

JONAH

AND THE GOD OF
SECOND CHANCES

You Can Run,
but You
Can't Hide!

Sometimes life feels like a storm we didn't see coming. It could be getting sick, drama at school, a broken friendship, or even a mistake we made ourselves. Some storms happen just because the world is broken. Other storms, like Jonah's, happen because of our own choices.

Jonah tried to run away from God and skip out on what God asked him to do. At first, he probably thought everything was fine once the ship sailed. But God was right there, chasing him down. Jonah's decision didn't just affect him; it put everyone on the boat in danger. Jonah tried to run from God, but we can't hide from Him.

Still, God didn't give up on Jonah. The storm, the sailors, and even the big fish all show that God is in control and that He keeps coming after us, even when we try to run away.

Icebreaker

What's the worst storm (literal or metaphorical) you have ever been through in your life?

Daily Devotions

Day 1 : Read It

Read Jonah 1: 4-17.

- 1. Who sent the storm that threatened the ship?**
- 2. How did the sailors react when the storm hit?**
- 3. What was Jonah doing while the storm raged?**
- 4. How did Jonah explain the reason for the storm?**
- 5. What happened after Jonah was thrown into the sea?**

Day 2 — Today's Theme: A Storm with a Purpose

Read Jonah 1: 4-6.

It is easy to think about God only in certain moments, but other times we forget or don't even stop to consider that He is in control. The Bible reminds us that God rules over everything. That can be hard to grasp, especially when we see evil or chaos in the world, but God is still holding it all together.

We see this clearly in Jonah's story. The storm that struck his ship was no accident. God, who made the seas and controls the winds, sent it with a purpose. Jonah was running from what God called him to do, and the storm was God's way of getting his attention and leading him back to the right path.

Even though the storm was fierce, it was actually an act of God's care. God wasn't trying to destroy Jonah; **He was waking him up and giving him another chance.**

And even in Jonah's disobedience, God was still at work. The sailors, who didn't believe in Him, came to see His power and authority through Jonah's situation. God used Jonah's sin to reveal Himself to the sailors. God can use us to point others to Him, even when we are not faithful.

6. Can you think of a time in your life when you couldn't imagine how God could bring anything good out of a difficult situation? Looking back now, can you see how He was working through it, or does it still feel unclear?
7. A captain who didn't believe in Jonah's God had to tell Jonah to pray to his God. What does this teach us about how our disobedience can affect our witness to others?
8. How can remembering that God is always in control give us peace, even in the middle of life's storms?

7. A captain who didn't believe in Jonah's God had to tell Jonah to pray to his God. What does this teach us about how our disobedience can affect our witness to others?

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Day 3 — Today's Theme: The Truth Comes Out

Read **Jonah 1: 7-10**.

Have you ever carried a secret that felt like a weight chained to your chest? Maybe it was a lie you told that spun out of control, or something you looked at or said that you hoped no one would ever find out about. At first, you think you've hidden it well. But then it starts gnawing at you when you're alone, keeping you up at night, or making you flinch every time someone gets too close to the truth. That's how guilt works. It doesn't just sit quietly—it eats at you until God finally drags it into the light.

That's where Jonah found himself. The storm pounding the ship wasn't just bad weather, it had Jonah's name written all over it. The sailors could sense something supernatural was going on, so they cast lots, and God exposed Jonah as the guilty one. With nowhere left to hide, Jonah confessed. His life didn't line up with what he claimed to believe, but the truth still came out—and in that moment, even his failure pointed back to God's power.

The sailors were stunned. They realized this wasn't just bad luck on the sea—they were caught in the crossfire of the living God chasing His prophet. Their question cut deep: "Why have you done this?" That same question could just as easily be asked today: If your God is so real, why would you run from Him?

The crew tried everything—rowing harder, crying out to their false gods, throwing cargo overboard—but nothing calmed the storm. That's the brutal reality of sin: no amount of effort, excuses, or self-help can save us from its fallout. Only God can step in and bring peace where chaos reigns.

9. Jonah couldn't calm the storm on his own. What does that show about your inability to fix the problems sin causes by yourself? Share a time when you tried to "fix" your sin.

