JONAH

THE CALL OF COMPASSION



A Devotional Bible Study on the Book of Jonah

by Sue LeBoutillier

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Dear Friends,

Who doesn't know the story of Jonah? Even those who haven't read the Bible have some familiarity with the *great whale*, who gobbled up poor Jonah and spat him out on the shore. Many people would put this story in the same category as **Paul Bunyan** or **Johnny Appleseed**. But is it a tall tale? Why is it in our Old Testament lineup of prophetic books? After all, it might seem more like a bedtime story than a legitimate book of the Bible.

Well, we're in for a treat, and we'll actually learn a lot about God through this book of the Bible. The main point isn't the *fish*, *Jonah*, or even the city of *Nineveh*, the main point is *God's mercy* available to all people on earth. THAT is why it's one of the 66 books of the Bible.

We will let the words of another prophet give a proper summary of this book for us:

Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other —Isaiah 45:22

I hope you will enjoy this study and grow in the mercy of God!

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Women of the Word Bible Studies

The following WOW Bible Studies written by Sue LeBoutillier are available through the **Calvary Chapel Ontario bookstore**, and through our online store at **www.ccontario.com**.

- Genesis—Divine design, from Eden to Egypt
- Exodus—Divine Deliverance, From Egypt to Sinai
- Numbers—The Wilderness Way, From Sinai to the Jordan
- Joshua The Path of Promise, From the Jordan into Canaan
- Judges A Time of Turning
- Ruth— Rescue and Rest
- 1 Samuel The Coming King
- 2 Samuel The Reigning King
- 1&2 Kings (Part One) Solomon and the House of the Lord
- 1&2 Kings (Part Two)— Learning from Leaders
- Esther— When God Works in the Shadows
- Jonah—The Call of Compassion
- The Way of Jesus —The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew)
- Simply Jesus—The "I AMs" of Christ (John)
- Acts—Walking in the Spirit, The First Days of the Last Days
- Ephesians— Finding Purpose in a Confused World
- Galatians—Finding Grace in a Demanding World
- Philippians—Finding Joy in a Disjointed World
- Colossians—Finding Stability in a Changing World
- Titus—While We Wait
- James—Real Faith for Daily Life
- 1 & 2 Peter—Hope, Holiness and Humility in a Hostile World
- 1,2,3 John—Light, Love and Logic

REFERENCES

Scripture quotations from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

1— **Nixon, Rosemary.** The Message of Jonah: Presence in the Storm. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003. WORDsearch CROSS e-book.

Map on p.3 https://visualunit.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/ jonah_map_lite2.pdf

How to use this Bible Study

Jonah is a five-week women's Bible study which is broken into four days of study each week.

Whether you're meeting to study with a friend, a small group, or doing this on your own — the following would be an ideal path:

#1 Your first step will be to watch/listen to **Week One** — **Introduction**, either independently or with your group.

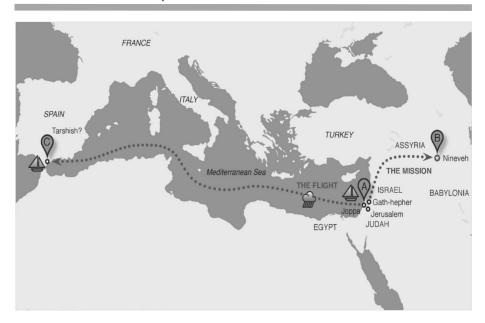
#2 Begin Week Two in your Study Guide

- ◆ Read the assigned scriptures and answer the questions for each day. This Study Guide is intended to be completed independently **before** you watch the teaching associated with each week's lesson. (Also note the *Questions for Thought and Discussion at the end of each lesson* you won't want to miss them).
- ◆ Then watch/listen to that week's teaching using the links below. You can do this privately or with your group.
- Discuss the week's lesson in your group and pray together about applying the passages to your lives.
- Repeat this process as you do all the weeks in your Study Guide.

