

THE BOOK *of* JONAH

Good Shepherd
Sermon-Based Study Guide
Jonah 1:3-16 | April 26, 2026

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I. Introduction to this Study

The book of Jonah stands apart from other prophetic books. It reads more like a parable than a prophecy. It is a story about God, His character, His mercy, and how far that mercy extends.

II. Connecting with One Another

Have you ever been in a storm that terrified you? What was that like?

III. Study the Text

Read Jonah 1:4-6

- What caused the storm and what was its effect?
- Who are the characters in this scene? How are they alike and how are they different?
- What does verse 5 tell you about the sailors?
- In your last trip, what did you have in common with those traveling with you? What were the differences? How did that affect your experience?
- Jonah went down to Joppa. (Jonah 1:3) He went down below deck on the ship. (Jonah 1:5). He went down into the depths of the sea. Jonah 2. All of this is in spite of God telling him to "arise and go to Nineveh" in Jonah 1:2. The captain told him to "arise and call on your god" in Jonah 1:6. And, God calls him again to "arise and go" in Jonah 3:2. (Note: the NIV does not translate the Hebrew word for "Arise")
- Compare Jonah's sleeping on a ship, in a storm to Jesus' experience sleeping on a boat. See Matthew 8:23-27. What is the difference between the two? Have you ever slept to avoid your waking reality?

Read Jonah 1:7-10

- How did the sailors seek to discern the reason for their plight? What does this tell them about their beliefs?
- How does Jonah answer the sailors' questions? Does Jonah's behavior match his beliefs?
- What are some of the reasons for the difficulty we sometimes have living our beliefs?
- How do our choices sometimes put others in danger? How aware are you of the impact of your own actions or inaction on others?

Read Jonah 1:11-16

- The sailors ask Jonah what they should do to him to calm the sea. They don't immediately do it. What does their reluctance to do it say about their morals and values?
- The sailors' efforts to work for the saving of life and the common good of all are a contrast to the actions of Jonah, which are selfish.



- Notice the change in who the sailors prayed to, comparing verse 5 and verse 14. What are some of the things that led to this “conversion”?

IV. Prayer

Spend time in prayer together after reflecting on this:

- It is possible to be religious, knowledgeable, even called by God—and still be spiritually asleep.
- It is possible to say the right things about God—and yet resist His will in practice.
- And it is also possible for those far from God to respond more faithfully than those near to Him.

Give thanks for this Good News.

- God pursues Jonah—even in his rebellion.
- God reveals Himself to the sailors—even in their ignorance.
- God is at work in the storm, in the ship, in the sea.
- No one in this story is outside His reach.

And that is good news—for sleeping prophets and searching sailors alike.

V. Digging Deeper

The quote below is from one of my favorite professors in seminary. Not only did I enjoy his teaching, but I also enjoyed sailing with him on his sailboat.

“Jonah, the individual, is a corporate representation of those whom God calls to do His work in the world. Rather than do God’s bidding willingly, the prophet balks at his assignment and gets into trouble. In his distress, he prays, but selfishly. Ultimately, when he does carry out God’s assignment and succeeds in his mission, Jonah resents what God has done. At this point, God reminds Jonah that He, the Lord, is concerned about all people and everything He has made.

The other books of the Bible flesh out in one way or another the theme of Jonah. At times, God’s people find the tension between self-will and God’s will too powerful to withstand. They then suppress their mission and become chameleons who take on the colors of the world. In the process, they are of little godly use. Alternately, they withdraw from the world to concentrate only on their worship and moral experience. In this case, they are of little worldly use. The Bible calls those who confess what it teaches to guard against both temptations by being obedient to God in the world, whatever the cost.”

A Path Through the Bible by Dr. John H. Piet

