

**Bible
Teachings
Series**

*A self-study
course on the
book of Jonah*



The Reluctant Prophet

The Reluctant Prophet

A self-study course on
the book of Jonah



Multi-Language Productions

Bringing the Word to the World

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Level 1, Book 7



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Getting Started

This book is about the Prophet Jonah, whose story we read in the Bible in the book of Jonah. It is a book about the Christian life: its ups, its downs and God's help through it all.

Each of the four chapters begins with a list of goals marked by a small star (*). These goals tell you what you will be learning in that chapter. Within each chapter there are some questions for you to answer. At the end of the chapter there is a test.

If you read the lesson carefully, you will be able to answer the questions on the test. If you go back to the beginning of the chapter and check the goals (*), you will see what you learned about those goals in the chapter. After each set of questions and after each chapter test, you will see a page number where you can find the correct answers to those questions. Check each of your answers and correct them, if necessary. Make sure you understand each answer before you read any further.

At the end of the book is a final test. Before you take the test, go back and review the chapter tests. When you complete the final test, you can either turn it in to the person who gave you this book or mail it to the address on the back cover of this book.

At the beginning of each lesson the chapter of the book of Jonah to be discussed is printed out for you to read. The chapters of this study book follow the chapters of the book of Jonah.

May God help you as you learn more about your relationship with God and his Son, Jesus Christ. May God bless your study.



Chapter One

RUNNING AWAY FROM GOD'S MERCY

Jonah Runs Away from the Lord

1 A message from the Lord came to Jonah. He was the son of Amittai. The Lord said, ²"Go to the great city of Nineveh. Preach against it. The sins of its people have come to my attention."

³But Jonah ran away from the Lord. He headed for Tarshish. So he went down to the port of Joppa. There he found a ship that was going to Tarshish. He paid the fare and went on board. Then he sailed for Tarshish. He was running away from the Lord.

⁴But the Lord sent a strong wind over the Mediterranean Sea. A wild storm came up. It was so wild that the ship was in danger of breaking apart. ⁵All of the sailors were afraid. Each one cried out to his own god for help. They threw the ship's

contents into the sea. They were trying to make the ship lighter.

But Jonah had gone below deck. There he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. ⁶The captain went down to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call out to your god for help! Maybe he'll pay attention to what's happening to us. Then we won't die."

⁷The sailors said to one another, "Come. Let's cast lots to find out who is to blame for getting us into all of this trouble." So they did. And Jonah was picked.

⁸They asked him, "What terrible thing have you done to bring all of this trouble on us? Tell us. What do you do for a living? Where do you come from? What is your country? What people do you belong to?"

⁹He answered, "I'm a Hebrew. I worship the Lord. He is the God of heaven. He made the sea and the land."

¹⁰They found out he was running away from the Lord. That's because he had told them. Then they became terrified. So they asked him, "How could you do a thing like that?"

¹¹The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, "What should we do to you to make the sea calm down?"

¹²"Pick me up and throw me into the sea," he replied. "Then it will become calm. I know it's my fault that this terrible storm has come on you."

¹³Instead of doing what he said, the men did their best to row back to land. But they couldn't. The sea got even rougher than before.

¹⁴Then they cried out to the Lord. They prayed, "Lord, please don't let us die for taking this man's life. After all, he might not be guilty of doing anything wrong. So don't hold us accountable for killing him. Lord, you always do what you want to." ¹⁵Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard. And the stormy sea became calm.

¹⁶When the men saw what had happened, they began to have great respect for the Lord. They offered a sacrifice to him. And they made promises to him.

¹⁷But the Lord sent a huge fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights.

Have you ever done something that was wrong? Maybe you were in a place that you knew you should not be, but you did not want to leave. Or maybe you were with a person you knew you should not see, but you did not want to be alone. Or maybe there was a job you needed to do, but you did not want to do that job.

Do you remember the ways you found to get your own way? Did you ignore the voice inside you that said, "This is not right?" Or did you find something to take your attention away from what you knew you had to do?

If any of this sounds familiar, you are not alone. A man named Jonah did the same things. He was a man who tried to run away from God. He tried to ignore a job he needed to do. The first chapter of the book of Jonah tells how he ran away from God, and then it describes the steps God took to bring him back. By the end of this chapter you will know:

- * how Jonah ran away from God;
- * how Jonah hurt others on the way;
- * how Jonah was backed into a corner;
and
- * how Jonah changed his mind with God's help.

Jonah was a prophet, the son of a man named Amittai. He lived in Israel, the nation of the Jews. The Jews were God's people before the birth of Christ. Jonah lived about 750 years before Jesus was born.

While Jonah was growing up, Israel had an enemy, the nation of Assyria. Israel and Assyria were at war for a long time. As you can imagine, Jonah hated Assyria. He probably was very happy when God told him to prophesy that Israel would win a number of battles against Assyria. Jonah's prophecy is mentioned in 2 Kings chapter 14. If you have a Bible, you can read about what it says about Jonah in 2 Kings 14:25 and the following verses.

The book of Jonah probably was written by Jonah himself. The book begins with the Lord giving Jonah a new prophecy. The Lord tells him to go to the great city of Nineveh. He is to tell the people there that the Lord is ready to punish them for their many crimes and wicked ways. Jonah was sure that God only wanted him to warn the people of Nineveh so they would repent and would not receive God's punishment.

But Nineveh was the enemy! The last thing Jonah wanted to do was to warn them about

God's anger. He wanted the Assyrians to suffer. He was glad that God was finally going to destroy their capital city. Now God wanted Jonah to warn them? Jonah said, "No way!" And he fled.

The first thing Jonah did was to run to the docks in the city of Joppa by the sea. There he found a ship sailing to Tarshish. We think this was a city in Spain. From Israel, Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, was about 400 miles or 660 kilometers to the northeast. Spain was 2000 miles or 3300 kilometers to the west. Is it any secret what Jonah was doing? God told him to go east, and Jonah was heading west! Jonah Chapter 1 says he wanted to go to Tarshish to get away from the Lord. You may ask yourself, "Did Jonah really think he could run away from God?" But do we not do the same thing whenever we disagree with what God says? Jonah knew he could not run from God, but he could run as far as possible from where God wanted him to go. When God said, "Go to Assyria," Jonah went to Spain. Where do we

go, for instance, when God tells us to go to church? Do we find another place to go, away from the Lord? Going where God does not want us to be is the same as running away from God, as Jonah did.

1. Jonah was a _____ in Israel.
2. Jonah hated _____, Israel's enemy.
3. _____ asked Jonah to go to Nineveh.
4. Jonah was to warn Nineveh that God would _____ their city.
5. Jonah found a _____ going to Spain.
6. Jonah was running from _____, since he was _____ from what God asked him to do.

(Check your answers on the bottom of page 18)



*The father hugged his son, forgave him,
and welcomed him home.*

Once the ship sailed away from Joppa, Jonah thought he was safe. He thought God could not expect him to go to Nineveh now. After all, he was headed for Spain. Jonah was saying, "Sorry, Lord, I have other plans right now." God, however, had his own plans to bring Jonah back.

Maybe you have heard of the story of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, or the Lost Son. These parables are written in Luke Chapter 15. Each of them is a story Jesus told during his life on earth. They all show how God wants to bring back those who get lost, even when it is their own fault. God knows we cannot live without him, even though television and books often tell us we can. When God sees one of his children getting lost, he works to bring him back. He is like a loving parent who rushes to grab his child before the child runs into a dangerous and busy street. In our study it is Jonah who is running into the street, and God is going to grab him.

