentance, but if they do not begin with believing on and trusting God, they are all useless works of the flesh.

i. You can’t *believe God* apart from the Word of God. Therefore, any real revival or repentance will begin with faithful preaching and faithful hearing of God’s Word, just as it was in Nineveh.

c. **The people of Nineveh... proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth:** Repentance means *doing* something. The people of Nineveh fasted, mourned as if for the dead, and they did it from the highest to the lowest (**from the greatest to the least of them**).

i. If repentance is anything, it is *not* business as usual. When repentance comes, something has to change and something has to be *different*. In their case, the people of Nineveh took off their normal clothes and put on **sackcloth** — a thick coarse cloth, normally made from goat’s hair. Wearing it displayed the rejection of earthly comforts and pleasures.

ii. **Let man and beast be covered with sackcloth:** They even repented on behalf of their animals, dressing them as if the animals were in mourning for the dead.

d. **But let man and beast... cry mightily to God:** Repentance means crying **mightily to God**. It means coming to God with passion and seriousness about your sin and your need for His mercy and forgiveness.

i. Many modern expressions of repentance, making excuses and justifying reasons for the sin, are really not repentance at all. Often they are only attempts to justify and excuse sin. Nevertheless, you sinned or you did-

n't; if you did, *there is no excuse*, and if you haven't, *there is no need to repent*. Repentance and excuses simply don't belong together.

e. **Yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands:** Repentance means turning from your **evil way and from the violence that is in your hands**. Repentance means to change your mind and turn from your previous sinful actions.

i. In the Christian life, repentance does not describe what you must do to turn to God; it describes the very process of turning to God. When we truly turn to Him, we turn away from the things that displease Him.

f. **Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger:** Repentance has hope in the mercy and love of God. It hopes that God will **relent** and that the repentant people will **not perish**.

g. Jonah could more effectively preach the message of repentance because he knew his own need to repent and was himself a model of repentance ([Jonah 2:8-9](#)). Being a repentant sinner didn't disqualify Jonah from preaching repentance; it made his preaching all the more effective.

2. ([Jonah 3:10](#)) God's response to the people's repentance.

Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

a. **God saw their works... and God relented:** God honored Nineveh's repentance, even though their *past* sin was just reason enough for an outpouring of judgment. The state would never forgive a cold-blooded murderer who vowed to never do it again, but God mercifully relented from judgment against the people of Nineveh.

i. We do not *obligate* God to forgive us when we repent. Instead, repentance appeals to God's mercy, not His justice.

b. **God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it:** Did God's relenting make Jonah a false prophet, when he prophesied *Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown*? Not at all, for two good reasons.

i. First, God acted in total consistency with His Word: *The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it* ([Jeremiah 18:7-8](#)). Jonah's preaching was like all warnings of judgment: it was an invitation to repent and avert the promised judgment. His words had an implied "if you do not repent" in front of them. Remember that we are not told the sum total of Jonah's preaching; though we should assume that the statement in [Jonah 3:5](#) is the central theme of what Jonah said, we should not assume it was *all* that he said.

ii. Second, God did judge Nineveh (as recorded in the book of Nahum). Nevertheless, in light of their repentance He delayed the promised judgment another 150 years.