

## *The Belly of the Beast*

Jonah 1:17–2:10

David Geldart

6/15/25

**Key Takeaway:** God's mercy meets us not when we're back on dry land—but when we're still in the deep.

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### Welcome

-Connect Cards

-Giving

-HAPPY FATHERS DAY!!! (Bacon) PRAYER of Blessing.

[1] Today we're continuing our study through Jonah.

[2] Today's about THE BELLY OF THE BEAST – Chapter 1:17-2:10.

### Reading Passage: Jonah 1:17-2:10 (Heather Johnson)

[3] <sup>1:17</sup> Now the LORD provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. <sup>2:1</sup> From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God. <sup>2</sup> He said:

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

From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help, and you listened to my cry.

<sup>3</sup> You hurled me into the depths, into the very heart of the seas,  
and the currents swirled about me;

[4] all your waves and breakers swept over me.

<sup>4</sup> I said, 'I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.'

<sup>5</sup> The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me;  
seaweed was wrapped around my head.

<sup>6</sup> To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever.

But you, LORD my God, brought my life up from the pit.

[5] <sup>7</sup> "When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, LORD,

and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple.

<sup>8</sup> "Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them.

<sup>9</sup> But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you.

What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, 'Salvation comes from the LORD.'" <sup>10</sup> And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

### PRAY (Heather)

[6] Today: THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

### Jonah & The Whale:

- 1) Make fun of Kids portrayals of Jonah

- a. [7] Flannelgraph
- b. [8] Complicated and creepy flannelgraph
- c. Kids books
  - i. [9] Scary kids book
  - ii. [10] super cute kids book
  - iii. [11] creepy kid Jonah
  - iv. [12] Oh No Jonah!
  - v. [13] Lego Brick Bible (outside by the kids board!)
- d. [14] Makes me think of Pinocchio
- e. [15] or VeggieTales Movie
- f. [16 – **PLAY VIDEO CLIP HERE**] Modern tiktok version → New veo3 jonah vlog (Dilan)  
<https://www.tiktok.com/@holyvlogz3/video/7511115339808230686>

## 2) [17 – after Video]

**Yes the big fish is in the story, but it's meant to point us to something beyond itself.**

Remember, we're supposed to see the **book of Jonah like a mirror**. How **we're far more like Jonah than we'd like to think**. We're supposed to follow his experience, his responses, and see ourselves in the reflection.

## **[18] WHEN LIFE SWALLOWS YOU WHOLE**

**Have you ever had a “swallowed whole” kind of moment?**

Everything around you feels dark. Trapped. Hopeless.

Maybe it was a broken relationship, an addiction, a mistake you thought was unforgivable. Maybe it was depression, loss, or burnout.

That's exactly where Jonah finds himself—in the belly of the beast.

**But this isn't just a fish story. It's a *mercy* story.**

Jonah ran from God—and **when he finally hits rock bottom, God meets him there.**

In the dark. In the deep. In the place he thought was the end.

Even in the place of death, yet—God is right there.

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### → **ADDRESS Skepticism ABOUT THE GREAT FISH**

- a. Fantastical
- b. **No way a human could survive in the belly of a whale or fish.**
- c. Nowhere is it ever called a whale (old KJV mistranslation)

- i. “large sea creature”, sea monster, huge fish
      - 1. Could have been anything
      - 2. And it only shows up here, v 1:17 and 2:10.
  - d. **Whale shark?**
    - i. No: huge mouths, but throat too small
  - e. **Best candidate would be a sperm whale**
    - i. They **draw in large amounts**
    - ii. **Throat** could pass a human
    - iii. It is known to **dive down extremely deep**, to “the depths of the mountains”
    - iv. And have **large stomachs** (4 in fact) that can hold hundreds of pounds of stuff
    - v. They even are known to **vomit!**, expelling large chunks of a waxy secretion called ambergris, that is collected and used in cosmetics and perfumes
  - f. **But there are no credible accounts of how a human could stay ALIVE** for 3 days inside the belly of a whale naturally
    - i. Some recent examples of fishermen accidentally sucked into the mouth of a whale (not swallowed!), but very quickly spit back out
- 2) The point is no matter what, it requires a miracle of God**
- a. Whatever the beast was, it was responding to God’s provision and command
  - b. **And without God’s intervention, Jonah was dead.**
    - i. No natural way for a human to survive in the stomach of a beast 3 days

## **[19] THE FISH WAS NOT PUNISHMENT—BUT RESCUE**

*“Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.” (Jonah 1:17)*

**So Jonah was tossed into a raging sea, and sank beneath the waves.**

- Ancient Israelite conception, the **sea was associated with chaos and death**.
- That’s why **Rev 21** description of the new Earth is there’s NO MORE SEA – death, chaos, danger.

