



***Becoming Fully Devoted Followers
by Studying the Followers Before Us***

WEEK 24

JONAH

JUNE 11-15, 2007

DAY	<i>THROUGH THE BIBLE</i>	ABBREVIATED STUDY
Monday	2 Chronicles 31-33; Psalm 116	Jonah 1:1-17; Psalm 116
Tuesday	Jonah 1-4; Psalm 117	Jonah 2:1-10; Psalm 117
Wednesday	2 Chronicles 34-36; Psalm 118	Jonah 3:1-10; Psalm 118
Thursday	Obadiah 1; Psalm 119	Jonah 4:1-11; Psalm 119
Friday	Hosea 1-5; Psalm 120	Matthew 12:38-41; Ps 120



Connecting people to abundant life.

READ

Jonah 1:1-17

Psalms 116

REFLECT

This story is so well known that there is no need to retell it. But it may be helpful to put it in context. The book of Jonah tells the story of this prophet's flight and how God stopped him and turned him around. But it is much more than a story of a man and a great fish – Jonah's story is a profound illustration of God's mercy and grace. No one deserved God's favor less than the people of Nineveh, Assyria's capital. And, yes, eventually, Jonah obeyed and preached in the streets of Nineveh, and the people repented and were delivered from judgment.

As you read Jonah, you will see the full picture of God's love and compassion and realize that no one is beyond redemption. The Gospel is for all who will repent and believe. Simply put, the book of Jonah is a story of God's love for even the most unlovable, despicable people imaginable – and of our responsibility to tell them the Good News. It is worth noting that everyone and everything in the book of Jonah (the storm, the lots, the sailors, the great fish, the people of Nineveh, the vine, the worm and even the east wind) obeyed God's command *except* for the prophet himself. Jonah witnessed them all and yet he was angry with God – so angry that he could die (4:9b). So it will be instructive to look a little bit more at the man, himself.

The first notice of Jonah is 2 Kings 14:25. Such a favorable prophecy's fulfillment would have made Jonah a national hero among the Israelites of the northern kingdom. The word Jonah means "dove;" Amittai means "truth." Thus, Jonah, son of Amittai means "mourning

dove, son of truth." Jesus referred on two different occasions to the sign of Jonah; He speaks of Jonah's experience in the belly of the fish as parallel with His own approaching entombment for three days, and cites the repentance of the Ninevites as a rebuke to the unbelievers of His own generation (Matthew 12:38-41, 16:4; Luke 11:29-32). All we know of him is what's found in 2 Kings 14:15 and this book that bears his name. One has to wonder what happened to Jonah's thinking between 2 Kings and his four-chapter book.

RESPOND

Have you ever been so upset or angry at someone that you lost perspective or direction? Have you experienced such a deep hurt or loss that you were angry at God and even might have felt like dying? Jonah was that angry. And he lost his focus. We can learn from this story of Jonah and take a step back and ask God for guidance and deliverance.

PRAY

"I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live."
Psalm 116: 1-2. "The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome by trouble and sorrow. Then I called on the name of the Lord: Oh Lord, save me!" Psalm 116:3-4.

- D.M.

READ

Jonah 2: 1-10

Psalm 117

REFLECT

This is a prayer of thanksgiving, not a prayer for deliverance. Jonah was quite simply thankful that he had not drowned. He was delivered in a most spectacular way and was overwhelmed that he had escaped almost certain death. Even from inside the fish, Jonah's prayer was heard by God. We can pray anywhere and at any time and God will hear us. Our sin is never too great, our predicament never too difficult, for God.

Jonah said, "When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord" (2:7). Do we oftentimes act the same way? When life is going well, we tend to take God for granted; but when we lose hope, we cry out to Him. This kind of relationship with God can result only in an inconsistent, up-and-down spiritual life. A consistent, daily commitment to God promotes a solid relationship with Him. If we look to God during both the good and bad times we will have a stronger spiritual life.

It is interesting to note several life lessons that we can extract from this little four-chapter book.

Situation: God told Jonah to preach to the Assyrians in Nineveh. Jonah knew that if he preached to them, they would have an opportunity to avoid God's wrath. Jonah hoped to see these enemies punished by God, so he ran away.