One last reminder — be sure to approach each of the above steps with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to give you understanding and speak to your heart.

*The best translation of the Bible to use is the one you understand the most easily—and using more than one translation can be a great aid to study! This study guide was created using the ESV (English Standard Version), which may be a helpful tool as you work through your study.

Map of Jonah's Mission



Exodus 34:4-7

⁴So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first. And he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand two tablets of stone. ⁵ The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.

⁶The LORD passed before him and proclaimed,

"The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,"

keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

Notes from Teaching on Jonah 4 —
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Notes from Teaching on Jonah 4 —

Introduction — The Call of Compassion

This page is provided as a guide for taking notes during the introductory teaching on Jonah.

The book of Jonah is really about
The book of Jonah could be considered the Old Testament counterpart to the New Testament book of
Among the books of prophecy in the Bible there are: major prophets and minor prophets.
Jonah was a prophet to Israel during the reign of
The ancient city of Nineveh is basically the modern-day city of in Iraq.
God is in the business of <i>calling out to people</i> judgment.
From Jonah 1:1-3:
Jonah fled from the of the
Instead of obeying God's command to, Jonah went to
List some of the attributes of God we learn from Exodus 34 :

Notes for Introduction on Jonah

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. We pointed out how Jonah's emotions rode the rollercoaster, depending on his circumstances. Name two things a Christian might do to steady their emotional responses through life's changes. Give one Scripture.

2. Jonah became *angry* about people who were spared, and yet he was *glad* about a simple plant. It has been said that our character can be judged by the questions: 'What makes you happy?' and 'What makes you angry?' How does that test play out in your life?

3. Christians can become imbalanced with regard to **truth** or **mercy**. Is there a tendency for *you* to be out of balance, either exclusively focused on the truth, or compromisingly merciful? What could you do to return to a point between these two extremes?

4. What country, or people group in past history, do you think many people may have considered undeserving of mercy? (i.e. Nazi Germany) What country, or people group today, might get the most votes for being undeserving?

5. How does **Romans 1:16** give you courage to be part of any *mission* of mercy to which God may call you?

Day 4: Since the focus of this book isn't necessarily about what happened to Jonah, but rather how God miraculously used *His creation* to extend His mercy — let's recap, by listing, on the lines below, any miraculous event or appointment of nature that God used to bring about His will: Jonah 1:4 Jonah 1:7 ______ Jonah 1:13 _____ Jonah 1:15 Jonah 1:17 _____ Jonah 2:10 ______ Jonah 3:10 ______ Jonah 4:6 _____ Jonah 4:7 Jonah 4:8 How many of those actions do you think Jonah recognized, in the moment, as a sign of God working? (place a ☑ beside them) Consider current circumstances in the lives of you or your loved ones. Is it possible that uncomfortable events may be God's purposeful interaction? How many of these events would you be able to place a

Notes for Introduction on Jonah

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Finish this study by allowing God to ask **you** questions about circumstances and perspective on life, and close your journal by writing a prayer of response to the Lord, based on what He has shown you.

☑ beside right now?

Jonah Chapter 1

Welcome to our first week of independent study. I've called this a *Devotional Bible Study* because we not only want to learn what the book of Jonah is all about in the context of the whole Bible, but we also want to learn what it means for us in the context of our life.

I want to encourage you to grab a journal or notebook, so that you can write out the whole book by hand. That sounds intense, until I remind you that we'll only write a few verses each day *and* there are only 48 verses in total. Still, you have permission to feel *accomplished* when you are finished. (I'll suggest markings for select words in your journal, so you may want to double-space your text.)

There are four days of study prepared for each chapter. Each day, pause and pray before you read the Scripture. Ask God to teach you, through His Word and His Holy Spirit. Then, as you write the passage, listen to what the Lord might be saying to you through the Scripture. I find that writing with my hand opens a special place in my mind for listening.

Like we said, the book of Jonah is about God and His mission of mercy to the world. Along the way we'll also learn a lot about our own responses to God's call, as we journey with Jonah.

