

# THE BOOK *of* JONAH

Good Shepherd  
Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Jonah 1:1-3 | April 19, 2026

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## I. Introduction to this Study

The book of Jonah stands apart from other prophetic books. Rather than focusing primarily on the message, it focuses on the prophet himself, his actions, his resistance, and his heart.

At the same time, this is not just Jonah's story. It is also a story about God, His character, His mercy, and how far that mercy extends.

Jonah lived during a time when Israel was experiencing success and expansion. He even prophesied in favor of Israel during the reign of Jeroboam, despite ongoing injustice. This stands in contrast to prophets like Hosea and Amos.

When God calls Jonah to go to Nineveh, the assignment is unusual. Prophets were not typically sent to the people they spoke against, which suggests that repentance and mercy were possible.

In these opening verses, we meet Jonah, hear God's command, and see Jonah's response. While we are not yet told why he runs, it is clear that God's mercy, and who receives it, is already at the center of the tension.

## II. Connecting with One Another

Have you ever been excited about something good happening for you, but less excited when it happened for someone else? What was that like?

## III. Study the Text

*Read Jonah 1:1–3*

- *What do these verses tell us about Jonah?*
- *What is God asking Jonah to do?*
- *How does Jonah respond?*

*Jonah's Background*

- *Jonah had previously prophesied in favor of Israel (2 Kings 14). What might that suggest about how he viewed his nation?*
- *How might that background shape the way Jonah responds to God's new command?*



### *A Different Kind of Calling*

- *God tells Jonah to go to Nineveh. Why is that unusual for a prophet?*
- *What does this instruction suggest might happen if Jonah goes?*

### *God's Mercy*

- *What do these verses begin to reveal about God's concern beyond Israel?*
- *Why might Jonah struggle with the idea that God's mercy could extend to Nineveh?*

### *Jonah's Response*

- *Jonah runs in the opposite direction. What does that reveal about his heart?*
- *Why do you think Jonah removes himself not only from Nineveh, but from Israel as well?*
- *The text does not say Jonah thought he could stop God's plan. What does that suggest about his decision to run?*

### *A Tension Introduced*

- *We are not yet told why Jonah runs. Based on what we see, what possibilities come to mind?*
- *Jonah's actions stand in contrast to prophets like Amos and Jeremiah, who struggled but still delivered God's message. What stands out about that difference?*

## **IV. Prayer**

*Spend time in prayer together:*

- Ask God to reveal any areas where you are resisting His direction.
- Confess any reluctance to participate in what God is doing.
- Ask God to shape your heart to reflect His mercy.
- Pray for a willingness to trust God, even when you don't fully understand His purposes.

## **VI. Digging Deeper**

- The book of Nahum gives a glimpse into the violence and cruelty of Nineveh. How does that shape your understanding of Jonah's situation?
- Jonah appears unwilling to give Nineveh any chance to repent. Why might someone resist that?
- In what ways can we begin to see ourselves in Jonah's response?
- Jonah's story can be compared to both sons in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15). Where do you see early hints of that in these verses?
- Romans 1–3 describes different expressions of disobedience. How might Jonah's response fit within that broader picture?