The first thing God does is to send a storm on the sea. This storm was so bad that the men sailing the ship thought their ship would be destroyed. Jonah did not care. He was happy to be away from the work God had given him. In fact, Jonah went below deck and went to sleep during the storm.

The sailors came and woke up Jonah. They wanted him to pray and ask God to save them. The sailors were scared. They started to cast lots, or to roll dice, like fortune-tellers, to find out who might be causing God to send the storm. God stepped in at this point and made it clear the storm was Jonah's fault.

The sailors grabbed Jonah and made him answer some questions. Who are you? Where are you from? What do you do for a living? Why is this happening? Jonah told them everything: that he was from Israel, that he was a prophet and a believer in the Lord.

Jonah also tells them he is running from the most high God, "He is the God of heaven. He made the sea and the land" (Jonah 1:9). When the sailors learned that Jonah was running away from God, they became even more scared.

7. The Lord sent a _____ onto the sea.
8. The sailors were afraid their _____ would be destroyed.
9. Jonah went below deck to _____.
10. The sailors threw _____ and found out Jonah was at fault.
11. The sailors learned that Jonah was running from _____.
12. When the sailors learned that Jonah was running away from God, they became even more _____.

(Check your answers on the bottom of page 18)

The sailors did not know what to do. They asked Jonah, the prophet, "What should we do to you to make the sea calm down?" (Jonah 1:11). Jonah told them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then it [the sea] will become calm" (Jonah 1:12). Jonah knew he had failed in his attempt to run away from God. He felt guilty about putting all those people in danger.

Have you ever caused other people harm by your reckless actions? Have you later felt bad about hurting people? Jonah was feeling bad that he had caused the sailors to be in danger. He wanted the sailors to throw him into the stormy sea.

The sailors were sure that Jonah would die if they threw him into the water. They did not want to kill a prophet of the God who sent this storm! They prayed harder. They tried to row the ship back towards shore. Nothing worked. In fact, the storm grew worse.

Finally, the sailors gave in to Jonah's advice. They called out to God, begging him not to hold them responsible for Jonah's death. Then they threw Jonah into the sea. And the storm stopped. The sea became calm.

God was still in control. Jonah was not dead.

At just the right time, God sent a large fish to swallow Jonah without harming him. Jonah would remain in the belly, or stomach, of the fish for three days.

The men were still scared. They had seen the awesome power of the Lord God. They had thrown his prophet into the sea. So they made promises to God and offered a sacrifice to him to make sure he was not angry with them. The storm was over. The ship and its crew were safe. The sailors most likely returned to Joppa and told everyone they saw what had happened.

13. Jonah told the men to _____
him into the sea.
14. The men did not want to kill a prophet of
the _____.
15. When the storm got worse, the men threw
_____ into the sea.
16. The Lord sent a large _____ to
swallow Jonah.
17. In this way, Jonah did not
_____, but lived in the belly of
the fish for _____ days.

(Check your answers on the bottom of page 18)

Review of Chapter 1

In this first chapter of Jonah, we have seen Jonah run away from the work the Lord had given him. We saw how Jonah put a crew of sailors in danger. We saw how God found Jonah and challenged his actions. And we saw Jonah take responsibility for what he had done, by telling the sailors to throw him into the sea. Finally, we saw how God protected Jonah by sending a large fish to swallow him and keep him alive and safe for three days.

Before you read further in our study of Jonah, take some time to think about these questions.

Thought questions:

1. Can you remember a time when you ran away from God by going somewhere you knew you should not be? Many of us run away from God by not reading and studying his Word, as we should.

2. If you were able to recall a time when you ran away from God, do you remember how your actions harmed other people or put them in danger? Have your actions hurt some people, maybe your children or a spouse or a girlfriend or boyfriend?

3. Can you see where and how God has come to you so you will return to him? God comes to us so we will repent. He wants us to take responsibility for our actions, confess our wrongdoings and crimes to him, and receive his mercy.

That is what the book of Jonah, and our lives, are really all about. We live under God's mercy. We are showered with it! But when we run away from God, we push aside all that mercy. God does not want that to happen. He finds us and does whatever it takes to bring us back into his mercy. Keep this thought in mind as

Answers to questions within Chapter One:

1. prophet; 2. Assyria; 3. God; 4. destroy; 5. ship; 6. God, running.
7. storm (or wind); 8. ship; 9. sleep; 10. dice (or lots); 11. God;
12. scared; 13. throw; 14. Lord; 15. Jonah; 16. fish; 17. die, three.

you study the book of Jonah: God always tries to bring us back into his mercy.

Now let us review what we have learned in Chapter 1. The following is the test for Chapter 1. Before you take this test, go back and review the questions and your answers for each of the section reviews in this chapter. Be sure you understand each answer. Then take the Chapter 1 test.

Test on Chapter 1

(Circle the best answer)

1. Jonah was:
 - a. a prophet.
 - b. from Israel.
 - c. told to go to Nineveh.
 - d. all of the above.

2. Jonah ran away from:
 - a. Joppa.
 - b. the Lord.
 - c. the sailors.

3. To find out who was to blame for the storm, the sailors:
 - a. took a vote.
 - b. asked the captain.
 - c. threw dice, or cast lots.

4. Jonah knew that the storm came because of:
 - a. his running from God.
 - b. a natural occurrence.
 - c. caused by global warming.

5. When the sailors threw Jonah into the sea:
 - a. God became very angry.
 - b. Jonah died instantly.
 - c. a large fish destroyed the ship.
 - d. none of the above.

6. Jonah was inside the belly of a fish:
 - a. for three days.
 - b. until the sailors could get help.
 - c. until he suffocated and died.



Chapter Two

RELYING ON GOD'S MERCY

Jonah Prays to the Lord

2 From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God.

²He said,

“When I was in trouble, I called out to you.

And you answered me.

When I had almost drowned,

I called out for help.

And you listened to my cry.

³You threw me into the Mediterranean Sea.

I was in the middle of its waters.

They were all around me.

All of your rolling waves were sweeping over me.

⁴I said, ‘I have been driven away from you.

But I will look again toward your holy temple in Jerusalem.’

⁵I had almost drowned in the waves.
The deep waters were all around me.
Seaweed was wrapped around my head.
⁶I sank down to the bottom of the mountains.
I thought I had died and gone down into the grave forever.
But you brought my life up from the very edge of the pit.
You are the Lord my God.

⁷"When my life was nearly over, I remembered you, Lord.
My prayer rose up to you.
It reached you in your holy temple in heaven.

⁸"Some people worship the worthless statues of their gods.
They turn away from the grace you want to give them.
⁹But I will sacrifice a thank offering to you.
And I will sing a song of thanks.
I will do what I have promised.
Lord, you are the one who saves."

¹⁰The Lord gave the fish a command. And it spit Jonah up onto dry land.

When life becomes difficult, where can you turn? If you are blessed with a loving family, good friends, even children who respect you, then you are blessed indeed! You have someone to turn to when times are bad or when things do not go the way you want them to go. But what if you do not have a family? What if you have no friends nearby? What if

you were in a boat on the ocean, fell overboard, disappeared beneath the waves, and people thought you were dead? THEN where would you turn for help?