At first glance, the fish looks like judgment. But did you catch the word? *“The Lord provided.”*

**It wasn’t a tomb—it was a lifeboat.**

**Even if Jonah indeed did die** in there (which I lean toward, along with the scholars at The Bible Project), the **belly of the beast became the vehicle for Jonah’s salvation and resurrection.**

**Jonah didn’t deserve to be rescued.** He didn’t even ask for it. But God provided.

→ Jonah ran from God on the sea, running from the salvation of the beastly and monstrous Assyrians, so God commanded a beast – a monster of the sea, to hold and save him **THROUGH** death!

- Didn't likely look like salvation at the time. But the mess was actually the place of God's mercy.

**Sometimes God's mercy swallows us whole. Not to destroy us—but to deliver us.**

**Illustration: There's lots of types of Unexpected Mercies:**

→ A layoff. A rehab stint. A breakup. A storm. Even a health scare.

It doesn't feel like grace at first—but it turns out to be exactly what saves you.

What God uses to redirect us from harm and toward flourishing.

**What have been those messy mercies in your own life?** ...the belly of the beast that, looking back, was the vehicle of his GOOD for you and others?

→ Me: Breakup with first steady girlfriend. Even past church hurt.

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## **[20] JONAH FINALLY PRAYS (2:1–6a)**

*"From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God." (2:1)*

**It's the first time in the story Jonah actually prays!**

- When the storm hit in chapter 1, and the sailors begged him to call on God—he stayed silent.

- But now, in the dark, slimy belly of the beast, he finally opens his mouth—not to protest, but to cry out.

**[21] "In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help..." (2:2)**

**Jonah's prayer sounds like a psalm**—because it echoes the Psalms, **especially Psalms 42–43** that Effie preached on a few weeks ago!:

**[22] Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me. (Ps. 42:7)**

**Jonah 2:3** *You hurled me into the depths, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me.*

Both the psalmist and Jonah voice what many of us feel: **God, I'm drowning. Are you still there?**

And yet—they remember. They cry out. They hope.

**[23] Jonah<sup>2:4</sup>** *I said, 'I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.'*

**Psalm 43:2** *Why have you rejected me? ...let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell. <sup>4</sup> Then I will go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight.*

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**[24] ...BUT GOD... (2:6b)**

*To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever.  
But you, LORD my God, brought my life up from the pit.*

**This is the pivot point.**

**Jonah is still in the belly of the beast** — whether miraculously still alive, or in the realm of the dead (as he seems to indicate in v 2) — but EITHER WAY, **something in him shifts.**

➔ He remembers. He turns. He prays.

**Illustration: The Turning Point**

A runaway child, hungry and cold, finally calls home.  
And a voice answers, "Come back. I've been waiting."

**Annie wandered off in the Air & Space Museum** outside Omaha, caught up by some other interest. Then she turned and in her fear cried out, and we found her. Saved her. (We'd been afraid too, longing for that reunion!)

That's Jonah's moment. **And maybe it's yours, too.**

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**[25] VOWS AND SALVATION (2:7–9)**

*"What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, 'Salvation comes from the Lord.'" (v.9)*

**Jonah isn't just rescued from drowning or death. He's being saved from himself.** His sin and rebellion. His resistance to God and following his way. His commands.

This is Jonah's declaration of trust and obedience. His rededication. (Not perfect—but real!)

**In the last chapter, Jonah was disobeying God and the pagan sailors were making vows to YAHWEH, now it's Jonah's turn.**

I turn again, not just for comfort, but to trust and obey. I MAKE MY RESOLVE. MY PROMISE.

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## [26] THE GOD OF SECOND CHANCES (2:10)

*“And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.” (v.10)*

**Not exactly a glamorous exit—but profoundly symbolic.**

→ Jonah, supposed to be the good guy – GOD’S MAN, was actually disgusting. Such that **even a sea monster couldn’t stomach him.**

This is another rebuke of Jonah.

And a symbol of rebirth.

- The God who controls the sea also controls the sea monsters.
- The God who disciplines also restores.
- From death to life.

**No matter where you’ve been, or what you’ve done. You’re never too far gone to turn and repent,** and your soul be rescued by God Himself.

Jonah gets a second chance. -- The story isn't over! And that’s a very encouraging thing.

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## [27] APPLICATION: WHAT TO DO IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

- **Cry Out Honestly**  
God isn’t waiting for polished prayers. He wants your real cry.
- **Remember the Lord**  
Recall His mercy. His past faithfulness. His presence—even in the deep.
- **Trust He’s Not Done**  
The belly of the beast is not your final address. It’s the waiting room of mercy.