Be blessed, friend!

Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God and there is no other

— Isaiah 45:22

READ & WRITE **Jonah 4:9-11.** In your journal...

- Draw a box around the word *angry*
- Mark the word pity with a tear drop •

Socratic Questioning is a method of asking questions to get students to reason for themselves and return with thoughtful answers. God does a lot of this as we wrap up this book.

- What question did God ask Jonah twice (v.4, v.9)?
- The first time, Jonah was angry and wanted to die because...
- The second time, Jonah was angry and wanted to die because...

Perhaps God's questioning was already helping Jonah to see his weak character. Still, God didn't leave anything to chance. He made it crystal clear, by pointing out Jonah's *pity* for the plant that perished, and lack of *pity* for the people who did not perish. God gently showed him the reality of his heart...and, then, that was the end! God had the last word.

I think there was a time when that really bothered me...not knowing the *end of the story*. Did Jonah return to Israel? What did he tell people? Were they just as angry that the Assyrians were spared?

But now, an unresolved story brings me comfort. I like the idea of God having the final word. I like that we don't know how Jonah turned out. I guess I just like more mystery in life than I used to, because there are many more unresolved corners in my own life.

I would invite you to join me often by echoing the words of Abraham: "Will not the judge of all the earth do right?"

Day 2:

READ & WRITE Jonah 4:5-8. In your journal...

- Draw a box around the words exceedingly, glad, might die
- Put (parenthesis) around the words appointed

We are fairly complex creatures — our emotions can be all over the map. In this chapter, we put a box around the words that showed us how Jonah responded emotionally to what was going on in his life.

- Choose a phrase from **v.2** that shows how God's character is quite the opposite from Jonah's:
- Which direction from Nineveh did Jonah sit?
- So, which direction was he facing in the hottest part of the day?
- What do you think he was waiting to see?
- In what way did God show mercy to Jonah, while he was watching over the city?

We see in this narrative how God used **His** own creation in **His** plan for Jonah. First He *appointed* the fish, then He *appointed* a plant.

- Name two more things that God appointed to alter Jonah's circumstances:
- How did Jonah's emotions rise and fall with his circumstances?
- How do your emotions rise and fall with your circumstances?

Day 1:

READ & WRITE Jonah 1:1-3. In your journal...

- Mark all the words *arise, rose* with an upward arrow ↑
- Mark all the words *down* with a downward arrow \downarrow
- Underline presence of the Lord and up before me

These first verses don't tell us what God's word-for-word message to Nineveh was. Let's peek ahead to **Jonah 3:4-5**:

- What was the message?
- What was the response of the people of Nineveh?

We're getting ahead of ourselves. It's clear that God's intention was to show mercy to pagan Gentiles, if they would *respond*. It's also clear that God offered Jonah a role to play in *His Call*, if he would *respond*.

- Write one sentence that summarizes Jonah's response in v.1-3:
- What do you think may have been some of the underlying reasons for Jonah's actions?

What about YOU? As God is extending His mercy in the world today, and as He invites you to participate, what people/situations might tempt you to pretend you didn't hear God's call, or to actually turn the other way?

Day 2:

READ & WRITE Jonah 1:4-8. In your journal...

- Mark all the words *arise* with an upward arrow ↑
- Mark all the words down with a downward arrow \downarrow

From these verses, write a summary of:

- The difficulty that came upon the journey and why?
- The actions of the mariners during the storm and why?
- Jonah's activities during the ship's journey and why?
- The command of the captain and why?
- The sailor's method of determining the cause of the storm and why?

Everyone in this event had motives behind their actions — even God! READ **Psalm 107:23-32.** This Psalm is a study of God reaching out to people in all sorts of difficult situations.

- What did God allow to happen in this section of the Psalm?
- How did the people react to the difficulty?
- How did God respond to them?
- What was the outcome?

Consider sharing with your group a time when a difficulty arose in your life — how you cried out to the Lord, how He responded, and how it may have changed the course of your life.