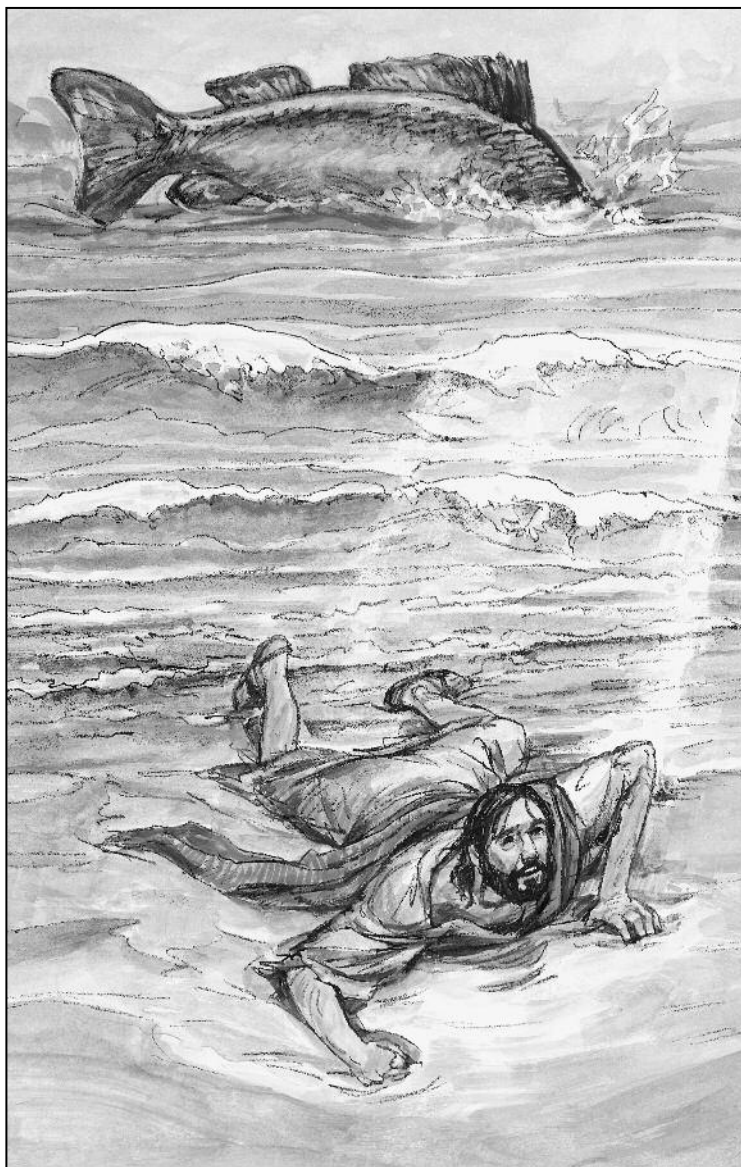
Chapter 2 of this study tells us where Jonah turned when all of this and more happened to him. Think about Chapter 1. After running away from the work he needed to do, after running away from God, after causing a horrible storm and putting the crew of a ship in danger, after recognizing his wrongdoing, after being tossed into a raging sea, after being swallowed by a huge fish, Jonah was at the bottom of life. He may have wished he were dead. The sailors thought he was dead. But Jonah was not dead. God rescued Jonah in a miraculous way by sending a fish that saved him from drowning. Now Jonah could cry out for help. But to whom should he cry? In this chapter, you will discover:

- * how Jonah could face his troubles;

- * how Jonah could praise and thank God at the worst of times;
- * how God comes to us wherever we are; and
- * that being confined can mean being alive and safe.

Jonah knew he was not innocent. He knew he had run away from God. He ran away from the work God gave him to do. He ran away from God's mercy and love. Now, inside the fish, Jonah knew it was God who saved him from the raging sea by sending the fish to swallow him. Jonah was touched by the mercy of God. Jonah had run away, and God had come after him to rescue him. Now, Jonah was ready to cry out to God for help.

Look closely at the words in chapter two of Jonah's book. Except for the first and last verses, the second chapter of Jonah is a song. It is the prayer that Jonah prayed from inside of



God saved Jonah and told him to go to Nineveh.

the fish. He addresses his prayer to "the Lord his God." He sings of his trouble, of being tossed by the sea, of being sure he would drown. As he sings his prayer, he calls to God. He sings of God's mercy, telling how God answered his prayer by sending the fish. Jonah says that when he was under water, he thought God was punishing him for his wrongdoing. But then the fish came to rescue him, and he knew that God still loved him.

Jonah was amazed by God's mercy. He says that as soon as he prayed, his prayer went straight to God himself. God heard his prayer and answered it.

1. Chapter 2 of the book of Jonah is a _____.
2. Jonah knows that running away from God was _____.
3. Even though Jonah had run away, God still _____ his prayer.

4. When Jonah was at the bottom of life, God _____ him.

5. Jonah's prayer went straight to _____.

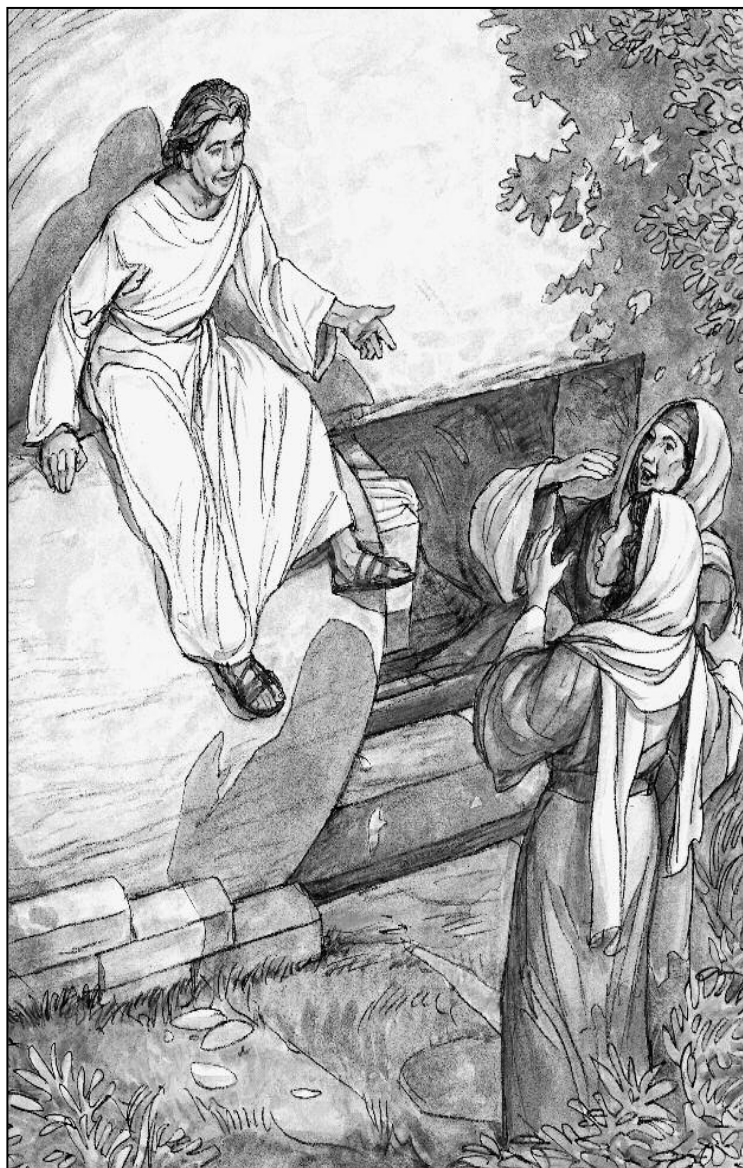
(Check your answers on the bottom of page 32)

Jonah's song is good for us to read and study. It reminds us that even when we do not love God very much, even when we run away from him, God still hears our prayers. No matter where we are, God hears and answers our prayers. God is so merciful and loving that he forgives our sins and rescues us from our troubles. Like Jonah, our worst trouble is sin. Sin is whatever we do that is wrong. When we do what we know we should not do, we sin. When we go where we know we should not go, we sin. When we are with people we know we should not be with, we sin. When we run away from God and the things he wants us to do, we sin. All these are sin. There is nothing we can do about sin. We are helpless fighting against it by ourselves. We cannot seem to stop sinning. We cannot make up for our sins because

selfishness and sin spoil everything we do. The harder we try to fix or cover up our sins, the worse we do. And if we do not try at all, we still end up sinning. It all sounds hopeless. We are like Jonah under water in a raging sea.