Say it out loud: *“Salvation comes from the Lord.”*

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## [28] JESUS IS THE GREATER JONAH

**Mat 12:** <sup>38</sup> Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.” <sup>39</sup> He answered, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. <sup>40</sup> For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. <sup>41</sup> The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and

*condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here.*

### **Jonah's descent into the belly of the beast foreshadows Jesus, the Greater Jonah!**

As Jonah sank into the depths of the sea (biblical symbol of death), and then came back to life,

**So, Jesus went into the depths of death itself—carrying our rebellion, shame, and sin.**

And He rose again to bring us back. **Not through a monster's vomit, but glorious resurrection and triumph!**

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### **[29] TESTIMONY: CHUCK CUCHY**

- Tell us about your story of running from God, being in the Belly of the Beast, and then turning and being saved by God and given a 2<sup>nd</sup> chance.

### **[30] Closing WORDS:**

**Brothers and sisters, whatever 'belly of the beast' you're in—addiction, shame, depression, finances, marriage, legal troubles, or outright running from God—**know this: mercy will find you if you turn and repent.**** It doesn't matter where you are. Your story isn't over. God's grace writes brighter endings.

God is merciful—even when we're at our worst.

Even when we run. Even when we fall.

**He meets us in the deep—not just when we've escaped it.**

**He wasn't done with Jonah.**

**And He's not done with you.**

**PRAY**



# JONAH

MISSION. MESS. MERCY.







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1:17-2:10

THE BELLY OF THE BEAST



# JONAH 1:17-2:10

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<sup>3</sup> You hurled me into the depths, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me;

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yet I will look again toward your holy temple.'

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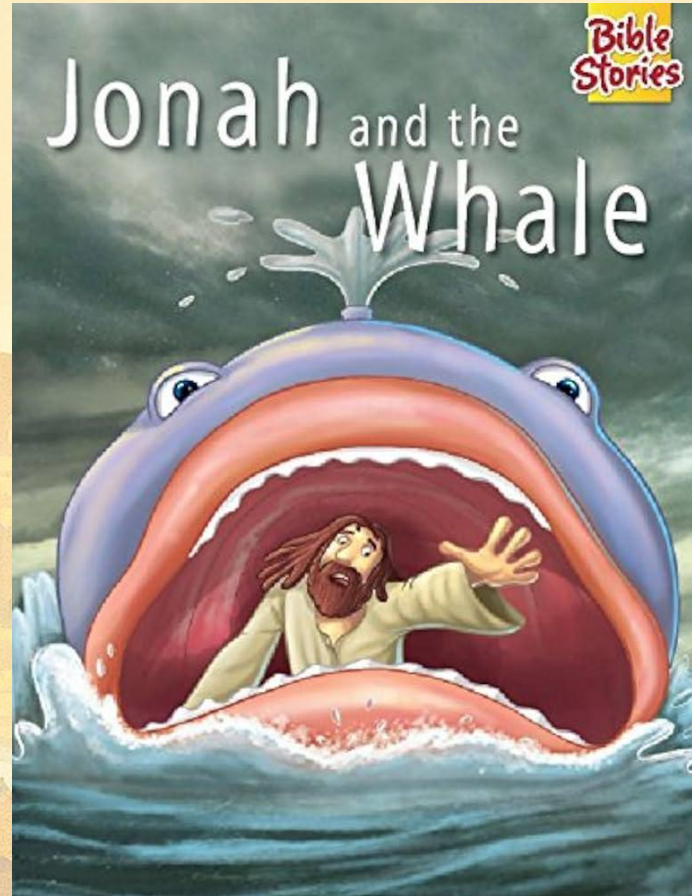


