



JONAH: CHASING CHANGE FOUR CROSSROADS OF REPENTANCE

SERIES COMMUNITY GUIDE

**THRIVE LA CHURCH
March 2026**

How to Use This Guide

The story of Jonah is about more than a prophet and a fish. It is a story about running, resisting, returning, and wrestling with change.

Throughout the book we see people constantly changing direction:

- Jonah runs from God
- The sailors turn toward God
- Jonah cries out for help
- The Ninevites repent
- God shows mercy

Yet the story ends with a question: Will Jonah change?

Jonah reveals that repentance doesn't just happen once - it's a series of crossroads where we must decide whether to continue running from God or turn toward the life God is offering us.

Each week we will explore a different crossroads in Jonah's journey and ask how our inner decisions ripple outward into the lives of others.

Watch the Sermon

In Person on Sundays at 10am: 2234 W Temple St, Los Angeles, CA 90026

Online Live on Sundays at 10am: thriveLA.online.church

Archived: thriveLAchurch.com/media

Gather Weekly

We have multiple Thrive Groups throughout Los Angeles and Online. We encourage our groups meeting in person to share a meal together.

Discussion

In your groups you will discuss the week's sermon and Bible readings with reflection/discussion questions designed to help you go deeper.

Join or Start a Group

Go to thriveLAchurch.com/thrivegroups or Text "Groups" to 323-709-0711 to be placed in a group and to learn more.

Week 1: Am I running from God?

week of March 9th

Jonah receives a call from God to go preach against the evil and unjust in Nineveh. Instead of following God's purpose, he runs away in the opposite direction and boards a ship, that will take him even further from Nineveh.

While Jonah goes to sleep, God sends a storm to wake him up. Ironically, the pagan sailors sense this is a divine power at work, so they wake him up.

When asked to explain himself, Jonah spouts off a bunch of religious mumbo-jumbo: "I'm a Hebrew, and I worship the LORD, who made the sea and the land" ([Jon. 1:9](#)). What a joke! He's obviously right in saying that God made the sea and dry land, but then he's dumb enough to run from that very same God by getting on a boat?! When the sailors ask Jonah what to do, he says that they should just kill him by throwing him overboard. This seems noble at first, until you realize that this could be his most selfish move yet. What better way to avoid going to Nineveh? He puts his blood on the innocent sailors' hands by forcing them to kill him. The sailors remain reluctant and actually repent to God as they toss the prophet over.

This chapter reminds us that our spiritual decisions are never only personal. When we run from God, the ripple effects can impact the people around us.

Opening Question:

What is something you tried once but quickly realized you weren't very good at?

Bible Reading:

Jonah 1

Discussion Questions:

- What stands out to you most in this chapter?
- Why do you think Jonah runs from God's call?
- What differences do you notice between Jonah's response to God and the sailors' response during the storm?
- Where do you see examples in life where someone's inner struggles affect others around them?
- When you sense God prompting you toward something difficult, what emotions or reactions usually arise?

Prayer:

Break up into pairs. Where might you be running from something God is inviting you toward? Close by praying together for courage to take one step toward God this week.

Week 2: Am I reaching for help?

week of March 16th

After being thrown into the sea, Jonah finds himself in the belly of a fish. In that place of desperation, he finally cries out to God. Jonah's prayer is honest and emotional. He never technically says that he's sorry, but he does thank God for not abandoning him and promises that he will obey his God from this point on, no matter what. God's response is comical - the fish vomits Jonah out back onto dry land.

Transformation often begins when we are willing to admit we need help. When we reach for God, we often discover that God has been present with us all along.

Opening Question:

Who is someone you tend to reach out to when you need encouragement or help?

Bible Reading:

Jonah 2

Discussion Questions:

- What images or phrases from Jonah's prayer stand out to you?
- Jonah cries out to God from the depths. Why do difficult circumstances sometimes push us toward God?
- What makes it difficult for people to ask for help - from God or from others?
- Jonah thanks God for rescue but never fully admits his wrongdoing. Why do you think repentance can sometimes stop halfway?
- When have you experienced God meeting you in a difficult moment?
- Where might God be inviting you to reach out for help instead of trying to carry things alone?

Prayer:

Break into smaller groups. Each person share one area where you need God's help right now. Pray for one another, asking God to bring His presence, wisdom, and hope into those situations.

Reminder for the group:

Every Friday during Lent, we are fasting as a church. This information can be found in the emails going out each Friday! **Please encourage your group to participate!**

Week 3: Am I returning to righteousness?

week of March 23rd

After Jonah's prayer, God gives him another chance. Jonah returns to Nineveh and delivers a short message: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned." Look at what's missing: There's no mention of what the Ninevites have done wrong or what they should do to respond, no mention of who might overturn them, and, most noticeably, there's no mention of God. What's going on here?

In response, something remarkable happens: the entire city of Nineveh repents. From the king to the common people - even the animals - the whole city humbles itself before God. God forgives the Ninevites and doesn't bring destruction down on the city.

Repentance means more than "feeling bad" about something. It means changing direction. When people return to God, transformation can ripple outward through entire communities.

Opening Question:

What is one place in Los Angeles that has changed a lot over the past few years?

Bible Reading:

Jonah 3

Discussion Questions:

- What stands out to you about the response of the Ninevites?
- Why do you think it was so difficult for Jonah to accept that God would forgive the Ninevites?
- What does this chapter teach us about second chances?
- How can one person's obedience to God impact others around them?
- What is one area of life where God might be inviting you to change direction?

Prayer:

Ask God: "Where are you inviting me to change course?"

Then pray together as a group, asking God to help you become people who encourage growth, humility, and transformation.

Reminder for the group:

Every Friday during Lent, we are fasting as a church. This information can be found in the emails going out each Friday! **Please encourage your group to participate!**

Ask: How have fasting Fridays been going? Anything that you're noticing?

Week 4: Am I repeating cycles of resentment or choosing restoration?

week of March 30th

Even after witnessing God's mercy toward Nineveh, Jonah becomes angry. He struggles with the idea that God would show compassion to people he believes do not deserve it.

God responds by gently confronting Jonah's heart. Through the story of a plant that grows and withers, God reveals Jonah's misplaced priorities.

The book ends with God asking Jonah a question: "Should I not have concern for Nineveh...?"

The story ends without telling us Jonah's answer.

In many ways, the real question of the book is not about Jonah - it's about us. The book of Jonah holds up a mirror to us. In Jonah, we see the worst parts of ourselves magnified, which should generate humility and gratitude that God does love his enemies and puts up with the Jonah in all of us. This strange story becomes a message of good news about the wideness of God's love, which ought to challenge us to the core.

Will we allow God to shape our hearts to reflect His compassion?

Opening Question:

What is something small that unexpectedly annoys you?

Bible Reading:

Jonah 4

Discussion Questions:

- What emotions do you see in Jonah in this chapter?
- Why do you think Jonah struggles with God's mercy toward Nineveh?
- Have you ever struggled to celebrate when someone else receives grace or forgiveness?
- The story ends with a question from God but never gives Jonah's answer. Why do you think the book ends this way?
- What do you think our response to God's question be?

Prayer:

As a group, spend a moment in silent prayer. Ask God: "Shape my heart to reflect your compassion."

Close by praying together for your city, asking God to help your church become a place where people encounter grace, healing, and transformation.

Reminder for the group:

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