Jonah discovered how wonderful it is that God is merciful. Jonah learned that God would save him even from his worst trouble—sin. God has saved both Jonah and us, by sending his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. Jesus took the blame for all the sins Jonah ever committed. Jesus took the blame for all the sins we ever commit, as well as all the sins done by people in the whole world. He was punished for all those sins. Instead of God punishing us for our sins, he punished Jesus. In fact, Jesus *died* to pay for all our sins. God was so pleased with Jesus' payment that he raised Jesus from the dead to prove Jesus really had saved the world from all its sins.

Now those sins are paid for. Our sins can no longer make us guilty before God. Like a judge



An angel tells the women that Jesus is alive and his grave is empty.

in court, God has declared every one of us INNOCENT of every sin we ever committed because Jesus already paid the penalty for them. Jonah praised God for being the one who rescues us from our sins. When he called out to God, God heard him. Even though Jonah sinned by running away, he repented, and God rescued him. That is why Jonah's prayer is filled with praise for God.

In the last part of his song, Jonah sings about how the Lord is the only God. When people pray to other gods, they are praying to worthless idols. And they give up or run away from God's grace.

But not Jonah! He sings to God a song of thanks and he promises never again to run away from God. Even in the fish's belly, Jonah praised God for saving him.

God indeed came to Jonah's rescue! God had the fish spit Jonah up onto the shore alive and well.

6. Like us, Jonah's worst trouble was _____.
7. Sin is anything we do that is _____.
8. Left to ourselves we are _____
against sin.
9. God sent his Son, _____
_____, to save us from sin.
10. Jesus saved us by taking the
_____ for our sins.
11. Jesus paid for our sins by _____
for them.
12. Jonah thanked God for saving him, even
though he was inside the _____.
13. God told the fish to _____
Jonah out onto the _____.

(Check your answers on page 32)

It is easy to run away from God's mercy. It is all too easy to sin! It takes courage to admit that we have sinned.

Without Jesus, we would be lost. But God wants to find us and save us. He comes to us wherever we are to rescue us. We can be as sure as Jonah was about God's mercy. We can pray as boldly as Jonah did, trusting in Jesus.

Review the section reviews in this chapter to prepare for the Chapter 2 test that follows.

Test on Chapter 2

(Circle the best answer)

1. Inside the fish's belly, Jonah:
a. cried. b. slept. c. sang or prayed.
2. Jonah prayed to God for:
a. rescue. b. food. c. the sailors to return.
3. Jonah's worst trouble was:
a. the sea. b. the fish. c. sin.

Answers to questions within Chapter Two:

1. song or prayer; 2. wrong; 3. heard; 4. saved; 5. God; 6. sin;
7. wrong; 8. helpless; 9. Jesus Christ; 10. punishment; 11. dying;
12. fish; 13. spit, shore.

4. God rescued Jonah from his sin by sending
 - a. prophets.
 - b. his Son, Jesus.
 - c. food and water.

5. Jesus paid for the sins of:
 - a. Jonah.
 - b. us.
 - c. the Jews.
 - d. all of the above.

6. Knowing that Jesus died to save us from our sins means:
 - a. we can pray to God to rescue us as surely as Jonah prayed.
 - b. we can go out and sin all we want.
 - c. God will get us out of a prison immediately.

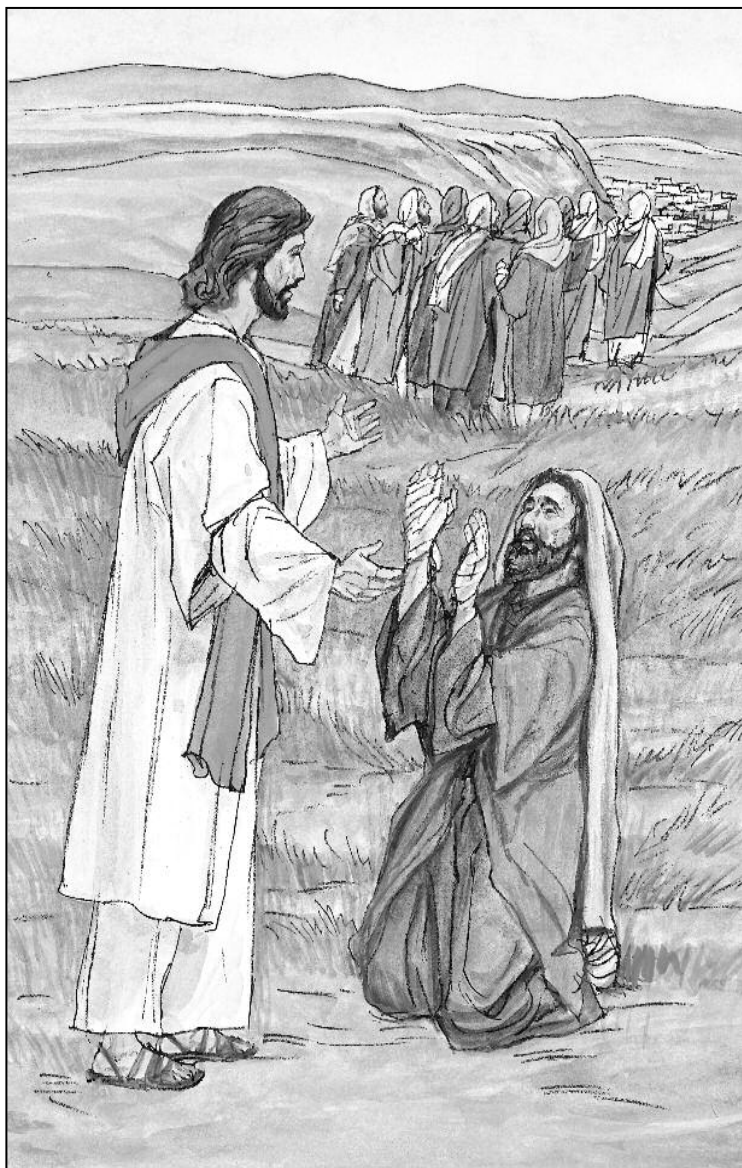
7. Jonah said that anyone who prays to false gods gives up:
 - a. his rights.
 - b. God's mercy.
 - c. his good times.

