

Study Questions for

JONAH

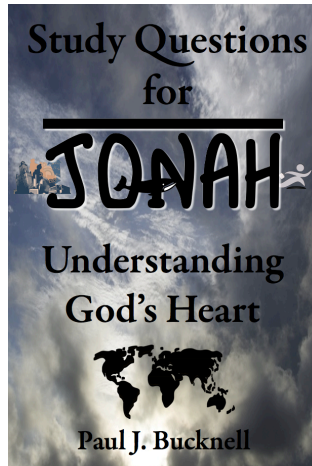


Understanding
God's Heart



Paul J. Bucknell

Study Questions for Jonah: Understanding God's Heart



by

Paul J. Bucknell

Book Information

Study Questions for Jonah: Understanding God's Heart

By Paul J. Bucknell

Ebook edition

ISBN-10: 1619930129

ISBN-13: 978-1-61993-012-4

Copyright ©2013 Paul J. Bucknell

wwwFOUNDATIONSforfreedom.net

Info@FOUNDATIONSforfreedom.net

3276 Bainton St., Pittsburgh, PA 15212

All rights reserved. Limited production is acceptable without prior permission for home and educational use. For extensive reproduction or translation contact the author at info@FOUNDATIONSforfreedom.net.

The NASB version is used unless otherwise stated. New American Standard Bible ©1960, 1995 used by permission, Lockman Foundation www.lockman.org.

Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®),

Study Questions for Jonah

copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Table of Contents

Book Information	4
Table of Contents	6
Notes on Usage	8
Basic Questions	
Advanced Questions	
Use for Group Bible Studies	
The Book of Jonah: A Brief Introduction	10
Study Questions for Jonah 1	12
Basic Questions	
Advanced Questions	
Study Questions for Jonah 2	19
Basic Questions	
Advanced Questions	
Study Questions for Jonah 3	24
Basic Questions	
Advanced Questions	
Study Questions for Jonah 4	30
Basic Questions	
Advanced Questions	
Appendix 1: Author Introduction	35
Appendix 2: Major writings by Paul J. Bucknell	36

Notes on Usage

Each chapter has two sets of study questions: basic and advanced.

Basic Questions

The answers to these questions are often found right in the Bible passage. These questions will encourage one to ask, “What does the passage say?” There are a few ‘thought’ questions to help the student understand the reason God reveals these things. Applications are blended in, especially towards the end of a study, to assure that the student applies the scriptures to his or her life. Room is left after each question to foster the discipline of writing down the answers. The NASB/ESV text is used because they follow a more literal translation of the originals but other versions can be used in this book without much distraction.

Advanced Questions

The advanced set of questions is noticeably different from the basic set. The advanced set of questions are for those advanced students of God’s Word who have been trained in other parts of the scriptures and can reflect on these passages from a broader perspective of the scriptures and life itself. Some of these passages are so rich and deep that a simple Bible study cannot capture the many truths therein.

These questions tend to be more applicative both in a practical and theological sense. They are designed to allow God's Word to reshape our thoughts. In the basic set of questions we focus on what is being said and make simple application to one's life, but in the advanced set of questions a deep analysis of the text is developed through advanced questions.

Use for Group Bible Studies

We welcome your use of these studies for group studies. Group studies are different in that one cannot just stop anywhere, so the leader must first go through the questions, choosing and tailoring them according to the main theme (not more than two themes). By centering your questions around a major theme, it becomes much easier to streamline the questions and guide profitable conversation and prayer. Advanced questions should only be used when complementing the theme.

The Book of Jonah: A Brief Introduction

The Book of Jonah, framed by its incredible message, touches so deeply on key issues people across the centuries and cultures have struggled. Adventure and theology dance together in these four chapters.

- How does God reveal His will to us? How should what God desires or plans for our lives influence our decisions? Why do we disobey if God is so caring? Is God involved in this world? If so, how? (Jonah 1)
- How should one counsel a person running from God's will? What are the fundamental parts of prayers that change things? (Jonah 2)
- Why doesn't God do something about the growing evil? Why aren't God's people more believing in God's good work in this evil world? Is revival possible in our society? (Jonah 3)
- God loves everyone so why does He judge people? What is the best way to care for a bitter person? Why is missions progressing so slowly across the world? (Jonah 4)

While the secular world boldly announces God's irrelevance, the Book of Jonah reveals how intricately God involves Himself in so many different aspects of this world: He speaks to people, commands individuals, appoints animals, plants and skies to bide His will,

chastises His people, converses with individuals to persuade them, threatens judgment, warns godless people, brings His compassionate mercy and patiently teaches those lacking enlightenment.