Observation: Running away from God can't be done. Jonah discovered that. God's dominion extends everywhere.

Application: Did you ever try to run away from your shadow as a child? You can't run from God either. When God tells you to go

somewhere, listen and follow. Where is God sending you to tell others about Him – to your family, next door, your co-workers? Will you run from God's call?

Exploration: Sovereignty – Job 37:23; 38:1; Revelation 19:16.

RESPOND

Have you ever tried to bargain with God? Johan was not in any position to bargain with God. Instead, he simply thanked God for saving his life. Our challenges and troubles in life should cause us to cling tightly to God, not attempt to bargain our way out of the pain. We can thank and praise God for what He has already done for us, and for His love and mercy.

For Jonah it took a miracle of deliverance to get him to do as God had commanded. As a prophet, Jonah was obligated to obey God's word, but he had tried to escape his responsibilities. At this time, he pledged to keep his vows. Jonah's story began with a tragedy, but a greater tragedy would have happened if God had allowed him to keep running. When you know God wants you to do something, don't run. God may not stop you as He did Jonah.

PRAY

It is incredible what can happen when we call on the Lord. It is imperative that we recognize what He has done in our lives and that we give Him the praise and the glory. "Praise the Lord, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples. For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord." Psalm 117: 1-2.

- D.M.

READ

Jonah 3: 1-10

Psalm 118

REFLECT

We learned in the previous two chapters about Jonah's character. Jonah was called to be a moral leader. But instead of helping, he disobeyed God's specific instructions and made a mess of a situation to which he could have offered a contribution. Leaders are sometimes more destructive to their organization than helpful. The leader who knows God's will but still chooses to run in the opposite direction embarks on a journey of futility.

What can we learn from Jonah that can directly apply to our lives? Certainly Jonah had run away from God, but was given a second chance to participate in God's work. Have you ever felt as though you are disqualified from serving God because of past mistakes? But serving God is not an earned position – no one qualifies for God's service. And yet God still asks us to carry out His work. You may yet have another chance.

The assignment that God had given Jonah was to preach a message of doom to one of the most powerful cities in the world. This was certainly not a particularly desirable assignment. What we learn is that God's word is for everyone and that even the Ninevite people were open to God's message and repented immediately. If we simply proclaim what we know about God, we may be surprised at how many people will, in fact, listen and accept.

RESPOND

How much time elapsed between the fish's vomit and the second commission? Did the second call come on the beach, or did Jonah go to Jerusalem first to atone for his sin?

Situation: Jonah finally obeyed God and preached in Nineveh. The people and their king responded immediately, and God had compassion on them.

Observation: God's words can have a transforming effect on people, causing them to repent from their sins.

Application: If God tells you to speak to others about their actions, take courage. You might be surprised at how many accept your words and repent.

Exploration: Repentance – 2 Kings 22:19; Matthew 3:8; Acts 17:30.

PRAY

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of this perfect day. Thank you for waking us up this morning. And we say joyfully that "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24). And we do rejoice and we freely state that "You are my God, and I will give you thanks; you are my God, and I will exalt you" (Psalm 118:28-29). It is our plea that You will continue to work in our lives and that You will guide us in Your ways, Lord.

- D.M.

READ

Jonah 4: 1-11

Psalm 119

REFLECT

Why was Jonah so mad? Jonah didn't mince words. He wanted the city of Nineveh, the center of the Assyrian empire that had tortured his people for years, destroyed. He was furious when God didn't bring about the destruction that Jonah thought Nineveh so richly deserved. Jonah failed as a prophet because, in the crunch, he abandoned his espoused values and acted on his own sense of what God should do.

What were the reasons for Jonah's anger?

1. Deep-seated prejudice and hatred of Gentiles.
2. Loss of face if his prophecy was unfulfilled.
3. Fear of Israel's rejection as God's people with the coming of Gentiles into that sphere of God's favor.
4. Jealousy.
5. Loss of Israel's territory, which had just been recovered by Jeroboam II, and their prosperity.
6. Inability to return to Israel as a hero (e.g., Saul of Tarsus).
7. Loss of a preaching example to compel Israel into staying faithful.