8. God heard Jonah's:
 - a. whining.
 - b. splashing.
 - c. prayer.

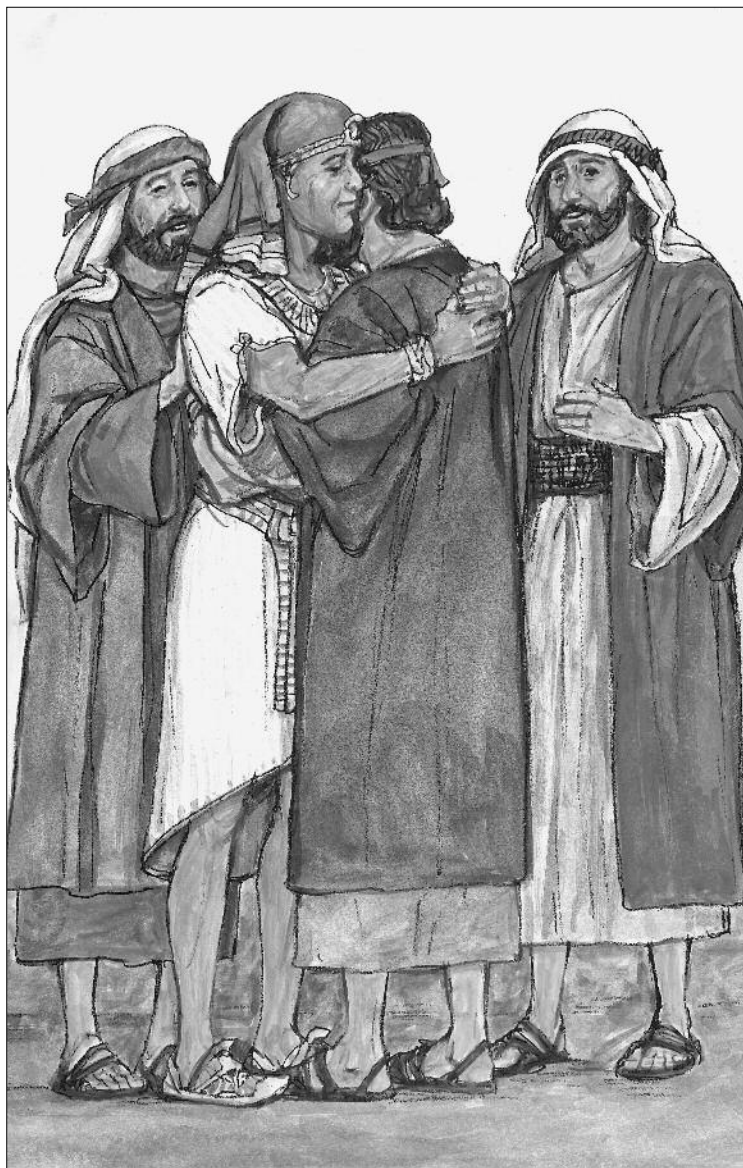
9. God told the fish to:
- a. eat Jonah. b. spit Jonah onto shore.
 - c. return Jonah to the ship.

(Check your answers on page 69)

Before you go on to Chapter 3, take a few minutes to consider what you have learned from Jonah's prayer. Can you remember a time when you were at your worst, as far away from God as you thought you could be, and God still found you? Do you think God hears your prayers today? Do you understand that Jesus paid for every one of your sins? Do you know that because your sins are paid for, you can go to heaven when you die? Have you thanked God for his wonderful gift of mercy?



One man came back to thank Jesus.



Joseph hugged his brothers and forgave them.



Chapter Three

RETURNING TO GOD'S MERCY

Jonah Goes to Nineveh

³ A message came to Jonah from the Lord a second time. He said, ²"Go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce to its people the message I give you."

³ Jonah obeyed the Lord. He went to Nineveh. It was a very important city. In fact, it took about three days to see all of it.

⁴ On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He announced, "In 40 days Nineveh will be destroyed."

⁵ The people of Nineveh believed God's warning. They decided not to eat any food for a while. All of them put on black clothes. That's what everyone from the least important of them to the most important did.

⁶ The news reached the king of Nineveh. He got up from his throne. He took his royal robes off and dressed himself in

black clothes. He sat down in the dust. ⁷Then he sent out a message to the people of Nineveh. He said,

"I and my nobles give this order.

"Don't let any person or animal taste anything. That includes your herds and flocks. People and animals must not eat or drink anything. ⁸Let people and animals alike be covered with black cloth. All of you must call out to God with all your hearts. Stop doing what is evil. Don't harm others. ⁹Who knows? God might take pity on us. He might turn away from his burning anger. Then we won't die."

¹⁰God saw what they did. They stopped doing what was evil. So he took pity on them. He didn't destroy them as he had said he would.

It looks like Jonah is back where he started. God gave him work to do. He ran away from that work. God found him. Jonah repented of his sin and called on God to rescue him. God rescued him and returned him to land. If you were Jonah, what would you be thinking right now?

If you are like most people, part of you would think, "Well, God, thank you very much for saving me from death. I am not expected to do the work you wanted me to do, am I?"

It is true. Often, even though we are glad to have God around to save us, we still do not like to obey him as we should. We still do not want to give up the things we like in order to love God better. Sometimes we slip back into our old ways.

But if we truly come to know God's mercy, we will want to live our lives as God wants us to. Jesus died to make us new people. He died to take our sins away and to help us live the right way, with God's love and mercy all around us.

Jonah had every reason to love God for his mercy and obey God's will. Chapter 3 of Jonah tells us how Jonah did the work God gave him, even though he did not want to. By the end of this chapter, you will see how Jonah:

- * returns to God and trusts God's mercy;
- * does what is right, even though he does not want to; and
- * sees God's mercy in action.

You will also see how to trust in God in your own life.

You remember that in Chapter 1 of the book of Jonah, God asked Jonah to warn the Assyrians that their capital city would be destroyed if they did not stop sinning. Jonah did not want to go because the Assyrians were Israel's enemy. Jonah wanted Nineveh to be punished!

Now God tells Jonah again to go to Nineveh. God had just rescued Jonah. Jonah was sorry for his sin and turned back to God. Jonah had learned to love God's mercy.

It was time now for Jonah to put aside his hatred for the Assyrians and to obey the Lord. Even though Jonah did not want to, he does what God asks. In Jonah 3:2 and 3 the Lord says, "'Go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce to its people the message I give you.' Jonah obeyed the LORD. He went to Nineveh."

The Bible tells us Nineveh was so large it took three days to see it all. Maybe you have heard that said about some city you know or some other place: "It takes three days to see it all." That is how large Nineveh was. Later in the book of Jonah we are told that more than 120,000 people lived in Nineveh.

Jonah walked around Nineveh and preached the message God had given him (Jonah 3:4): "in forty days Nineveh will be destroyed."

1. The Lord again told Jonah to _____.
_____. (Three words)
2. Jonah was sorry for his _____.
3. Jonah _____ went to Nineveh.
4. Nineveh was so big; it took _____
days to see it all.
5. Jonah preached that in forty days Nineveh
would be _____.

(Check your answers on the bottom of page 44)

As soon as Jonah preached God's warning to the people of Nineveh, something amazing happened! The people of the city became afraid. They knew they had not obeyed God. Much like Jonah, they were sorry for their sins. They decided to beg God for mercy. The Bible says they fasted, which means they went without food for a while. Fasting shows how sorry they were about their sins. They all dressed in black cloth, the scratchy cloth used in making sacks. The people of Nineveh wore this instead of ordinary clothes. They were willing to punish themselves to show God they were sorry for their sins.

The king of Nineveh did the same thing. He put on black sackcloth and sat in ashes or dust. Sitting in ashes or dust is the same as acting like a dead man. The king was so sorry for his sins that he acted as if he deserved to die. Then the king made a new law. He said that the people and animals of the city could not eat or drink anything. They had to call out to God and beg for mercy. And they had to stop

sinning and start living right. "Who knows?" the king said in Jonah 3:9, "God might take pity on us. He might turn away from his burning anger. Then we won't die."

After that, Jonah watched God's mercy unfold for his enemies. As soon as the people of Nineveh turned to God, God saw what they did. God had mercy on the people of Nineveh and did not destroy the city. Just as God had mercy on Jonah in Chapter 2, now he had mercy on the whole city of Nineveh.

6. As soon as Jonah warned Nineveh, the people were _____.
7. The people were _____ for their sins.
8. Everyone in the city dressed in _____.
9. The king ordered everyone to stop _____ and _____.

