

## The Book of Jonah

### Session 2: Jonah 1:4–16

#### SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

**Main Idea:** God will spread his Word to all nations and transform his people’s hearts because he intends to make each of his followers more like him.

**Head Change:** To know that God’s purpose of saving people from every nation will be fulfilled.

**Heart Change:** To feel a healthy fear of God and a resolve to submit to his Word.

**Life Change:** To submit to God’s Word and spread it to people, near and far, who don’t follow him.

#### OPEN

**Have you ever experienced a significant or dangerous weather event? How would you describe your experience? How did you respond?**

Weather can turn severe surprisingly quickly. A nice, sunny day can turn into a thunderstorm before we know it. And what’s most unsettling about severe weather is that it is entirely outside of our control. We can prepare for it, and we can shelter ourselves, but we are virtually helpless against it.

As we continue in the book of Jonah, we come to a notable severe weather event. But this was no typical weather pattern, and everyone aboard the ship knew it. In this session of *The Book of Jonah*, David Platt will show us why this tempest came upon Jonah and the crew, and what we can learn from it.

**READ**

Read Jonah 1:4–16.

**WATCH**

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in David Platt’s teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

**While the ship’s crew members were crying out to their gods, where was Jonah?**

**How did the sailors respond when they learned that Jonah’s God “made the sea and the dry land”?**

**Instead of repenting of his sin, how did Jonah suggest that they resolve their predicament?**

Show Session 2: *Jonah 1:4–16* (11 minutes).

Blank lined area for writing answers to the questions.

**DISCUSS**

David opened this session by pointing out that, at this point in the story, we see Jonah giving up on God. But God hadn't given up on Jonah. God could have sent plenty of other prophets to Nineveh; he could have let Jonah go. But he didn't. **In what ways do you find it encouraging that God refused to give up on Jonah? Do you believe God will never give up on you? Why, or why not?**

*Note: For a reading exercise covering the book of Jonah, see **Go Deeper Section 1** at the end of this study.*

Read Jonah 1:4–9.

Beginning in verse 4, the story takes a foreboding turn. Jonah was running away, but God didn't let Jonah get far before he intervened in a dramatic way. **Has God ever intervened in your own life in a dramatic way? What was your life like when God intervened? In what ways did God's intervention change your life?**

God "threw a great wind onto the sea," halting Jonah's progress and frightening all those aboard the ship. It was such a violent storm that it threatened to rend the ship in two. The sailors were so frightened that they began crying out to their gods. **What does this passage show us about God's power? Did these sailors respond to God's exercise of power in the right way? To what degree are you conditioned to respond to the power of God like these men?**

In contrast with the ship's crew, Jonah had descended into the bowels of the ship and fallen into an apathetic slumber. He was hiding from God and, in effect, plugging his ears to the voice of God. **In your life, to what lengths have you gone to hide from God and shut out his voice? Who or what did God use to break through to you? What does it say about God's love for you that he engaged you even as you were avoiding him?**

*Note: For an exploration of the parallels between Jonah's slumber aboard a ship and Jesus's in Matthew 8, see **Go Deeper Section 2** at the end of this study.*

As David pointed out, the irony of verse 6 is that Jonah, the prophet from Israel, was running from God while the

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pagan ship captain and his crew did anything they could to seek God. What’s more, they implored Jonah to snap out of his slumber and seek God too. **What is Jonah doing wrong? What did the captain and his crew get right? What stands out to you about the difference in Jonah’s and the sailors’ reactions?**

Eventually, the mariners convened and cast lots to determine who was responsible for their plight. Jonah was found out, and when they confronted him, he answered them in verse 9: “I’m a Hebrew. I worship the Lord, the God of the heavens, who made the sea and the dry land.” Jonah could have saved everyone a lot of trouble by taking responsibility much sooner. **Why do you think Jonah was so slow to take responsibility for the ship’s current situation? How do you tend to respond when you’re confronted for wrongdoing? Do you confess honestly, or do you try and circumvent the charges?**

Read Jonah 1:10–16.

