

Knowing the
God of
Tonah

SAMPLE PAGES:

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Lesson One, Days One through Five

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Lesson *One*

Divine Revelation

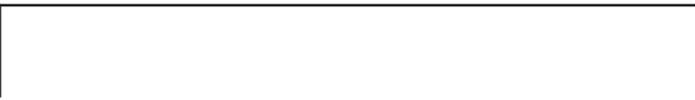
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF JONAH

*A*s a child, did you have a favorite book or favorite movie? One you would read or watch again and again? One that never seemed “old,” but instead grew more special each time, even though you could almost quote parts of it word for word? One in which, even though you knew what would come at the end, you delighted to experience the adventure with the characters one more time?

In our family, favorites have included *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Anne of Green Gables*, *The Sound of Music*, *The Fox and the Hound*, and more. In fact, many of these are favorites to this day. Perhaps even now you, too, have favorite stories that you return to again and again.

It seems, though, that our delight in the retelling of a great story can often cease when it comes to the Bible. Take the account of Jonah, for instance. Perhaps you heard some version of the story two or three times in Sunday School as a child, or perhaps you have read the narrative in the Bible yourself. Perhaps it can seem easy to think that there is nothing more to learn, or to understand more fully, or to apprehend more deeply. Can that be so? Of course not!

As you study the (true, historical¹) story of Jonah, ask the Lord to help you put aside any thoughts that you have “heard it all before.” Rather, each time you read part of the book of Jonah, take time to delight in the telling of the story—the words, attitudes, and actions of each character—and in the God who orchestrated all these events for His glorious purposes.



*“I will meditate
on Your precepts,
And contemplate
Your ways.”*

Psalm 119:15

DAY ONE

"I will _____ on _____ precepts,
And _____ Your ways."

Psalm 119:15

Of all the wonderful, life-changing truths in Scripture, none are more important than those that clearly tell about God Himself. The Bible is God's self-revelation to us, and we must read and study it in order to know Him. We do not study the Bible in order to become smarter; rather, we study it in order to come to a true and growing knowledge of the God Who made all things, Who planned and carried out a way for sinful humanity to be saved and adopted into His family, and Who will one day return to establish His eternal Kingdom on earth.

As you study the book of Jonah with this focus, you will not merely come to understand Jonah and his actions (though this will surely happen), but rather you will come to know the God of Jonah in more of His wisdom, majesty, faithfulness and glory. He is the God of Jonah, the God of all humanity, and the personal God and Father of every believer.

May He bless you as you study!

1. Begin by reading Psalm 119:129-133 and meditating on the awesome privilege of hearing, reading and studying God's Word. After a short time of thought and prayer, initial the box and begin your study.

2. Read through the book of Jonah. (It is short—a total of only 48 verses!) As you read, remember that it is more about God than it is about Jonah!

3. Title each of the four chapters. You may use any titles you wish, or you may use the acrostic F - I - S - H as a memory aid (for example, the title for chapter one would begin the letter "F," chapter two would begin with an "I," etc.).

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Title</i>
One	_____
Two	_____
Three	_____
Four	_____

4. In a complete sentence, how would you answer the question, "What is the book of Jonah about?"

DAYS TWO through FOUR

“ _____ on Your precepts,

And contemplate _____.”

Psalm _____ :15

In the book of Jonah, God reveals Himself to a rebellious believer, to unbelievers, and to all who read this amazing account in the Scriptures. As you complete your overview of the book of Jonah, keep in mind that it is first and foremost a revelation of God...and, as such, it is not an account to take casually. God is not ordinary, His Word is not ordinary, and the reading of His Word should have far from ordinary results in our lives!

*“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword,
piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow,
and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”*

Hebrews 4:12

1. Your assignment for the next three days of study is to read, observe and meditate on the book of Jonah. As you do, answer the questions which appear below and on the following page. *(Try reading the book in a variety of ways: for example, use different translations, read softly, read expressively, etc. This will aid observation and meditation, and is also a great way to include your children in your study!)*

The questions for these days of study are designed to take thought, so don't rush or become discouraged if they take time! Insights will come as you prayerfully observe and meditate on the book of Jonah.

a. In the book of Jonah, what do you find most amazing about God or His actions? Explain.

b. What do you find most surprising about the sailors' thoughts or actions? Explain. (Jonah 1:4-16)

- c. Jonah's prayer of repentance (Jonah 2:1-9) comprises approximately one-fourth of the entire book. Why might God have chosen to make this prayer so prominent?
- d. What do you find most interesting about Jonah's words to the Ninevites and/or their response to his words? Explain. (Jonah 3:1-10)
- e. At the end of chapter three, Jonah has followed God's command, gone to Nineveh, preached God's word and the Ninevites have repented. Why does the book not end here? What is at least one purpose of chapter four?