10. God saw what the people did and had _____ on them.

11. Jonah saw God's mercy, and that God did not _____ the city.

(Check your answers on the bottom of page 44)

In this chapter of Jonah, we saw Jonah turn back to God and do what he wanted. We saw the city of Nineveh turn to God also. And we saw God have mercy on the city of Nineveh just as he did for Jonah. God has mercy on sinners, like Jonah, like Nineveh, and like you and me. Anytime we turn to God for mercy, we will find it. God always has mercy on those who turn to him in need. He did it for Jonah. He did it for Nineveh. He does it for you and me.

Now review the section review questions in this chapter to prepare for the Chapter 3 Test.

Answers to questions within Chapter Three:

1. go to Nineveh; 2. sin; 3. immediately; 4. three; 5. destroyed;
6. afraid; 7. sorry; 8. sackcloth or black cloth; 9. eating, drinking;
10. mercy; 11. destroy.

Test on Chapter 3

(Circle the best answer)

1. As soon as he rescued Jonah, God:
 - a. made Jonah promise to apologize to the sailors.
 - b. told him again to go to Nineveh.
 - c. let Jonah go home and relax.

2. Jonah _____ Nineveh.
 - a. immediately went to.
 - b. refused to go to.
 - c. cursed.

3. Jonah warned Nineveh they would be _____ in forty days.
 - a. forgiven.
 - b. destroyed.
 - c. invaded.

4. The people of Nineveh:
 - a. laughed at Jonah.
 - b. left the city immediately.
 - c. immediately turned to God.

5. The king of Nineveh made a law that the city must:
 - a. turn from its wicked ways.
 - b. stop eating or drinking.
 - c. call out to God and beg for mercy.
 - d. all of the above.

6. When God saw what the people did, he:
 - a. destroyed the city.
 - b. sent Jonah home.
 - c. had mercy and did not destroy them.

7. God had mercy on:
 - a. Jonah only.
 - b. Nineveh only.
 - c. both Jonah and Nineveh.

(Check your answers on page 69)

Sometimes it is hard to do what we know God wants us to do. Sometimes we have to give up what we want in order to do what God wants. Jonah had to give up what he wanted (Nineveh to be destroyed) in order to do God's will (to warn Nineveh). God promises to bless us when we do his will. Even when we make mistakes, as Jonah did, God has mercy on his children. God remembers the punishment his Son, Jesus, took on himself for our sins, and he has mercy on us. If there is one thing God wants us to know about him, it is that he has mercy on sinners. You could even say that Mercy is God's middle name. In fact, God says exactly that in Exodus 34:6,7 where he reveals his name to Moses. God has mercy on sinners. That is a good way to sum up everything God tells us about himself. He has mercy on sinners like you and me.



Jesus loves us and promises to take care of us.



Chapter Four

SELFISHNESS AND GOD'S MERCY

The Lord Shows Concern for Nineveh

4 But Jonah was very upset. He became angry. ²He prayed to the Lord and said, "Lord, isn't this exactly what I thought would happen when I was still at home? That's why I was so quick to run away to Tarshish. I knew that you are gracious. You are tender and kind. You are slow to get angry. You are full of love. You are a God who takes pity on people. You don't want to destroy them. ³Lord, take away my life. I'd rather die than live."

⁴But the Lord replied, "Do you have any right to be angry?"

⁵Jonah left the city. He sat down at a place east of it. There he put some branches over his head. He sat in their shade. He waited to see what would happen to the city.

⁶Then the Lord God sent a vine and made it grow up over Jonah. It gave him more shade for his head. It made him more comfortable. Jonah was very happy he had the vine.

⁷But before sunrise the next day, God sent a worm. It chewed the vine so much that it dried up.

⁸When the sun rose, God sent a burning east wind. The sun beat down on Jonah's head. It made him very weak. He wanted to die. So he said, "I'd rather die than live."

⁹But God said to Jonah, "Do you have any right to be angry about what happened to the vine?"

"I do," he said. "In fact, I'm angry enough to die."

¹⁰But the Lord said, "You have been concerned about this vine. But you did not take care of it. You did not make it grow. It grew up in one night and died the next. ¹¹Nineveh has more than 120,000 people. They can't tell right from wrong. Nineveh also has a lot of cattle. So shouldn't I show concern for that great city?"

What do you do when you do not get what you want? When God does not act the way you think he should, do you get angry? When things do not go your way, do you sometimes think God is unfair?

If you are a human being, you probably do get angry. We all do. But are we right? Should we be angry? Is God sometimes unfair?

Though it is hard to believe sometimes, the simple answer is, NO. God is never unfair, and God is never wrong. In fact, if we could understand what God understands, we would see that everything God does is done out of love. God is merciful. Everything he does is for our good and the good of his kingdom.

So when we are angry with God, we probably are not remembering God's mercy. We are being controlled by our own feelings. That is called "self-centeredness," the feeling that things should go OUR way, or that we should get what WE want. So even when God is being very merciful, we get angry with him. Jonah was no different. Jonah was human, a sinner. Jonah was selfish and self-centered like the rest of us. In this chapter, we will see Jonah getting angry at God. He thinks that God is unfair because God is merciful! Jonah lets self-centeredness get in the way of his love for God and his thanks for God's mercy. Keep in mind everything that has happened so far in the story of Jonah as you read this chapter. By the end of the chapter, you will see:

- * Jonah's anger at God for God's mercy;
- * Jonah's self-centered wants; and
- * how God remains merciful to Jonah and Nineveh.

Chapter 3 of the book of Jonah ended by telling us that God had mercy on Nineveh and did not destroy the city. The first words of Jonah Chapter 4 are: "Jonah was very upset. He became angry."

Remember that Jonah was from Israel. He hated the Assyrians because the Assyrians were at war with Israel. God asked Jonah to go to Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria, to warn them about God's anger. God wanted the people of Nineveh to turn from their wicked ways so they could live and not be destroyed by God's anger. But Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh. He hated the Assyrians so much he wanted God to destroy them because they were enemies of Israel. Jonah hated the

Assyrians so much that he even ran away from the work God gave him. Chapters 1 and 2 of Jonah told you what happened next.