READ & WRITE Jonah 4:1-4. In your journal...

• Draw a box around the words displeased, exceedingly, angry

Why would someone become so negatively charged about God holding back His wrath? Let's consider some possible reasons:

- First, describe the reason that Jonah gave to God (v.2):
- Then, consider other reasons you think of (including reputation):

- As Jonah is praying to the Lord, what passage of Scripture does he seem to be referencing?
- Write out the three phrases in v.2 that give color and definition to God's mercy:
 - •
 - •
 - •

READ the account of God's judgment on Sodom in Genesis 18:22-19:29. In 18:25, Abraham said to God, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" Sodom's fate was completely opposite of Nineveh:

- Why do you think that was?
- Abraham was certain God was just, but was He still merciful?

Jonah Chapter 4

I think some of us would be much happier if there were only three chapters in Jonah, rather than four. I mean, the story ends so nice and tidy, right at the end of chapter three. It's a win-win for everyone!

Unfortunately, there is one final chapter and the camera focuses in tight on Jonah again. This chapter is all about man's response to God's mercy — and that is often a messy picture.

Why is it that even modern Christians, who understand God's grace, still stumble over the truth that God lavishes His mercy over people?

—Even on people whom we don't think deserve mercy!

In Exodus 33:19, God told Moses:

"I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."

The Apostle Paul, missionary to the Gentiles, also quoted that in his letter to the Romans (Romans 9:15). WOW! That understanding sort of puts us in our place, and leaves us out of the decision-making process, doesn't it? We know the Bible says, "God's ways are not our ways" and, "Who can know the mind of the Lord?", but we sure do want to try sometimes!

Here is the truth: God is intent on His work of salvation, despite the stubbornness of His people!

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

— Isaiah 55:10-11 (ESV)

Day 3:

READ & WRITE Jonah 1:9-13. In your journal...

• Underline the phrase presence of the Lord.

Can you imagine how frightened the sailors must have been? They lived in a superstitious world that believed every bad thing was caused by the displeasure of some god. The burden to figure out which god was having a bad day, and what to do about it, rested on their shoulders!

- What did Jonah tell the crew about himself in **v.9**?
- Why was it sadly ironic that he said (v.9) that he feared the LORD, the God of heaven; yet the men knew (v.10) that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord?

When God's kids ignore God's calling and *fall asleep on the job*, other people are often affected.

- List who was affected by Jonah's disobedience in this chapter.
- How have you been affected by another's disobedience?
- Here's a harder question. How has *your* disobedience affected those around you?

READ **Galatians 6:1** and **James 5:16.** Explain how we should relate to people who are, or have been, *fleeing the presence of the Lord:*

• Why do you think the sailors might have been reluctant to follow Jonah's order (v.12)?

Day 4:

READ & WRITE **Jonah 1:14-17**. Jonah was clearly out of fellowship with God at the moment. I wonder if he even realized that, as he freely told the crew about his God—Jehovah.

- Explain what the crew did before throwing Jonah into the sea (v.14):
- What two things happened *after* the crew threw Jonah overboard?
 - V.15
 - V.17
- It sure seems like the ship's crew was drawn into God's *mission of mercy*. Describe how God used the situation in their lives:

READ **Psalm 139:7-12.**

- How does this Psalm specifically apply to Jonah's life?
- How does this Psalm specifically apply to your life? How does it bring you comfort through all the ups and downs of life?

Notes from Teaching on Jonah 3 —

Notes from Teaching on Jonah 3 —

Questions for Thought & Discussion

- 1. It is the *message of God,* not the *messenger,* that is important; yet God never gives up on His messengers. Name things God used in chapter 1 to pursue Jonah and restore him to useful service.
- 2. It's easy to roll our eyes at Jonah's disobedience to partner with God's mercy. READ **Matthew 28:19-20** and **Acts 1:8,** and explain how God's Church today is often just as sleepy as Jonah was.
- 3. Jonah DID NOT want to see the Assyrians receive mercy. When people hurt *us*, we would sometimes rather not see them receive mercy either. This is called unforgiveness. How can we personally overcome this in order to walk in agreement with God's *Call of Compassion*? (Give at least one Scripture verse.)
- 4. The *presence of the Lord* was a theme in this chapter. Name ways you can proactively and intentionally *turn toward* the presence of the Lord, in order to prevent *turning away* from His presence.
- 5. The entire *Call of Compassion* was a message of warning, rather than a message of God's love. We prefer messages of love, not judgment. Can you describe how a warning of God's judgment *could* fit into your personal methods of evangelism?