God actively works in this world, individual lives and huge cities alike. The Lord has not given up on this world but tirelessly works with His workman, the prophet Jonah, to continue on with relentlessly preaching God's judgment and mercy to display His awesome grace.

Study Questions for Jonah 1



1:1 The word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying, 2 “Arise, go to Nineveh the great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.” 3 But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare, and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. 4 And the LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up. 5 Then the sailors became afraid, and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down, and fallen sound asleep. 6 So the captain approached him and said, “How is it that you are sleeping? Get up, call on your god. Perhaps your god will be concerned about us so that we will not perish.” (Jonah 1:1-6, NASB)

Note on chapter 1: Most of the first questions are fact finding questions and are brief to answer. Don't get caught up there; make sure you go to the end and discuss the more important questions towards the end of the basic study.

Basic Questions

1. What do we know about Jonah from verse 1? What else do we know about Jonah from 2 Kings 14:45?
2. What did the Word of the Lord do in Jonah 1:1? What might that mean?
3. What was the message that Jonah heard (1:2)? What do you know of Nineveh? (If possible, learn a few more things about Nineveh.) From verse 2, how did God describe Nineveh?
4. What do you think the phrase “come up before Me” from verse 2 means? Did God not know the evil from before? Expand on this as you look at Genesis 6:13.
5. How did Jonah respond to God’s call (1:3)? Jonah was probably living in Israel when he received this call. Where is Tarshish and Nineveh in relationship to Israel? What did this reveal about Jonah? {Some commentators believe Tarshish was a place in modern day Spain, but it is not certain; Tarsus, Paul’s birthplace, is an alternative place.}

6. Have you ever run away from God to avoid what He wanted? Was it because you were: distracted, too busy, felt like you couldn't, didn't want to give up what you were doing, etc.? Why? Explain.

7. What happened to Jonah's plans (1:4)? How did the sailors respond (1:5)?

8. How could Jonah sleep while everyone else was panicking for their lives (1:5-6)?

And each man said to his mate, "Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity has struck us." So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 Then they said to him, "Tell us, now! On whose account has this calamity struck us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?" 9 And he said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land." 10 Then the men became extremely frightened and they said to him, "How could you do this?" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. 11 ¶ So they said to him, "What should we do to you that the sea may become calm for us?"--for the sea was becoming increasingly stormy. 12 And he said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you,

Study Questions for Jonah

for I know that on account of me this great storm has come upon you.” 13 However, the men rowed desperately to return to land but they could not, for the sea was becoming even stormier against them. 14 Then they called on the LORD and said, “We earnestly pray, O LORD, do not let us perish on account of this man’s life and do not put innocent blood on us; for Thou, O LORD, hast done as Thou hast pleased.” 15 So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging. 16 Then the men feared the LORD greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows. 17 And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights. (Jonah 1:7-17, NASB)

9. What did the crew find out from the lot that was drawn (1:7-10)? List at least three things they found out about Jonah.
 -
 -
 -
10. Why were the men alarmed when they heard Jonah answer (1:10)?
11. What did the men do after hearing Jonah (1:11)? What did Jonah advise them (1:12)?

Jonah 1

12. How did the men respond to Jonah's suggestion (1:13)? Why do you think they responded this way? How come the storm got worse?
13. What did the men do next (1:14-15)? How does that differ from verse 5?
14. What happened to the storm upon throwing Jonah in the sea (1:15)? How did the men then respond (1:16)?
15. Do you think we should conclude that disobedience is okay because it brings people to understand God more? Why or why not?
16. What happened to Jonah (1:17)? For how long? What might have Jonah's experience been like?
17. What did Jonah's experience of 3 days and nights in the belly of the fish predict? How do we know? Refer to Matthew 12:39-40.
18. Jonah's life was used as type for Jesus' death and resurrection. How does Jonah's life as a prophet in this book differ from Jesus' life?