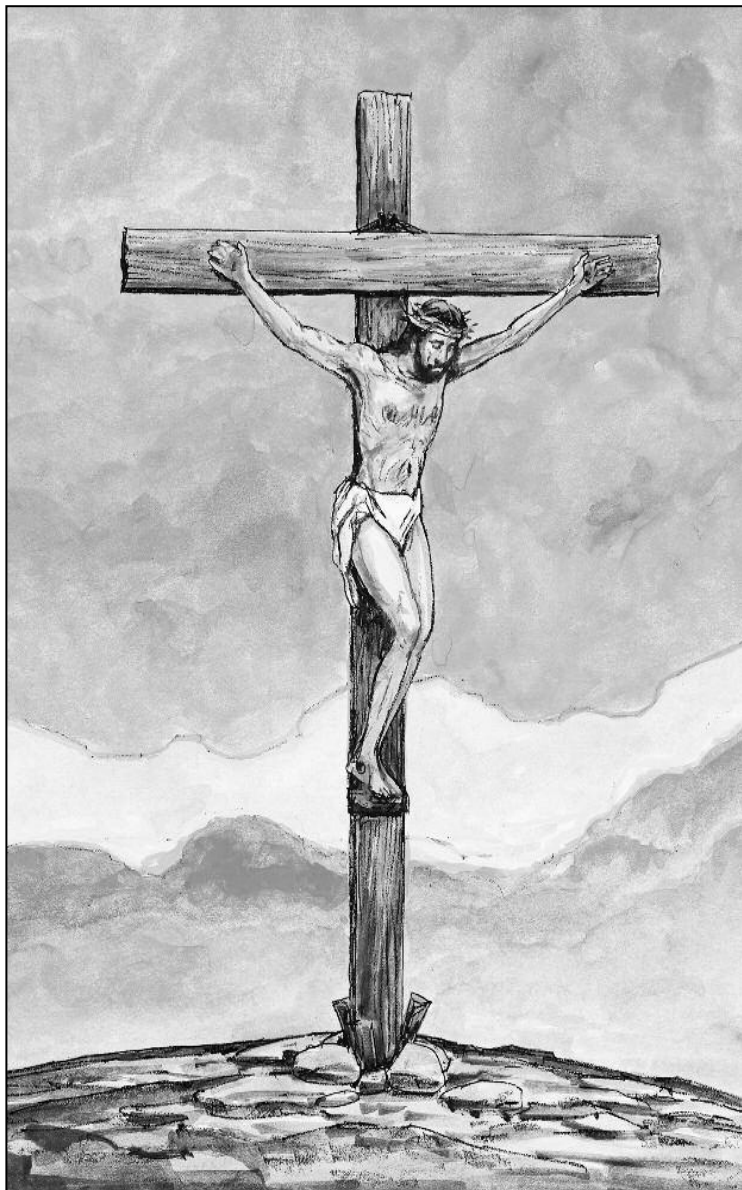
Jonah did not want to warn the people of Nineveh because, as he tells us in Chapter 4, he was sure that God would forgive them when they repented. He hated to think that the Lord would have mercy on this enemy and not destroy them. That is what he tells God. In fact, Jonah is so upset that he asks God to take his life. He does not want to live in a world where God is merciful to Israel's (and Jonah's) enemies. Jonah is angry with God because God is merciful!

Jonah is no different from the rest of us. Jesus once said, "Love your enemies; pray for them." It is difficult to hear God telling us to bless and show mercy to our enemies. We think they do not deserve it. But the truth is, NONE OF US deserves God's mercy! That is why it is called mercy! God's mercy is never deserved. All of us have sinned against God and lost his

approval. It is only because God is merciful that he sent his Son to die for our sins and to bring us his forgiveness. Without Jesus, no one could be saved. Jonah forgot that. How quickly he forgot his own need for God's mercy after he foolishly had stirred up God's anger! And so soon after God had been merciful to him!

1. When God did not destroy Nineveh, Jonah became _____.
2. Jonah knew God would have _____ on Nineveh.
3. Jonah was so angry, he wanted to _____.
4. Jonah forgot that no one _____ God's mercy.
5. Not long before this, Jonah had been _____ from death by God.

(Check your answers on the bottom of page 62)



Jesus suffered and died for the sins of all people.

Almost in one breath, Jonah thanks God for saving him and yells at God for saving the people of Nineveh. God asks Jonah, "Do you have any right to be angry?" (Jonah 4:4).

Jonah does not answer God's question. Instead he silently leaves the city and sits nearby to see what will happen. He builds a little shelter for himself. Jonah is going to sit like a judge and watch the city. He is going to wait for God to change his mind. Jonah is waiting for God to destroy his enemies.

But God does not destroy the city. Instead, to show his great mercy to Jonah again, God causes a large, leafy plant to grow up next to Jonah. The plant covers the small shelter Jonah had built and gives him shade from the hot sun. The Bible says, "Jonah was very happy he had the vine" (Jonah 4:6). So Jonah waited.

The next morning, God sent a worm to chew on the vine and kill it. As soon as the plant

died, the sun rose, and God sent a hot wind to blow on Jonah. When God removed his mercy by doing these things, Jonah became very upset and angry again. Again he tells God he wants to die.

God again asks, "Do you have any right to be angry about what happened to the vine?" (Jonah 4:9). This time Jonah answers, "I do. In fact, I'm angry enough to die."

Jonah was so concerned about himself. He needed and wanted all of God's mercy, but only for himself, not for his enemies. He didn't want to live if God was going to withhold some mercy from him while giving mercy to the Assyrians. He thinks God is unfair.

The problem here is not with God. The problem is with Jonah. God loves to show his mercy. God IS mercy! And the mercy God provides because of Jesus our Savior is always fair! Jonah wants God to be unmerciful or, at least, to be less generous with his mercy. That really

would be unfair because it would ignore what God has done through Jesus to save all people.

God has this in mind when he says to Jonah, "You have been concerned about this vine. But you did not take care of it. You did not make it grow. It grew up in one night and died the next" (Jonah 4:10).

The plant's life was a gift from God. But it was nothing compared to Nineveh and all of the lives in that city. "Yet, you feel sorry for this plant." This is serious business. Jonah is in danger of running away from God again. All this happens because he does not want God to love the Assyrians.

6. Jonah went outside the city to wait for God to _____ it.
7. God made a _____ grow up beside Jonah to shade him.

8. Jonah was _____
about the plant. (Two words)
9. God sent a _____ to kill the plant.
10. Jonah was so angry he wanted to _____.
11. God asks Jonah, "Do you have any right to
be _____?"
12. God shows that Jonah is only concerned
about _____.

(Check your answers on the bottom of page 62)

Will God stay merciful and generous with his mercy? Of course he will. Even though Jonah is so forgetful and selfish and angry, God still loves Jonah. And God still loves Nineveh. God can love the whole world, even though the people of the world cannot love each other or get along with each other.

The book of Jonah ends with God reminding Jonah how concerned Jonah was over the vine, which was purely a gift from God. God then says, "Nineveh has more than 120,000 people. They can't tell right from wrong. Nineveh also has a lot of cattle. So shouldn't I show concern for that great city?" (Jonah 4:11). God is merciful, and stays merciful, to all those people, including Jonah.

God is always merciful. For Jonah to be angry at God's mercy toward everyone is a big mistake, because he is asking God not to be God! When we let our own sinful, selfish thinking get in the way of thanking God for his mercy, we have a problem. When we get angry with God or think that he is unfair, we have a problem. We need to tell God we are sorry for thinking that way. We need to remember how merciful God has been to us. Then we will live to thank God for all his mercy.

It can be hard to remember, but God is always merciful. We thank God for his mercy and the

gift of his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus came to take away our sins by dying in our place.

We will want to tell that good news to as many people as we can, even our enemies! God wants to be merciful to them, too. As God's children, we want to talk about his love. God lets us be his messengers! By remembering the mercy God has for us and for all people, we will have plenty to talk about. We will be excited to share God's gift of life and heaven.

13. God is always _____.

14. God felt sorry for the 120,000 _____ in Nineveh.

15. God reminded Jonah that God wants to have mercy on _____.

(Check your answers on the bottom of page 62)

We are not told what Jonah said to God after this. The book of Jonah ends with God's words of love and mercy for Nineveh. The fact that

this book is in the Bible tells us that God will be merciful no matter what we think or do. That is really the lesson we learn here.

We can run away from God's mercy, and God comes to find us. We can return to God's mercy, and God blesses us. We can live in thanks for God's mercy and show his mercy to others. We can even be angry at God's mercy and think only about ourselves; but God will always be merciful. God IS mercy. May we always treasure that fact.

Now that you have finished the book of Jonah, you have only to take the test on Chapter 4, before studying for the final test. Be sure to review the section review questions in this chapter to prepare for the test. Make sure you understand each answer. After the test, study carefully all the chapter tests to prepare for the final test.

Answers to questions within Chapter Four:

1. angry; 2. mercy; 3. die; 4. deserves; 5. rescued (or saved);
6. destroy; 7. plant or vine; 8. very happy; 9. worm; 10. die; 11. angry;
12. himself; 13. merciful; 14. people; 15. everyone.