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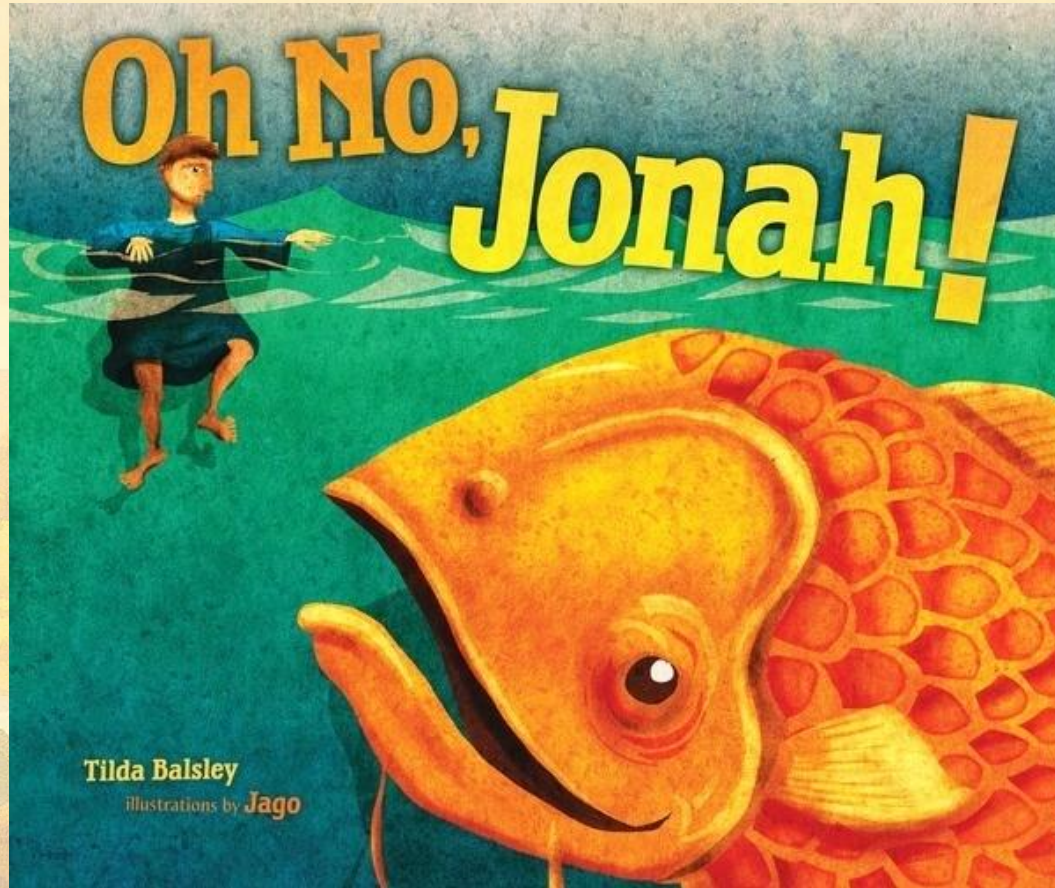


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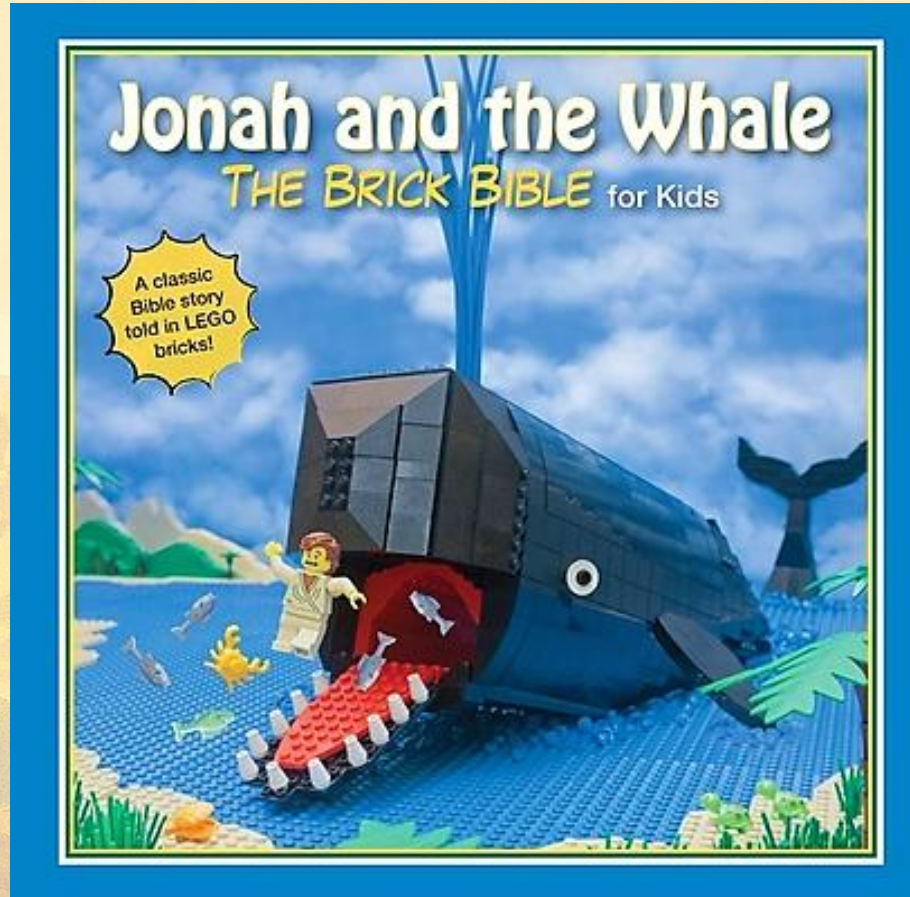