2. Speaking of the Old Testament Scriptures, Romans 15:4 says,

*“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning,
that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”*

As you consider the book of Jonah and your answers to question #1 (a—e), what initial applications can you see for life today?

DAY FIVE

"I _____ on _____ precepts,

And _____."

Psalm _____:15

*“What is the book of Jonah about? Well, it’s not simply about a great fish (mentioned only four times), or a great city (named nine times), or even a disobedient prophet (mentioned eighteen times). It’s about God! God is mentioned thirty-eight times in these four short chapters, and if you eliminate Him from the book, the story wouldn’t make sense.”*²

1. Depending on your translation, the book of Jonah begins with words such as “*Now the word of the LORD came to...*” or “*And the word of the LORD came to...*” Several other Old Testament books begin in a similar manner. Take a few minutes to read and compare the first few verses of such books as Joshua, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Micah, and Zechariah. Check the box when done.

This frequent beginning serves to show us that the book of Jonah is part of an on-going working out of God’s purposes and plans...this time through the prophet Jonah.

2. Scripture’s first mention of Jonah is in 2 Kings 14:23-27. These verses record another time when the word of the LORD came to this prophet. As you read this passage, record all you learn about Jonah and his response to God.

3. Jonah was part of God’s on-going plan, not only by speaking His words, but also by physically demonstrating something related to Christ in a particular, special way (a “type”). Record what you learn from Matthew 12:38-42. (*You will look at this subject more in Lesson Seven.*)

4. God chose Jonah for a special work, during a particular time in history, for His own purposes and glory. Today, God continues to further His eternal plans and purposes through faithful (and sometimes unfaithful) men and women. Regardless of their time or prominence in history, believers always need to ask themselves whether they are responding faithfully to the Word of God.

Take time now to consider your personal faithfulness by answering the questions on the following page.

Am I faithfully responding to the Word of the LORD?

Am I faithful to “hear” (read, study, listen to and obey) the Word of God?

Do I meditate on the Scriptures enough to sink the truths deep within my heart? (*The best tests of this are whether or not biblical thoughts are a spontaneous and habitual part of your thoughts, conversations and prayers.*)
If not, what seems to be my biggest obstacle to consistent meditation?

Do I see life as being about me (my plans, my wants, my needs) or about God (His kingdom, His plans, and His glory)? How do I know? Can others tell?

Do I most often give lip-service or heart-service? Where have I succeeded or failed this week?

Am I faithfully responding in areas of ministry, family, parenting, thoughts, work, discipleship, evangelism, pursuits, passions, etc.? Give an example from life this week.

Am I being faithful to share the Word of the LORD with others? If I say “yes,” am I faithful in both words *and* actions? What is one example of my faithfulness or unfaithfulness?

If I could change one thing about the way I respond to the Word of God, it would be...

5. End this week’s study by reading five verses of Psalm 119 (left-hand column) and a five-verse prayer based on the same passage (right-hand column). In one or both, underline phrases which echo your own heart and desires. When done, make these thoughts a part of your closing prayer and initial the box as your “Amen.”

Scripture at a Glance
Psalm 119:12-16

¹² *Blessed are You, O LORD!
Teach me Your statutes!*

¹³ *With my lips I have declared
All the judgments of Your mouth.*

¹⁴ *I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies,
As much as in all riches.*

¹⁵ *I will meditate on Your precepts,
And contemplate Your ways.*

¹⁶ *I will delight myself in Your statutes;
I will not forget Your word.*

Prayer based on
Psalm 119:12-16

*Blessed are You, O LORD!
Teach me Your statutes!*

*Cause me to declare
All the judgments of Your mouth.*

*And to rejoice in the way of Your testimonies,
As much as in all riches.*

*I want to meditate on Your precepts,
And contemplate Your ways.*

*And to delight myself in Your statutes;
May I never forget Your word.*



END OF SAMPLE