Study Questions for Jonah

19. Do you think God was trying to bring Jonah to repentance or to simply punish him for his disobedience? Why do you think so?
20. What do you think the major point of chapter 1 is? Have you ever openly disobeyed the Lord? Can you retell some consequences?
21. List some reasons God's people disobey the Lord. What forms of disobedience are you most susceptible to? Why?

Advanced Questions

1. Does God still speak like He spoke to Jonah? What are the various ways God's people understand God's will?
2. Have you ever seen or experienced a situation in which God rebukes the believer through unbelievers? Please relate.
3. What is disobedience? Is there a difference between small and large disobedience? Explain. Would 'rebel' be a proper word to describe Jonah's action? When does 'rebel' become the right word to describe a person in disobedience?

Jonah 1

4. What percentage of God's people, would you say, live in persistent disobedience to God's Word? How does this affect the church (refer to Revelation 3:14-21)?

Study Questions for Jonah 2



2:1 Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish, 2 and he said, "I called out of my distress to the LORD, And He answered me. I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; Thou didst hear my voice. 3 "For Thou hadst cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas, And the current engulfed me. All Thy breakers and billows passed over me. 4 "So I said, 'I have been expelled from Thy sight. Nevertheless I will look again toward Thy holy temple.' 5 "Water encompassed me to the point of death. The great deep engulfed me, Weeds were wrapped around my head. 6 "I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever, But Thou hast brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God. 7 "While I was fainting away, I remembered the LORD; And my prayer came to Thee, Into Thy holy temple. 8 "Those who regard vain idols Forsake their faithfulness, 9 But I will sacrifice to Thee With the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from the LORD. 10 Then the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land. (Jonah 2:1-10, NASB)

Basic Questions

1. Where was Jonah in 2:1? What did he do there? How did he get there (refer to 1:17 as needed)?
2. For what reasons does Jonah state that he prayed (2:2)? What sort of things cause you to pray?
3. What various aspects of Jonah's prayer in verses 2-3 stand out to you?
4. What signs of hope is found in his prayer in verse 2:4? What might have given him that hope?
5. How are verses 5-6 similar to verses 3-4? Name at least two things.
6. How is it that Jonah stated in verse 6 that the Lord "hast brought up my life from the pit" while he was still in the large fish?
7. In 1:3 it says the Jonah fled the presence of God. How is 2:7 different?

Jonah 2

8. Do you think that even if we are sinful that God will hear our prayers (2:7)? What are we to learn from Jonah's life and prayer here?
9. Jonah, in verses 2:8-9, openly challenges the pagans and agnostic alike. How did he do this? How was Jonah so certain that God was real?
10. In verse 2:9 Jonah refers to paying the vow he made. What do you think that vow was? Why?
11. Who made the fish vomit Jonah up (2:10)? Who brought the storm upon the ship (1:4)? Who appointed the fish to swallow Jonah (1:17)? How does God, a spirit, control the material world? Why would God get so involved in detailed things regarding a person's life? What is the lesson from this?
12. Where did the great fish spew Jonah out (2:10)? What are five other places the Lord could have had the fish spew Jonah out? Where do you think God had the fish spew him out and why?
13. Do you see any references or hints to Jonah's confession of his own sin? Do you think this is strange? Why or why not?

Study Questions for Jonah

14. What is the main point of chapter 2? Why do you think so?
15. Deep and sincere prayers become significant times in our lives. What have you deeply prayed about in the past? Why? What brought you into such situations? Do you think God's hand was in it? Explain.

Advanced Questions

1. Was God punishing Jonah? What is the difference between punishment and discipline?
2. Look again at God's involvement in Jonah's life and then answer how God exercises guidance and control over His people?
3. Would God have been right to just allow Jonah to die? Why didn't He just kill him off? Why did God keep Him alive through numerous miracles?
4. How has God had to engage you (or others) to get you to change your mind? Could not God choose others to do what Jonah or we should have done; why didn't He?

Jonah 2

5. Having read about Jonah, do you think you will deliberately disobey the Lord who made the seas and earth? What areas do you struggle most with regarding rebellion – openly going against God's clear way.

