

Running From God

A Study in the Book of Jonah

LESSON Four

Jonah Goes to Nineveh

(Jonah 3:1-5)

Prayerfully read through Jonah 3:1-5.

Starting in **verse 1**, we read that the Word of the Lord came to Jonah a **second time**. It is an honor and a privilege to be used by God. We often forget that fact, sometimes seeing God's callings as burdens being placed on our backs. He does not have to use us. He can send whoever He chooses to carry out His will. And when we quench His Spirit by ignoring and turning our back on His callings, He will often move on to someone else who is willing to obey His call. His will still gets accomplished, but we have lost the privilege and blessing of being the instrument He uses to accomplish His purposes. The fact that God sent His Word to Jonah a second time, after his rebellion and repentance, shows the great mercy and compassion of God. He gives Jonah a second chance to be the instrument chosen to deliver His message to Nineveh as His representative. He is a God of **second chances** and the God of **new beginnings**.

1. Have you experienced this in your own life? Has God's mercy and grace given you a **second chance** to be used by Him? Do you have an experience you can share?

2. How thankful I am that He is such a God! His mercy and grace, His restoration and healing of our soul is available to us afresh each morning. We do not deserve those gifts, yet they are extended to us, even in our failures, the moment we turn to Him with a repentant heart. Look up and record **Lamentations 3:22 & 23** below.

3. Looking at **Jonah 3:2**, record what God's message was to Jonah this **second** time.

In God's **first** message to Jonah, He told him to "**cry out against**" Nineveh. In this **second** message He tells Jonah to "**GO to Nineveh**" and then to "**wait**" for God to give him the words He wants him to say. **David Guzik** gives us this valuable insight: "**The story of Jonah demonstrates why God so often leads us one step at a time without telling us more. When God told Jonah what he would say in Nineveh, Jonah rejected the call. God often only tells us what we can handle at the time.**"

4. This can be frustrating and difficult for us. We want to know ahead of time what to plan for. We want to see the path ahead all the way to the finish line. But God wants us to learn to **trust Him**, and He trains us in that trust by not showing us things too far ahead of where we're standing now. This is true, whether the Lord is calling us to be His messenger, or sending us someplace far out of our comfort zone for purposes we do not yet know. Write down the examples found in the Scriptures below.

Joshua 1:9 -

Luke 12:11 & 12 -

Luke 21:14 & 15 -

Matthew 10:19 & 20 -

Hebrews 11:8 –

5. Looking at the **first part** of **Jonah 3:3**, write down Jonah's response at this **second chance** call from God.

6. Jonah had learned a great lesson as he sat trapped three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish. He has learned that any attempts to resist God's will are futile and foolish attempts. We cannot run from God. Look up and record **Isaiah 29:15 & 16**.

Several times now, God has described Nineveh as a "great city," meaning great in size. In verse 3, the words "**exceedingly** great city" are used. It states that it was a three-day journey in extent (from one end to the other). This shows us the enormity of the mission God was sending Jonah on. It would be like God asking us to go to Los Angeles and preach a very unpopular message of doom to a city, not only great in size, but of great wealth, influence and culture. Nineveh is said to have been around 60 miles in circumference. If Jonah walked 20 miles a day, it would take him a minimum of three days to cover it.

7. Looking at **Jonah 3:4**, write down the message God now gives Jonah to declare.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary states, “Going a day’s journey does not mean that Jonah traveled into the city for a whole day before preaching. Instead it means on the first day he entered the city he began preaching. The message God gave the prophet was the threat of complete destruction of Nineveh within 40... days. Perhaps this was a period of grace, giving the people an opportunity to repent before the judgment fell. Jonah continued this proclamation for three days before going “east of the city.”

David Guzik adds, “Jonah emphasized to the people of Nineveh what would happen if they did not repent – the city would be overthrown in judgment. Undoubtedly, this was not Jonah’s *whole* message to the people of Nineveh; but clearly it was his emphasis.”

8. Note that God didn’t tell Jonah to declare that their destruction would come immediately. He was giving them **40 days** warning to repent before that destruction would come. How **gracious** is our God! He is both **gracious** and **just**. Look up and record **Jeremiah 18:7-10** below, which displays both of these attributes (grace and justice) of God’s character.

9. What does **1 Timothy 2:4** remind us of? Write it down below.

10. What does **Ezekiel 18:23** add to this truth? Record that verse below.

11. Looking at **Jonah 3:5**, record how the people of Nineveh responded to the message Jonah was given by God.

12. The first thing we read in this verse that happened was that the people of Nineveh **believed God**. That is, in itself, a great miracle. What do **Romans 10:14 & 17** tell us?

Romans 10:14 -

Romans 10:17 -

David Guzik states that, “**Repentance begins with believing God. As we believe Him and His Word, we have the power to transform our lives as He wills. You can do many other things associated with repentance, but if they do not begin with believing on and trusting God, they are all useless works of the flesh. You can’t *believe God* apart from the Word of God. Therefore, any real revival or repentance will begin with faithful preaching and faithful hearing of God’s Word, just as it was in Nineveh.**”

13. The second thing **Jonah 3:5** tells us is that they **did something** in response to their belief in God. They proclaimed a **fast** and they put on **sackcloth**. Both of these, when done in sincerity, are signs of godly sorrow and a truly repentant heart. Record these other examples we see in Scripture.

Judges 20:26 -

1 Samuel 7:6 -

Ezra 8:21 -

Nehemiah 1:4 -

Daniel 9:3 -

Joel 2:12-13 -

David Guzik's commentary gives this insight: **"If repentance is anything, it is *not* business as usual. When repentance comes, something has to change and something has to be *different*. It means coming to God with passion and seriousness about your sin and your need for His mercy and forgiveness."**

- 14.** In **2 Samuel 12**, we read of David being confronted by God through the prophet Nathan over his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of Bathsheba's husband. God's judgement on David was that the illegitimate child Bathsheba bore with David was going to die. In **2 Samuel 12:16** we read that **"David therefore pleaded with God for the child, and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground."** In this case, David's fasting did not result in God turning away His discipline for David's sin, but it did result in David coming to a place of true godly sorrow and repentance. Look up **Psalm 51:4** and record David's words as he weeps over his sin.

Psalm 51:4 -

- 15.** As David continues his lament over his sin in **Psalm 51**, his heart becomes more repentant, and we see the result of that repentance that began with fasting and ended with true brokenness. Record below David's words in **Psalm 51:16-17**.

This is an example of what sincere repentance looks like. The fasting and sackcloth shows the **seriousness of our petition**, but the ending brokenness shows the **sincerity of our repentance**.

16. Jonah 3:5 declares that this belief in God, along with their seriousness as they proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, was something that the entirety of Nineveh did, from the greatest to the least of them. This is a powerful picture of how seriously they took to heart God's warning. They not only believed that God would do what He said He would do, but they put hope in Him, that perhaps He would show mercy. Look up **Psalm 86:5**. What does it tell us about God's character?

Psalm 86:5 -

17. How does this speak to your heart? What was your greatest take-away from Lesson 4 in our study of Jonah?

This study was written and prepared by Shawn Van Hook, 2026