Whatever the reasons for Jonah's anger, God makes it clear that he was wrong. Jonah failed to match his values with God's values. If he had, he could have celebrated what God was doing in Nineveh rather than sulking in humility outside the city gates.

This chapter tells us about Jonah's priorities: God's desire for Nineveh was fulfilled, but Jonah, God's chosen moral leader, angrily protested. Jonah felt that it was more important to remove the threat that

Nineveh posed to Israel. The point here is simply that when a leader's priorities contradict God's priorities, the leader can look as foolish as Jonah did sitting under his withered plant.

RESPOND

God gives grace to whomever He will, and all leaders need to recognize – as Jonah did – that their power and position are purely a result of God's grace already at work in their lives. Have you ever struggled with not wanting to give God the credit for the successes you've had in your life? Do you feel like you have worked really hard and that your accomplishments are simply the earned reward for your efforts? Giving God the credit doesn't diminish our accomplishments but rather recognizes that all good things come from God.

Jonah resisted God's call to prophesy to the capital city of Israel's archenemy, fearing the city would repent and God would show grace to Nineveh. We can be thankful that God's mercy moves beyond our prejudices and national borders. Do you see any parallels with Nineveh and other cities in countries around the world today?

PRAY

Gentle Father, continue to work in my life. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105). Knowing that You are always with me and that You will never leave me is such a blessing. And I will follow You always and I will attempt to discern Your call on my life and to live in a way that would be pleasing to You.

- D.M.

READ

Matthew 12:38-41

Psalms 120

REFLECT

A number of divine purposes are clearly seen in the book of Jonah. First is the demonstration that God is the God of Gentiles and all peoples, as well as the God of the Jews. Secondly there is the warning to Israel of God's displeasure at their exclusiveness and disregard of other races. Thirdly is the prophesying of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Fourthly is the teaching of the ultimate resurrection of all men from the dead. Finally is the demonstration that there is always an element of contingency in the promises of God, whether of judgment and destruction on the one hand, or grace and salvation on the other.

There are some amazing parallels between Jonah and Jesus that are described very clearly in Matthew 12:38-41.

1. Both were from Galilee; Jonah from Gathhepher, and Jesus from Nazareth.
2. Both were asleep on board a ship at sea in a storm.
3. Both were awakened: Jonah by the captain, Jesus by the apostles.
4. Both were involved with the ship's security: Jonah for danger, and Jesus for safety.
5. Both gave themselves to save others: Jonah for the sailors, Jesus for all men.
6. Both produced a great calm: Jonah by being cast overboard, Jesus by fiat.
7. Both were "alive" after their three days' and three nights' experience.
8. Both converted the Gentiles: Jonah at Nineveh, and Jesus throughout the earth.

RESPOND

Jonah lived nearly 800 years before the birth of Jesus. And yet his story and his life lessons point to the way of our Savior. As we look at the four phases of Jonah's story, he transitioned from the "I won't go", to "I will go" to "I'm here", and finally "I shouldn't have come." These mirror his "Going from God", "Going back to God", "Going with God", and then finally "Going ahead of God." When have you fallen into these four different categories? How did it feel when you were running from God? And how was that different than when you going with God? Are you able to tell when you may be going ahead of God?

It is critical that we have several truth-tellers in our lives who can speak to us in love when they observe us either running away from or going ahead of God. Accountability in our spiritual walk with God is something that we desperately need. Have you sought out an accountability partner to help in this critical area? If you haven't, perhaps you might consider initiating such a contact.

PRAY

Good morning, Father. Thank You for waking me up again this morning. And thank You for being always present in my life. I need You to walk alongside me and to show me the way. The gift of Your precious son, Jesus, is the gift of eternal life with You. His death and resurrection allow us the gift of Your incredible grace and salvation. We know that the tomb is empty and that the cross is empty and that He has risen. And we do not fear death as we have the assurance of our place having been set at your table. It is in the name of Jesus that we pray. Amen.

- Dave McIntire