Test on Chapter 4

(Circle the best answer)

1. When God did not destroy Nineveh, Jonah:
a. cheered. b. was angry. c. went home.
2. Jonah was so angry, he wanted to:
a. die. b. start a war. c. kill the Ninevites.
3. Jonah left the city and:
a. sailed for Israel on the same ship he took before.
b. built a church to praise God for his mercy.
c. built a shelter and waited for God to destroy Nineveh.
4. God made a plant or vine grow up:
a. beside Jonah to give him shade.
b. in the middle of the city of Nineveh.
c. which Jonah climbed up into the clouds.
5. God sent a worm:
a. to entertain Jonah.
b. to kill the plant.
c. to yell at Jonah for being selfish.

6. God asked Jonah:
 - a. "Do you have a right to be angry?"
 - b. "How could you have run away from me?"
 - c. "Would you like to go to another city and preach?"

7. Jonah was concerned about a plant that:
 - a. grew up overnight and died overnight.
 - b. fed 120,000 people with its fruit.
 - c. Jonah had cut down.

8. God wants to:
 - a. let us know he is boss.
 - b. make Jonah angry.
 - c. have mercy on everyone.

9. Jonah forgot:
 - a. to tell the city of Nineveh about God.
 - b. how merciful God had been to him.
 - c. where he was going when he left Nineveh.

10. God is always:
 - a. angry.
 - b. unfair.
 - c. merciful.

(Check your answers on page 69)



Glossary

(A list of words you may not know)

addresses	directs a prayer towards someone
amaze	to be filled with great surprise or wonder
approval	the act of agreeing something is good
Assyria	a great nation that lay to the northeast of Jonah's land
attempt	to try to do something
attention	the act of watching or listening closely
awesome	making people feel amazed and awed
capital	the city where a nation's ruler lives
commit	to do something wrong
concern	something that is of importance to someone; worry
confine	to keep in a small place
consider	to think about
courage	bravery; able to face danger without fear
crime	an act committed against the law

dangerous	something that causes harm or loss
deck	the floor on a ship
deserve	to be worthy of or suitable for
dice	a small six-sided block with numbers used to play games
dock	a place where ships are loaded
experience	something that happens to a person
familiar	well known; often seen or experienced
fasting	not eating any food
flee (fled)	to run away
grab	to take hold of something with your hand
horrible	very bad
idol	a false god that is worshipped
ignore	to not take notice of; to pay no attention
imagine	to form a picture or idea in your mind
immediately	at once
innocent	not guilty
job	work a person has to do

necessary	needed
Nineveh	the capital city of Assyria
parable	an earthly story with a spiritual or heavenly meaning
penalty	punishment for breaking a law or rule
prophecy	God's message spoken or written through a prophet
prophecy	to speak what God reveals
prophet	a man through whom God spoke or wrote his message
reckless	not caring for danger to oneself
rescue	to save someone from harm or danger
respect	to feel high regard for, to honor
responsible	being blamed if something goes wrong
sackcloth	rough cloth, burlap
sailor	a person who works on ships
sacrifice	to give up something of value
scare	to frighten; to make someone afraid
secret	something hidden

selfish	caring only for yourself and not for others
shore	land along the edge of a body of water
spouse	the opposite person in a marriage; a husband or wife
swallow	to make food or drink go from the mouth to the stomach
wicked	evil, sinful
yell	to shout loudly



Answers to the Chapter Tests

Chapter Test One (Pages 19-20)

1. d. all of the above; 2. b. the Lord; 3. c. threw dice, or cast lots;
4. a. his fault; 5. d. none of the above; 6. a. for three days.

Chapter Test Two (Pages 32-34)

1. c. sang or prayed; 2. a. rescue; 3. c. sin; 4. b. his Son, Jesus;
5. d. all of the above; 6. a. we can pray to God to rescue us as surely as Jonah prayed; 7. b. God's mercy; 8. c. prayer;
9. b. spit Jonah onto shore.

Chapter Test Three (Pages 45-46)

1. b. told him again to go to Nineveh; 2. a. immediately went to;
3. b. destroyed; 4. c. immediately turned back to God;
5. d. all of the above; 6. c. had mercy and did not destroy them;
7. c. both Jonah and Nineveh.

Chapter Test Four (Pages 63-64)

1. b. was angry; 2. a. die; 3. c. built a shelter and waited for God to destroy Nineveh; 4. a. beside Jonah to give him shade;
5. b. to kill the plant; 6. a. "Do you have any right to be angry?"
7. a. grew up overnight and died overnight; 8. c. have mercy on everyone; 9. b. how merciful God had been to him; 10. c. merciful.



Final Test

Congratulations! You have completed your study of the book of Jonah. Go back through the book and review any mistakes you made in the chapter tests. Also review the goals from each chapter. When you are sure you know all the goals, you are ready to take the final test.

Complete the final test without looking at the book. When you are finished, give the test to the person who gave you this book, or mail it to the address on the back cover of this book. You may also ask for more Bible study books in this series.

If you are ready, remove the test from the book and put the book away. Take the test without opening the book.



The Reluctant Prophet

Final Test

Part A *(Fill in the blanks)*

1. Jonah was a prophet and sent from _____.
2. God told Jonah to go to _____ and preach to the people there.
3. Jonah was to warn them that God would _____ their city in 40 days.
4. Jonah did not want to go, so he found a _____ going to Spain and got on board.
5. God sent a _____ onto the sea, and the sailors were afraid their ship would be destroyed.
6. The sailors threw _____ and found out the storm was Jonah's fault.
7. Jonah told the sailors that to save the ship, the sailors would have to _____ Jonah into the sea. The sailors did.
8. God sent a huge _____ to swallow Jonah.

9. Jonah stayed inside the fish for _____ days.

Part B (*Circle the best answer*)

10. Inside the fish, Jonah:
a. slept. b. cried. c. sang or prayed.
11. Jonah's worst trouble was:
a. the sea. b. the fish. c. sin.
12. Jesus paid for the sins of:
a. Jonah. b. us. c. the whole world.
d. all the above.
13. God told the fish to:
a. spit Jonah onto the shore.
b. eat Jonah.
c. swim to Spain.
14. After that, Jonah:
a. found another ship to Spain.
b. went immediately to Nineveh.
c. went straight home.
15. After Jonah preached, the city of Nineveh:
a. was sorry for their sins.
b. held a festival in Jonah's honor.
c. killed Jonah.

16. When God saw how the people turned to him, he:
- a. destroyed them.
 - b. killed Jonah.
 - c. had mercy and did not destroy them.
17. Jonah went outside the city and:
- a. looked for a ride home.
 - b. waited for God to destroy Nineveh.
 - c. found a job to support himself in Nineveh.
18. God sent:
- a. a plant to give Jonah shade.
 - b. a worm to kill the plant.
 - c. both a and b.
19. Jonah had no right to be angry because:
- a. God did everything Jonah wanted.
 - b. God is always merciful and wants to have mercy on everyone.
 - c. Jonah asked for the worm.

Part C *(Circle T or F, for True or False)*

20. T F God IS mercy.
21. T F God IS love.
22. T F God always does what is best for us.
23. T F God always does what we want him to.

24. T F Jonah knew that God would have mercy on Nineveh.
25. T F Jonah was angry at God because God was merciful.
26. T F When Jonah ran from God, other people got hurt.
27. T F Sometimes even prison can be God's way of helping us.
28. T F God says we never have to do anything we do not want to.
29. T F We get angry at God when we think only about ourselves.

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