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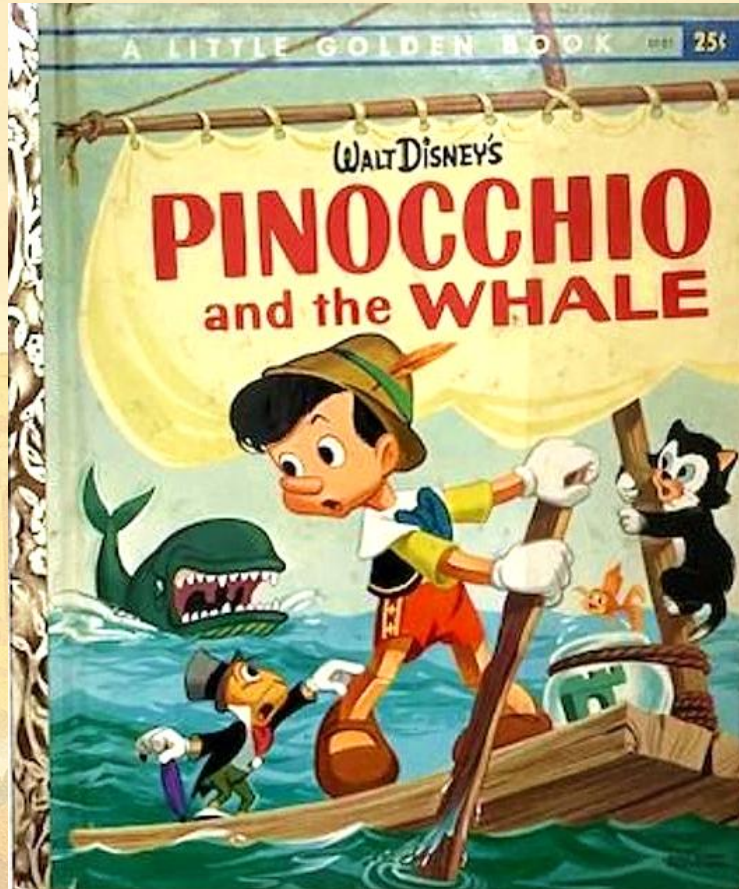


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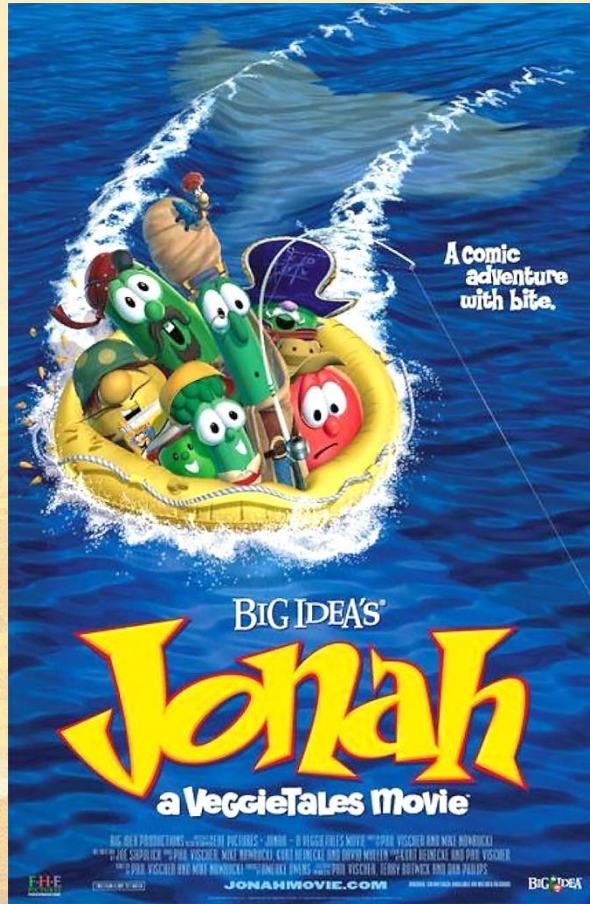