Notes for Teaching on Jonah 1 —

Questions for Thought & Discussion

- 1. How does the story of Jonah shape your hope of a believer's usefulness after being restored from a season of disobedience or distance?
- 2. How does this chapter inspire you to seek God through your involvement in community prayer whether it be a local Church Body or an entire nation?
- 3. How do you think fasting can be a useful prelude to repentance?
- 4. Why is it that even Christians may think an *act of compassion* is only helping people with physical needs, without a heart of pity for their spiritual condition?
- 5. Why do you think we tend to exclude any conversation about God's judgment of the world when we are sharing the Lord?
- 6. If Jesus said that "He would draw all people to himself" (John 12:32), then what is our part? Are we needed at all?

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.
But it is a much more fearful thing to fall out of them.

— D. H. Lawrence ¹

READ & WRITE Jonah 3:10. In your journal...

• Mark the words turned and relented with a U-turn sign --

You drew quite a few U-turn signs in your journal! As we marked God's choice to *relent*, we should remember that God didn't change His mind about what He said previously. God's Word is not *Yes* and then *No!* The change in course was the result of the Ninevites backing away from the *edge of destruction* — the *line of judgment*, if you will.

READ **2** Chronicles 7:14. This was spoken specifically to the nation of Israel at the dedication of the temple. How might this predict God's response to any people group, at any time, in any situation?

When the king heard Jonah's message, something persuaded him to hope in God, regardless of his heathen world view. Remember, this was never about Jonah — it was always about God reaching people.

 READ Romans 1:18-20, 2:14-15. Explain what God uses to reveal Himself to people:

• READ **John 12:32** and **John 16:7-11**, and explain how Jesus told His disciples that people would be reached today (in addition to the above).

Notes for Teaching on Jonah 1 —

Jonah Chapter 2

Today's chapter is different than the other three. It's a song, a prayer, a poem. From the time that Jonah was swallowed by the great fish, until God spoke to the fish at the end of this chapter, the narration pauses, and the text turns to Jonah's inner turmoil and response.

When Scripture looks deep within a soul, we should take the opportunity for introspection as well. And we will...but first...the fish!

Chapter one ended with Jehovah *appointing* a GREAT FISH to swallow up Jonah. Could this be a thing? Isn't this the reason people want to file the whole book on the *fable* shelf?

Well, let's talk fish!

- 1) Remember, it's not our responsibility to *prove* Scripture by our reasoning skills. After all, is not salvation itself a miracle of grace?
- 2) Sea creatures *do* exist that seem to have the capacity to swallow an animal as large as a man whole, and there *are* stories throughout history that seem to prove that experience.
- 3) The life and mission of Jonah read the same, whether he was sustained alive for three days, or actually resurrected after three days in the fish's belly.

The point is, a person needs to make peace with the existence of miracles, in order to receive anything from the Biblical text!

- Did the Red Sea part, allowing Israel to walk on dry ground?
- Did God provide manna for His people for 40 years?
- Did Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead?
- Did God create the Heavens and the earth by His word?

This event with the fish is no greater or smaller than any of those. It was **miraculous mercy**, either way.

So, we see that learning from the Bible is closely tied to believing that God exists, that He is in control of all of His creation, and that He is constantly using creation to reach out to mankind.

Day 3:

READ & WRITE Jonah 3:6-9. In your journal...