10. The sailors felt the impact of Jonah's sin firsthand. How do your choices affect the people around you, even when you don't realize it?

11. When Jonah admitted who God is, the truth came through despite his failure. What does that teach you about God's power to work through imperfect people?

Day 4 — Today's Theme: A Surprising Sacrifice

Read Jonah 1:11-16.

I know you all *love it* when I talk about movies (and yes, I probably do it too much), but here's a good example.

Take Anakin Skywalker from *Star Wars*. He started as a gifted Jedi, but fear and pride pulled him off course. His selfish choices hurt others, fueled the rise of the Empire, and brought destruction across the galaxy. But in the end, when the evil Emperor threatened his son, Anakin faced a choice: protect himself or sacrifice everything. He chose to act, giving his life to save Luke and defeat evil.

Jonah had a similar moment. With the storm raging, he admitted his sin and told the sailors, *"Throw me into the sea so the storm will calm."* Taking responsibility for his failure saved innocent lives and even led the sailors to worship the true God, even if Jonah himself doesn't "get the point."

12. The sailors were very reluctant to throw Jonah overboard. What does their hesitation and prayer reveal about their character, especially when compared to Jonah's attitude toward Nineveh?

13. Jonah's willingness to be thrown into the sea saved the sailors. What does this teach us about the importance of taking responsibility for our sin instead of hiding it or blaming others?

14. After the storm stopped, the sailors showed respect to God, gave Him a sacrifice, and worshiped Him. What does that teach us about how we should respond to God when He shows us mercy?

Day 5 — Today's Theme: Swallowed by Mercy

Read Jonah 1:17.

Lifeguards have an important job: they watch the water and make sure no one drowns. Some work at pools, some at waterparks, and some at beaches, each with their own challenges. Either way, they're there to help and rescue.

But Jonah had no lifeguard. No one was there to save him when he jumped off the boat. Left to fend for himself, he was as good as dead, treading water with no hope of survival. Just when it seemed Jonah was doomed to drown, God intervened in a shocking way: *"The LORD prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah."*

This wasn't an act of destruction, but of preservation. The fish was not Jonah's tomb but his shelter and deliverer. It wasn't the rescue Jonah would have chosen, but it was God's merciful way of saving His runaway prophet.

This incredible event was more than just a fascinating story; it was a real, historical act of God that Jesus Himself later pointed to as a sign of His own death and resurrection. Just as Jonah spent three days and nights in the belly of the fish, Jesus would spend three days in the grave before rising again.¹ Jonah's rescue turned him into a living monument of mercy, preparing him to preach repentance more effectively.

Mercy is when we don't get the punishment we deserve and God sending the fish to swallow Jonah was actually an act of protection, not punishment. Wow.

Jonah's earlier sleep in the storm is also a striking image of spiritual apathy. He was indifferent to the chaos around him, blind to his own danger, and useless to the sailors who needed him. God had to send a storm to wake him up. The sailors' questions—*"What do you mean, O sleeper?"* and *"Why have you done this?"*—are questions that could just as easily be asked of believers today who are running from God's call.

Like Jonah, many of us fall asleep to our calling. We delay obedience, avoid hard conversations, or ignore the Spirit's prompting to forgive, reconcile, or step out in faith. Sometimes God allows storms to shake us awake.

Jonah's story is an invitation to examine our own lives: Are we running from God? Are we asleep to the needs around us? The good news is that even when we run, God pursues us with mercy to bring us back to Himself and His purposes.

15. God's rescue plan (a giant fish) was completely unexpected. How does this challenge you to trust God's mercy and provision, even when it looks strange or uncomfortable?

16. The fish was meant to *protect*, not *devour*, Jonah. How does that change the way you view the consequences God allows in your life when you disobey?

17. Jesus pointed to Jonah's story as a picture of His death and resurrection. How does that connection deepen your understanding of both Jonah's deliverance and the gospel?

¹ Matthew 12:40

This study was written by Ethan Wentzlaff, based on the adult study by the VBC pastoral team.