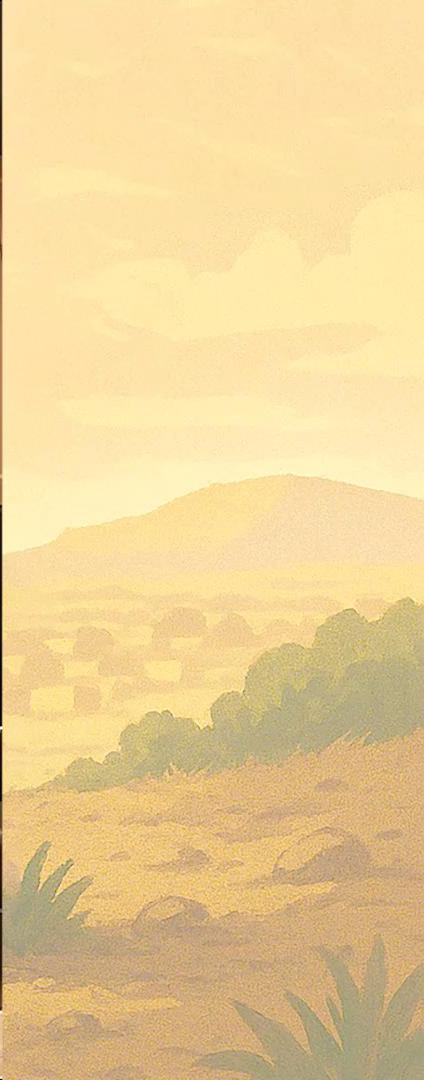
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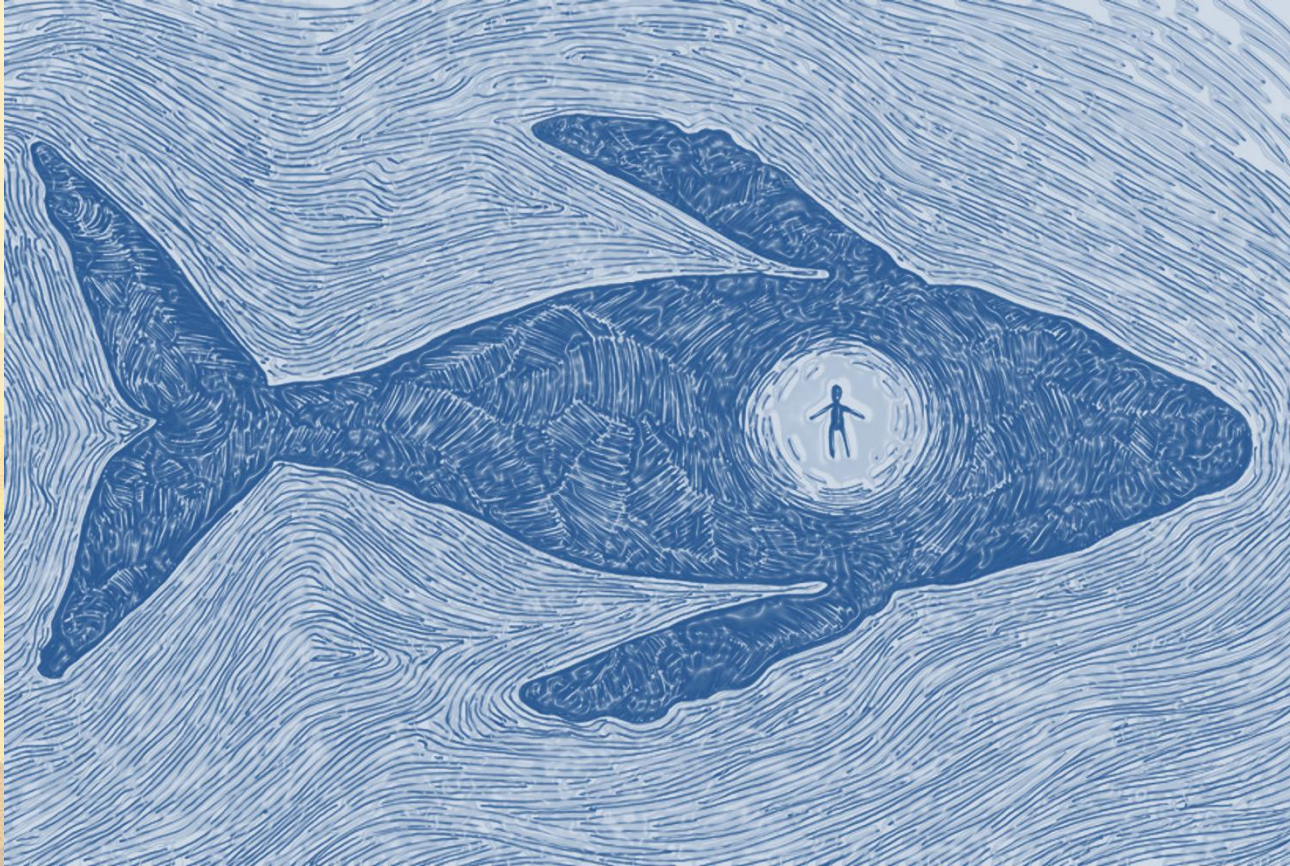