- Mark the word a*rose* with an upward arrow ↑
- Put a "C" over the phrase call out
- Mark the words turn and relent with a U-turn sign →
- Once word had reached the king, how did he respond personally (v.6)?

What four things did he require of all the people through his proclamation (v.7-8)?

- •
- •
- •
- •
- How might the withholding of food for the animals have created an ongoing reminder to the people to pray to God?
- What did the king hope might be the result of his people's unified actions (v.9)?
- What characteristic of God was he counting on for that outcome?

Day 2:

READ & WRITE Jonah 3:4-5. In your journal...

• Put a "C" over each word call, called in v.1-5,

The title of our Bible Study is **The Call of Compassion**. What do you think of when I say, *Compassion Ministry?* Maybe feeding starving children in a developing country? Pop-up dental clinics in areas with poor nutrition? Handing out toiletry packs for the homeless? We probably equate *compassion* with help — meeting physical needs.

- Look up the word *compassion* in a dictionary, and write a few of the definitions you find.
- What was the *Compassion Message* that God asked Jonah to speak in Nineveh? (Write the exact words)
- On the surface, that message seems more like judgment than compassion. Why do you think it's legitimate that we call this a message of compassion?

- What effect did Jonah's call have on the people (v.5)?
- What physical actions accompanied the Ninevites' response (v.5)?

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Day 1:

READ & WRITE Jonah 2:1-6.

This week, we're going to take a long look into Jonah's spiritual condition while in *the belly of the fish,* and see what we can learn about emotional and spiritual prisons that we create within ourselves.

- Describe Jonah's emotional condition in the opening of **Jonah 2**:
- Who did Jonah consider responsible for his current situation (v.3)?

It sounded like Jonah was placing blame, but then, God actually *did* play a role in Jonah's downward spiral. Jonah set the pace when he consistently *went down* — away from the presence of the Lord — but God helped to propel him *further down* than he wanted to go — for a purpose.

In your journal, put [brackets] around phrases that describe God's work of trouble or uncomfortableness in Jonah's situation. Also mark the *down* with a down arrow \downarrow and *brought up* with an up arrow \uparrow .

- Does this exercise shake up your theology a bit? Are you okay believing God would contribute to our distress for His purpose?
- Can you cite other Biblical examples, where God did something similar in someone's life?

What about your life? Have you ever initiated the downward spiral from God's presence and then realized God allowed you to stay on that path, until you recognized the emptiness and distress of going your own way? Explain.

Day 2:
READ & WRITE Jonah 2:7-10. Circle the phrases in your journal, where Jonah comes to a realization of God's work and even God's love in his life — those places where he changes his mind and attitude.
 When a person gets this far down, it's not easy to look up and it's not easy to talk to God. The natural response is withdrawal. Yet, based on v.2,4,7, describe what Jonah did in the midst of realizing his despair.
• Describe Jonah's determination by the end of this song (v.9):
God had a purpose for Jonah to fulfill, and He faithfully walked with him each step of the way — never giving up on him. You know what I'm about to say don't you — God has a purpose for you, too! Read Psalm 138:7-8 and write v.8 below:
Read these Psalms of <i>calling</i> out to God. Put them in numerical order, as they resonate best with you. (You may also want to mark them in your Bible.)
Psalm 30:2-3 Psalm 40:1-6
Psalm 69:1-3 Psalm 94:17-19
Psalm 107:10-15 Psalm 123:1-4

D	ay	1:									
		-									

READ & WRITE Jonah 3:1-3. In your journal...

• Mark the word *rose* with an upward arrow ↑

Compare the second *Word of the LORD* with God's original command in **Jonah 1:2**. What is the same or different?

Do you always act on God's commands the first time? Or have you found that sometimes you need to be brought to a place, where you are *finally ready to listen to God and obey?* Jot down an example of something God had to speak to you a second or third time:

- Describe Jonah's actions in **v.3**:
- Describe the effect the previous days may have had on Jonah's physical appearance. (hair, skin, etc.)

