

THE BOOK *of* JONAH

Good Shepherd

Sermon-Based Study Guide

Jonah 3:1-10 | May 10, 2026

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I. Introduction to this Study

Jonah 3 begins with a second chance: “The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time.” Jonah had run from God, but God was not finished with him. This time Jonah goes to Nineveh and delivers the message God gives him.

Nineveh’s response is immediate and dramatic. The people believe God, fast, put on sackcloth, and turn from their evil ways. Even the king joins in, asking, “Who knows? God may turn and relent.”

Jonah 3 shows us that God responds with mercy to repentance, but it also forces us to ask whether repentance is only a temporary crisis response or true surrender to God. God’s mercy is wide and real, but it is never casual. Ultimately, this passage points us to Jesus, the one greater than Jonah, where God’s mercy and justice fully meet.

II. Connecting with One Another

When have you seen someone make a surprising change, even if you weren’t sure whether it would last?

What’s a time when a warning actually helped you, even if you didn’t like hearing it at first?

III. Study the Text

Read Jonah 3:1-10

A Second Beginning

- What do you notice about the similarity between Jonah 3:1–2 and the beginning of the book?
- What does this second call reveal about God’s patience with Jonah?
- The text does not tell us Jonah preached halfheartedly. Why is it important not to assume more about Jonah’s attitude than the passage actually says?

Nineveh

- Why might it matter that Nineveh is described as a great or important city?
- What does God’s concern for Nineveh reveal about His character?
- How might Jonah have struggled with the fact that this city mattered to God?



- What stands out to you about the response spreading from the people to the king?
- Why do you think the king calls not only for outward signs of repentance, like fasting and sackcloth, but also for turning from evil and violence?
- What is the difference between feeling sorry, changing behavior temporarily, and truly turning toward God?

“Who Knows?”

- In verse 9, the king says, “Who knows? God may turn and relent.” What does this question reveal about his understanding of God?
- How does this question hold together human response and God’s sovereignty?
- Why is repentance not a way of controlling God, but a way of humbly appealing to His mercy?
- How do verses 9-10 show that God’s mercy is not arbitrary, but connected to His character and His response to repentance?

Reflect and Respond

- What does Jonah 3 teach you about God’s willingness to show mercy?
- Where do you see the difference between temporary change and deeper surrender?
- Why is it dangerous to treat repentance as only a crisis response?
- How does the question “Who knows?” invite humility before God rather than presumption?

IV. Prayer

Spend time in prayer together:

- Thank God for His patience and mercy.
- Confess the ways we settle for temporary change instead of deeper surrender.
- Ask God to give us repentance that is more than outward behavior.
- Pray for humility to respond when God confronts us with truth.
- Thank Jesus for being greater than Jonah and for bearing judgment so mercy could come to us.

VI. Digging Deeper

- **Jeremiah 18:7–10** — How does this passage help explain the relationship between God’s sovereignty and human repentance?
- **2 Timothy 2:25** — What does this teach about repentance as a gift from God?
- **Nahum 1:1–8** — What does Nahum reveal about Nineveh’s later future and the seriousness of God’s justice?
- **Numbers 14:18** — How does this verse hold together God’s patience, mercy, and justice?
- **Hebrews 9:22** — Why is atoning sacrifice necessary for final forgiveness?
- **Matthew 12:38–41** — How does Jesus use Nineveh’s repentance to confront those who refuse to respond to Him?

