

# THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

## *Jonah 1*

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Individuals or groups of people may enjoy working through this content while having fellowship in a home, while away on summer vacation, or in a *Connect Group*. We'll provide updated content from week to week across this summer.

### **Scripture: Jonah 1**

#### **SUMMARY**

Jonah 1 introduces us to the prodigal prophet Jonah. God calls him to Nineveh to proclaim judgment against it. Instead of joyfully participating in God's mission, Jonah attempts to flee to Tarshish, far from Nineveh and the presence of the Lord. He boards a boat in Joppa, but the Lord pursues Jonah in great loving-kindness. The sailors, fearing for their lives, cast lots to figure out who is responsible for "this evil," and the lot fell to Jonah. Jonah confesses that he is fleeing from the Lord and that they must throw him overboard to be safe from harm. Reluctantly, they do so, and the sea becomes calm. The sailors worship the Lord while the son of Israel sinks in the sea. God appoints a great fish to swallow Jonah, where he remains for three days and three nights.

We exist to help connect **Jesus to people, people to community, and community to God's mission**. Here are a few insights about how Jonah 1 connects to our mission as a church.

#### **JESUS TO PEOPLE...**

Jonah's story reminds us of the gospel. Just as Jonah fled from God's command, we often run from God's will. The storm represents the consequences of our sin/rebellion/disobedience. Jonah's willingness to be thrown into the sea symbolizes Jesus willingly throwing himself into the storm caused by our sin so the storm of God's wrath can be calmed. Jonah's three days in the belly of the fish are a sign of Christ's death and resurrection, offering hope and salvation to all who believe. We exist to help connect Jesus to people, Jesus is the ultimate Savior who rescues us from the storm of our sin and the storms of life.

#### **...PEOPLE TO COMMUNITY...**

The interaction between Jonah and the sailors illustrates the importance of community. Despite Jonah's disobedience, the sailors demonstrate concern for him and seek to understand the cause of the storm. When they realize Jonah is the source of the storm, they do not immediately abandon him but try to row back to land. These actions show the value of caring for others and working together in times of crisis. Similarly, our church community is a place where we can support one another, seek understanding, and work together to navigate life's challenges. We exist to help connect people to community, fostering relationships that reflect God's love and care.

### **...COMMUNITY TO MISSION**

The theme of mission in the book of Jonah highlights God's desire to reach all people, especially those who are far from Him. God's call to Jonah to go to Nineveh, a city known for its wickedness, underscores his compassion and mercy for all nations. Jonah's reluctance and eventual obedience serve as a reminder that God's mission is not just for a select few but for the entire church in the entire world. As God's church, we are called to participate in this mission, bringing the message of God's love and salvation to all people, regardless of their background or current condition. This aligns with our mission to connect community to mission. We are to be active participants in God's work of spreading his glory and grace to all corners of the earth.

### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION**

1. Jonah changes his attitude and starts to take responsibility by saying, "Hurl me into the sea." what seems to be the cause of that?
2. Have you ever been in a situation where you're saying something like, "You are dying for me, but I should be dying for you. I'm the one whom God is angry"?
3. What is the pattern of substitutionary sacrifice? Do you have experiences of being loved like that? Have you loved like that?
4. How does Jonah point us to Jesus? What does Jesus mean by himself being "the sign of Jonah" in Matthew 12:41?
5. How is Jesus different (and greater) than Jonah?
6. Why does verse 1:15 say "raging," referring to the "anger" of the storm? What do you think about God being angry?
7. Are there areas of your life where you're struggling to trust the goodness of God right now?

### **THEMES TO PRAY**

- Pray for "the word of the Lord" to be strong in our midst as a church (Jonah 1:1)
- Pray for members of our church to, "Arise and get going" in the specific ways that the Lord commands them (Jonah 2:2)
- Pray for people who, like Jonah, "flee the presence of the Lord" and pray for them to return to the Lord (Jonah 3:3)
- Pray for the hearts of our neighbors to be softened to the Word and works of God so that they may call out to God in prayer (Jonah 1:4-5)
- Pray against stubbornness and spiritual-sleepiness that threaten our willingness and alertness to participate fully in the mission of God (Jonah 1:5-6)
- Pray for God to make his name great in our lives, church, and city (Jonah 1:7-10; Psalm 143:3; Psalm 145:8-9)
- Pray for our church to be aware of man-made modes of salvation and the futility of trying to prove our worth through good works (Jonah 1:13)
- Pray for God to grant salvation to the nations (Jonah 1:14-17)
- Pray for God to provide salvation from the storms of life (Jonah 1:17)