6. Why is confession (i.e. Identifying our sin and seeing it as wrong before God) of sin so important to full healing and fresh vision for our future lives?

Study Questions for Jonah 3



3:1 Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, 2 “Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you.” 3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three days’ walk. 4 Then Jonah began to go through the city one day’s walk; and he cried out and said, “Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” (Jonah 3:1-4, NASB)

Basic Questions

1. What is said to have happened in 3:1? What does God’s second call reveal about God’s relationship with Jonah?
2. How would you have dealt with Jonah? The same way? Do you give second chances to those who have disappointed you?
3. What is significant about this phrase ‘second time’ (2:1) and God’s relationship with the people of Nineveh?

Study Questions for Jonah

4. Summarize the key points of the project that God has set before Jonah in 3:2. How is this different or similar to the original command found in 1:2?
5. How did Jonah respond to God's command this time (3:3)?
6. Describe what further things we know about Nineveh from 3:2-3 along with other outside sources. Did Nineveh deserve to be judged? How do we know?
7. What was the message in verse 4 that the Lord told Jonah to proclaim to Nineveh? (We need to assume the message the Lord said He would give to Jonah (3:2) was the one spoken, "Yet forty days... (3:4).) Do you think it was too harsh? Why or why not?
8. Describe one or two of the largest cities you are familiar with. Would you say that they deserve God's judgment? If not, why? If so, why has not God judged them?

5 Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them. 6 When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he

Jonah 3

arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat on the ashes. 7 And he issued a proclamation and it said, "In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water. 8 "But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands. 9 "Who knows, God may turn and relent, and withdraw His burning anger so that we shall not perish?" 10 When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it. (Jonah 3:5-10, NASB)

9. Look at verses 5-6. How did the people respond to Jonah's message? Are you surprised at their response? Why or why not?

10. What did the emperor command his staff and people to do in verses 7-8? Why might he have done this? Do you think this was too extreme?

11. Do you think you would have humbled yourself and fasted if you heard the edict from the king? If our king or president proclaimed such a command, how might the people respond?

Study Questions for Jonah

12. What was the king's hope found in his words from verse 9? On what basis might he have that hope?

13. How did God respond to their change of ways (3:10)? Why did God do this? Did the way the king and the people respond change the evil from the past? Explain.

14. Do you think the people deserved this pardon? Explain. Do you think the people knew that God pardoned them? Why or why not?

15. What is God's heart for the city? Do you have such a heart? Be sure to pray and seek God for such a heart. Use the following questions to help you gauge how much God's heart for the city is in you:
 - Do you ever think about your city (place you live)?

 - Do you seriously pray about it?

 - Do you act irresponsible due to what you know?

Jonah 3

- Have you given up hope in resignation – “Can’t do anything about it.”
- Have you joined in with its worldliness?
- Have you arrogantly condemned the wickedness?
- Have you sought God’s mercy upon your city? Do you think He will bring it?

Advanced Questions

1. Has God ever given you a ‘second chance’ to work with Him? Explain or illustrate by some incident in your life.
2. What do we learn about God from Jonah’s second chance? For example, how might this aspect of God relate to the way a father should respond to an errant son (see the first part of Ephesians 6:4)?
3. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the greatest, how would you state God’s love for the people of Nineveh? What makes you think so?

Study Questions for Jonah

4. Shaping your understanding from Jonah, how does God's mercy relate to God's judgment? Give biblical references to support your answer.

5. Summarize the lessons we learned about how God deals with nations and cities from Jonah 3.
 -

 -

 -

6. How was repentance of those in Nineveh used as an illustration in the New Testament (cf. Luke 11:29-32)? Explain why this situation was used to make the illustration.

Study Questions for Jonah 4



4:1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. 2 And he prayed to the Lord and said, “O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. 3 Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.” 4 And the Lord said, “Do you do well to be angry?”(Jonah 4:1-4, ESV)

Basic Questions

1. How would you describe Jonah’s disposition in 4:1? Shouldn’t he be thankful to have been saved?
2. What kinds of anger are there (4:1)? What best described his anger?
3. How did Jonah explain his anger in verse 2? Does that make sense to you? Why or why not?