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# WHEN LIFE SWALLOWS YOU WHOLE





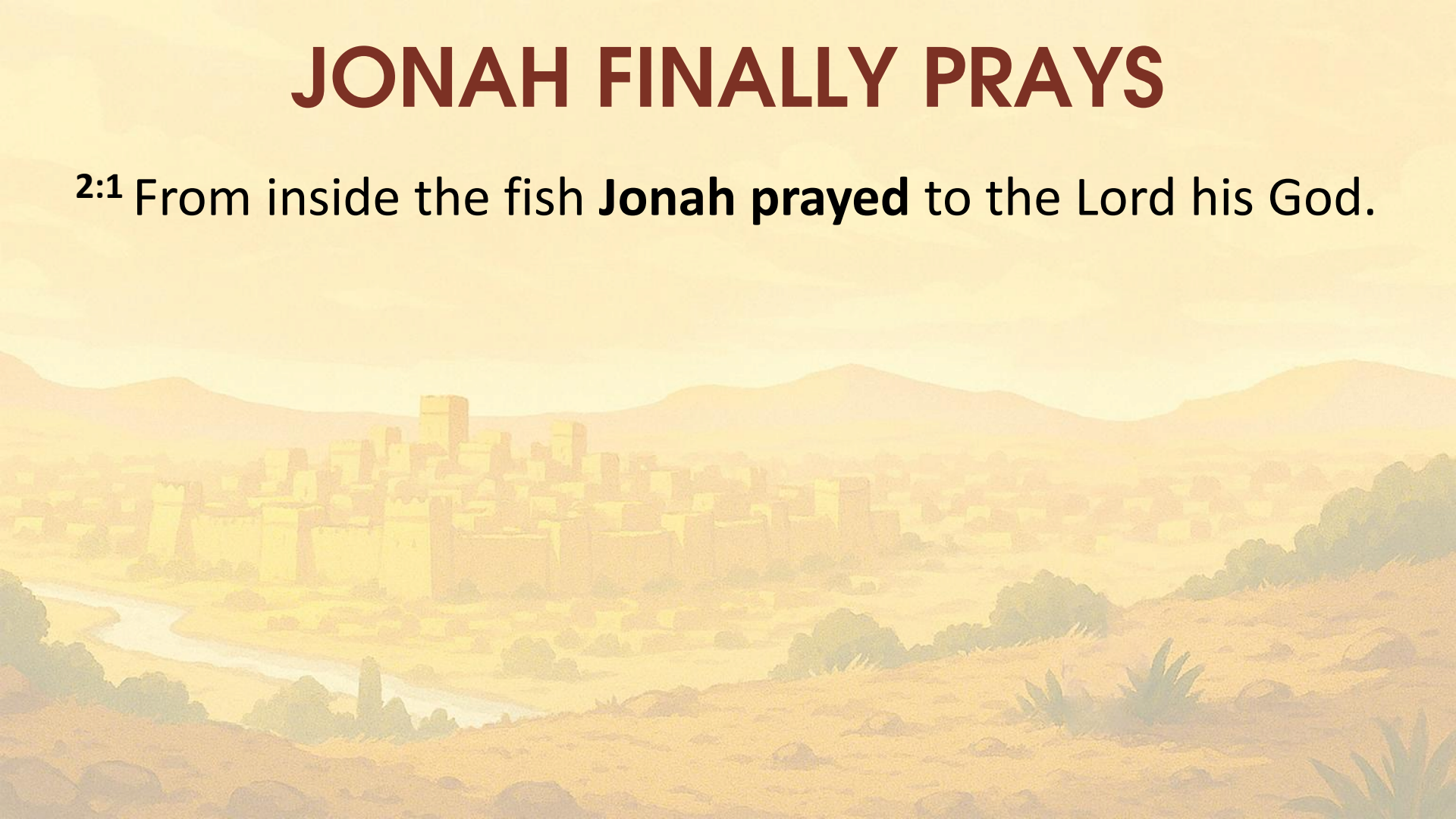
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**1:17** Now **the Lord provided** a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.



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2:2 In my distress **I called to the Lord**, and he answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead **I called for help...**





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4 Then I will go to **the altar of God**, to God, my joy and my delight.