Learning that Jonah had sinned against the God who made the sea, the men on the ship “were seized by a great fear” (v. 10). They began urgently seeking for a way to appease Jonah’s God. They were learning the hard way that sin and a lack of repentance have dire consequences. **To what degree do you feel an urgency to repent when you’ve sinned? How could you condition your heart to view sin as seriously as these men did?**

In this exchange, we see God using Jonah to spread his Word to the nations. Even in Jonah’s reluctance, these sailors witnessed the power of his God. At the same time, God was working on Jonah’s heart as well. And that’s one of the beauties emerging from this story already: God is concerned both about the redemption of whole people groups and the hearts of his people individually. **How can we recognize God’s plan of redemption and the individual care he gives his people—both in this story and in our lives? What happens if we emphasize one over the other?**

As the sailors were questioning Jonah, searching for an escape from danger, Jonah proposed a solution in verse 12: “Pick me up and throw me into the sea.” David suggested a number of other solutions Jonah could have proposed, repentance being one of them. Instead, as David said, “Jonah would rather die than obey God” at this point in the story. **How do you think Jonah could prefer**

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**death over obedience? Does obeying God's will ever feel more frightening to you than the consequences of your disobedience? Why?**

In verse 14, the sailors were at the height of their desperation. On one hand, they faced certain death because of the storm. On the other hand, Jonah was arguing that the storm would calm if they just threw him overboard, presumably to his death. So, in their desperation, they cried out to God—they prayed. **What is it about desperate circumstances that compel us to cry out to God? Have you ever found yourself in a desperate situation? Did you respond more like Jonah or like these sailors? How did God attend to you in your desperation?**

In their prayer, these men cried out for mercy—something Jonah had yet to do. Then they cast Jonah overboard. David said that while Jonah thought he was running to a distant, exotic land, he was running to his death. And this is where sin leads. It disorients us, deceives us, and leads us to places we don't want to go. Jonah is showing us, David said, that "rebellion against God never ends in our good." **When have you experienced the bitter effects of sin? What did it take for you to recognize that your sin was leading you down a road you didn't want to go?**

David said one of Jonah's problems was that his faith in God didn't carry with it the fear or reverence of God. There are a lot of ways to describe what it means to fear God—reverence, awe, respect, or even dread. **In your own words, how would you define the fear of God? How can we cultivate a healthy fear of God? How can a healthy fear of God lead us to submit to him and his Word?**

When the ship's crew threw Jonah overboard, and he landed in the sea, the storm stopped. The men were once again "seized by great fear" (v. 16). They offered sacrifices and made vows to the Lord. In these acts of worship, the sailors identified as followers of God. So, even as Jonah disobeyed God's command to go to a foreign nation, God used him to lead sailors from foreign nations to himself. **What does this story communicate about God's willingness and ability to save people, even despite our own feeble attempts or refusal to share his Word? How can this story remove some of the pressure we might feel to perform perfectly when we talk about God?**

Horizontal lines for taking notes, consisting of 18 lines.

**Note:** For a guided reading and reflection on God’s plan to draw to himself people from every nation, see **Go Deeper Section 3** at the end of this study.

David closed this session by reiterating two thoughts. First, God is intent on accomplishing his purpose of spreading his salvation to all nations. But, second, he’s also intent on transforming and caring for the hearts of his people—we see it in Jonah’s narrative, and we can see it in our own lives as well. **In what ways is God currently at work in your heart? What means is he using to shape your heart? To what degree are you submitted to God and the work he’s doing in you?**

**In what ways is God’s work in your heart preparing you for deeper involvement in spreading his Word to others? What opportunities do you have right now to share the gospel?**

**LAST WORD**

Jonah was resolved in his efforts to flee from the presence of God and shirk the command God had given him. But God was committed to Jonah and the work he planned to do through him and in him. That was good news for Jonah, and it’s good news for us.

God will spread his Word to the nations, and he will use us to do it. And as he’s using us, he will shape us and our hearts into his likeness. The question for us is will we resist like Jonah, or will we submit to the good work God intends to do through us and in us? Which will you choose?

Lined writing area consisting of 20 horizontal lines for taking notes.

**GO DEEPER**

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material. We've highlighted a place where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide.

But you can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting. Consider reading one section a day to deepen your study of the book of Jonah.

1. *Swallow the book of Jonah whole.*

Continue what we started last week by setting aside around thirty minutes this week to read the book of Jonah in its entirety.

Before reading, reflect on what you read last week. **Which pieces of the story stuck with you over the last seven days? What were your major takeaways and how did you apply them to your life?**

Read Jonah 1–4, this time using a different translation. There are plenty of options, such as the CSB, NIV, NASB, ESV, NET, NLT, KJV, NKJV, and The Message. If you don't have a physical copy of another translation, you can use websites like [stepbible.org](http://stepbible.org), [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com), or [biblehub.com](http://biblehub.com), where you can access all major Bible translations. You can also access several translations in the RightNow Media app.