Study Questions for Jonah

4. How did Jonah describe the Lord (2)? Is his description proper? Explain.

5. What is the point of Jonah's statement in verse 3? Do you think he was willing to die regarding this matter? How do you know?

6. God questions Jonah about the appropriateness of his anger in verse 4. How would you rephrase, "Do you do well to be angry?" in your own words?

4:5 Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city. 6 Now the Lord God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant. 7 But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. 8 When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, "It is better for me to die than to live." 9 But God said to Jonah, "Do you do well to be angry for the plant?" And he said, "Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die." 10 And the Lord said, "You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make

Jonah 4

it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. 11 And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?" (Jonah 4:5-11, ESV)

7. Where did Jonah go after this (4:5)? Why? Do you think he was pouting? Do you pout? If so, when?
8. What do you think Jonah wanted to happen to the city of Nineveh (4:5)?
9. What did the Lord do in verse 6? Why might have Jonah been so glad for the plant?
10. What happened to the plant (4:7)? What was Jonah's response (4:8)?
11. Note the three things God 'appointed' (verses 6,7,8). Why did the Lord do this in this sequence?
12. Jonah was totally uncomfortable and irritated (4:9). How did the Lord use this as a teaching lesson for Jonah (4:10-11)? What were the props? What did it all mean?

Study Questions for Jonah

13. Do you think Jonah grasped the lesson? Why or why not?
14. What do you think about God's willingness to individualize this lesson for Jonah? Might God be willing to do this for you in one or more areas of your life? Explain.
15. From the description in 4:11, how would you compare Nineveh to today's cities? What conclusions should we draw from the Lord's words about what He thinks about big cities?

Advanced Questions

1. What do you learn about biblical counseling from the Book of Jonah?
2. From the Book of Jonah, how would you say God's mercy works along with His wrath?
3. How can we use this book to confront our hatred for groups of people and replace it with compassion?
4. Jeremiah 12:11 says, "They have made it a desolation; desolate, it mourns to me. The

whole land is made desolate, but no man lays it to heart.” Put: “But no man lays it to heart” in your own words. When you look around and see desolation, how true is it of you that you do nothing about it? Check out these places:

- Your heart
 - Your family
 - Your neighborhood
 - Your city
 - Your country
 - Your world
5. Do you think if God’s people had more compassion, cried out in prayer, that we would see God’s gracious hand more powerfully at work? Find some others and cry out for your city/country.

Appendix 1: Author Introduction

Paul J. Bucknell, an active writer and international trainer, has written more than ten books on pertinent Christian training topics. His books are written with the conviction that the more we build our lives on the truth of God's Word, the stronger and more vibrant our faith and lives will be. He has written many Bible studies and loves leading people into God's truths and apply them to their lives.

During his international training seminars for pastors and other church leaders, Paul takes God's Word and powerfully applies His truth to different aspects of Christian living. Paul has served as a church planter, pastor and now serves as president of Biblical Foundations for Freedom. Paul provides printed and digital media along with video training courses and an ongoing website ministry, www.foundationsforfreedom.net. Paul with his wife, Linda, have been married more than 35 years are actively raising their eight children and presently delight in having two grandchildren.

Appendix 2: Major writings by Paul J. Bucknell

The Life Core: Discovering the Heart of Great Training

*Redemption Through the Scriptures: Gaining a Clearer
Picture of Christ*

Overcoming Anxiety: Finding Peace, Discovering God

*Cross Training: Learning to Grow in Relationship with God
and People!*

The Godly Man: When God Touches a Man's Life

Reaching Beyond Mediocrity: Being an Overcomer

Running the Race: Overcoming Sexual Lusts

Walking with Jesus: Abiding in Christ

*Christian Premarital Counseling: Preparing the Two to Be
One*

Building a Great Marriage! Faith, Forgiveness, Friendship

Godly Beginnings for the Family

*Principles & Practices of Biblical Parenting: Raising Godly
Children*

Genesis: The Book of Foundations

Book of Romans: Building a Solid Foundation

Summary of Redemptive Restoration

Paul now offers libraries of Christian training resources including books, Bible studies, video and audio training and powerpoint slides.

Find these and many more resources at:
Biblical Foundations for Freedom
www.foundationsforfreedom.net