# ...BUT GOD...

2:6 To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever. **But you, LORD my God,** brought my life up from the pit.





# VOWS AND SALVATION

2:9 “What I have **vowed** I will make good. I will say,  
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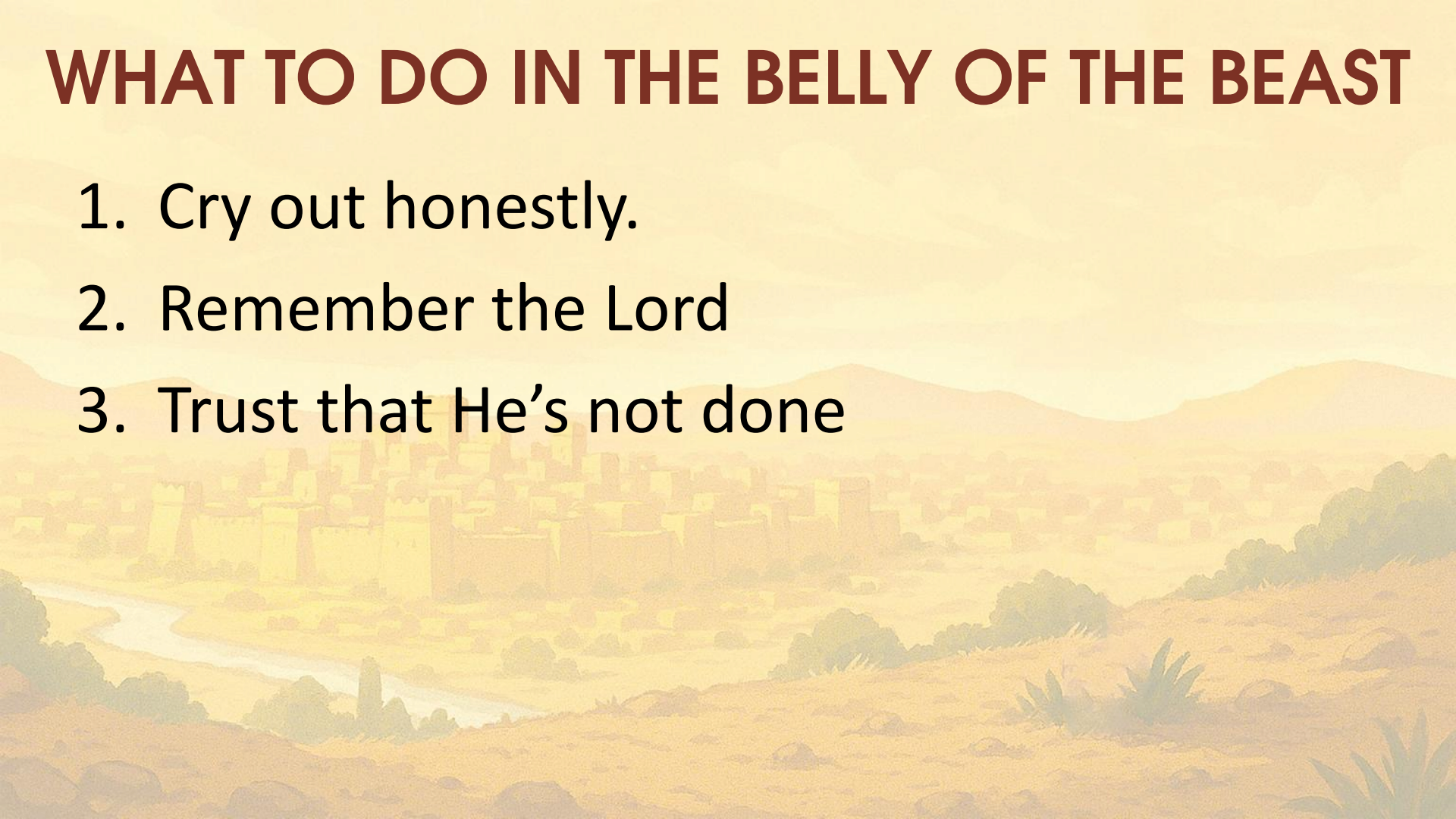
# THE GOD OF SECOND CHANCES

2:10 And **the Lord commanded** the fish, and it **vomited** Jonah onto dry land.



# WHAT TO DO IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

1. Cry out honestly.
2. Remember the Lord
3. Trust that He's not done





# JESUS IS THE GREATER JONAH

**Matthew 12:38** Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.” <sup>39</sup> He answered, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. <sup>40</sup> **For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.** <sup>41</sup> The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now **something greater than Jonah is here.**



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