This is clearly not the same Jonah who God called the first time — neither physically nor emotionally. READ **Romans 8:28**, and consider how *Jonah 2.0* may have had an even greater impact on the people of Nineveh:

The description of Nineveh was altered in this chapter as well.

- Now, how is it described (v.3)?
- Name a city you are familiar with, which might compare in size and importance:

Jonah Chapter 3

In chapter two, we hit the *pause button* on the **Call of Compassion** toward Nineveh, while God took care of business with one of His kids. Isn't that how our lives go sometimes? God holds all the spinning plates of the world, yet He somehow efficiently deals directly with ME! He is doing this for all of us at the same time! It's amazing!

Now, as we hit the *resume button* in chapter three, it sounds shockingly similar to where we started at the beginning of this book. It's as if Jonah's slate is wiped clean and he gets a complete *do-over!*

Whenever I see that in Scripture, I claim it for myself. I tell the Lord, "If you did it for Jonah, you can do that for me." And He has — God has graciously allowed me many second chances in my life. I wonder if God has done that for you, too.

By nature, a second chance means that we have personally run headlong into God's mercy. In many ways, I believe we become even better equipped after a *run-in* with God's mercy.

As we begin this chapter, let's remember an important point about this book — it's not about Jonah — it's about God and His *Call for Compassion* to reach people with His mercy before the day of judgment.

"Come, let us return to the LORD; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up.

After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.

Let us press on to know the LORD; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth."

— Hosea 6:1-3 (ESV)

Well, that was *Jonah's season* of being *cast down*. Do Christians go through similar seasons? If the plethora of Psalms written specifically from a *downcast* heart is any indication, I'd say — *Yes!* Christians can also enter into spiritual and emotional despair.

Today, we're going to use a couple of Psalms to inform our mind and heart about how to handle distress and the depression that follows.

RFAD Psalm 43:5 —

- What things in *your* life contribute to you becoming emotionally *downcast?*
- Explain how the Psalmist speaks to himself. How does he instruct his soul? How is this similar to Jonah's prayer?

Read Psalm 66:16-20:

- What does that the Psalmist want to explain to everyone who hears him?
- His desire was that God would hear his call and answer him, but what does he say might have lead to that not happening?

Has this Bible Study, by chance, caught you turning from the *presence* of the Lord in some way? Have you created a downward progression in your life, leading to depression and distress? Based on Jonah's prayer and these Psalms, what will be your plan of action?

Day 4:

The song of Jonah has two bookends — the swallowing and the vomiting of a great fish.

• According to **Jonah 1:17** how much time passed between those two actions on the fish's part?

That amount of time is just too coincidental for us to pass up. Let's close our study this week, by turning to two New Testament passages, where Jesus used the book of Jonah to make a point.

READ Matthew 12:38-42 & Luke 11:29-32 —

- First, how do you think these two passages affirm that the account of Jonah is a historical narrative, rather than an assumed fable?
- Next, how did Jesus compare himself to Jonah?
- List as many similarities you can think of between Jonah in the fish and Jesus in the grave:

Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

— Proverbs 28:13

Notes from Teaching on Jonah 2 —

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Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. It's not uncommon to find ourselves in a desperate situation created by our own stubborn will. Our temptation may be to think, 'I got myself into this...I'll get myself out'. So, we don't call out to God. READ **Hebrews 4:14-15**, and explain how this passage can help us reach out to God in our distress.

2. In what way might **Hebrews 12:5-6** and **Revelation 3:19** relate to this chapter?

3. Emotional stability is elusive enough when we *are* seeking God. If we deliberately turn from *the presence of God,* our soul is bound to become unbalanced. Name three things you believe would help a Christian maintain emotional and spiritual stability.

4. Jonah wanted no part in mercy for the Assyrians, maybe because he had an underlying prejudice against them. Explain how his prejudice caused harm to himself, and how the same thing can happen in our lives.

5. READ **Matthew 6:14-15**. Share why is it important for our own emotional and spiritual health to extend mercy and forgiveness to others?