Bible translations can vary in the way they present the text. A translator's goal is to take what the original autographs communicate and translate it as accurately as possible in a form that is readable. And each reputable translation has something to offer its reader. **Compared to your previous readings, what differences did you notice between translations (word choices, paragraph breaks, section headings, etc.)? How did these differences—specifically the word choices—add to your understanding and retention of the book of Jonah? Which translation did you prefer, and why?**

After reading, spend some time recalling and reflecting on the book of Jonah. **To what degree is your fluency of the story improving? How can you tell? How do you think**

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**growing more familiar with the book of Jonah will help you become more like Jesus and follow him more faithfully?**

2. *Jonah and Jesus: Sleeping through a Storm*

Certain aspects of Jonah’s narrative are what theologians refer to as a “type,” or a pattern or motif that occurs in the Old Testament which points to something in the New Testament. And if you’re familiar with the Bible, you may have noticed—whether you knew what to call it or not—a “type” in Jonah 1:4–6 that resurfaces in a well-known story from the New Testament. In these first few verses of Jonah, we get our first glimpse of the book’s typological significance. Let’s explore it briefly.

Read Jonah 1:4–6, 12.

We examined this scene already in this session, but it’s worth another look as we consider its connection to the life and ministry of Jesus. **What are the main points of tension in this portion of Jonah’s story? In what ways does Jonah fall short as a prophet of God?**

Flipping ahead to the New Testament, we find in Matthew’s gospel (Mark’s and Luke’s as well) a story that is strikingly similar to Jonah’s run-in with the storm. In some ways, it’s a story meant to accomplish what Jonah left undone. Read Matthew 8:23–27.

Jesus and his disciples, some of whom were adept sailors or fishermen, were out in a boat when a storm rushed upon the sea. As the waves were swamping the boat, Jesus was below deck fast asleep while his disciples were in a panic. **What similarities do you notice between this scene and the scene in Jonah? What differences do you see?**

Afraid for their lives, the disciples woke Jesus and yelled for him to save them. In their panic, you can almost hear echoes of the crew in Jonah: “What should we do?” Instead of instructing them to cast him into the sea like Jonah, Jesus gives instructions to the storm. He said, “Quiet! Be still!” (Mark 4:39, NIV). In both stories, the storm was calmed. But how each storm was calmed couldn’t have been more different. **How did the disciples respond to Jesus calming the storm?**

Lined writing area consisting of 20 horizontal lines for student responses.



These stories reveal why Jesus is often referred to as “the greater Jonah.” Jonah rebelled against God and was plunged into the stormy sea, presumably to his death, to save others from God’s wrath. Jesus’s storm was a bit different—it wasn’t brought on by his sin. But he, too, would eventually plunge himself into death on behalf of rebels like Jonah. And his sacrifice wouldn’t save only a few sailors, but *all* who believe in him. **To what degree does the good news of Jesus amaze you and cause you to worship? How can you grow in your amazement (or fear) and worship of the Lord?**

3. *Pause and Reflect: Lectio Divina*

We can sometimes breeze through familiar or difficult passages of Scripture, speeding over the words instead of letting the truth of Scripture sink into our minds and hearts. Lectio Divina, or prayerful reading, is a historical Christian practice that has helped generations of Christians to pause and reflect on God’s Word.

Below are the four steps of Lectio Divina, which will help you pray and think deeply about Revelation 7:9–10, which David referenced in this session. As we consider God’s command to spread his Word to the nations, what does that mean about the make-up of his kingdom, and how does this passage illuminate it for us? Carve out some time this week to go through this exercise. Take your time with each step. This isn’t something to rush through, so make sure you have plenty of time before you start.

**Lectio** (read): Remove all distractions and quiet your mind before God. Read Revelation 7:9–10 three times slowly. If you can, read it out loud to yourself. Let the message hit you. After reading it three times, find something that stands out to you. Re-read it a couple more times and place emphasis on different words as you read.

**Meditatio** (meditate): Think about the words or phrases that stood out to you the most. What do they mean? What do they say about God? What do they say about God’s kingdom? How do they illuminate the main idea of Revelation 7:9–10?

**Oratio** (pray): Pray through your words or phrases. Ask God to show you what he’s saying through this verse. Take the verse and turn it into a prayer. For example, you could pray, “Thank you, God, that you save people from among every nation around the world,” or, “Help me, oh

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God, to join your work of saving people from among the nations.”

**Contemplatio** (contemplate): Now that you’ve read, thought, and prayed through Revelation 7:9–10, finish your time in silence. Ask God to speak to you. Pray he’d show you one practical thing you could apply to your life from this passage. Then listen. Write down what he says and then do it.