

JONAH

THE RELUCTANT PROPHET

STUDY ONE

Jonah: The Reluctant Prophet

Selections from Jonah

Though only forty-eight verses, the message of Jonah proves timeless and timely as it speaks not just about Jonah and his life but about us and our lives.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WHEN the Lord first spoke to one of His prophets, that person's life was never the same. Some prophets welcomed the Lord's words. Look how Jeremiah described his experience hearing the voice of the living God:

*"When I discovered your words, I devoured them.
They are my joy and my heart's delight,
for I bear your name,
O LORD God of Heaven's Armies."* (Jeremiah 15:16)

What a privilege and joy to be chosen by God to bear His name as His messenger! But not every prophet thought this way. Even Jeremiah expressed some concern initially (1:6).

Take Jonah, the subject of this new series. God spoke to him more than a hundred years prior to Jeremiah. Yet, when Jonah heard the voice of the living God, he "got up . . . to get away from the LORD" (Jonah 1:3). Unlike Jeremiah, Jonah did not want to bear the divine name before Nineveh. *Would Jonah's reluctance keep the Divine tame?* NO! That reluctant prophet held no sway over our relentless God.

In this series, Pastor Chuck Swindoll will teach us about how God hurled the storm, appointed the fish, gave Jonah a second chance, spared Nineveh, and grew the plant—all so Jonah, along with the rest of the world, might get a glimpse of His glorious ways. We begin this first *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study by overviewing the book, so that our verse-by-verse exploration might be more memorable and enriching.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

First, pause. Simply quiet your heart, and express gratitude to God for His Word, asking that He guide you in this study and bless you through this series. Pray the words below as you posture yourself before the Almighty.

Father, what gratitude I have for the ability to discover Your Word and devour it. It is true food for my soul that always fills me, guides me, comforts me, corrects me, and delights me. In Your Word I hope. I pray that You make this study of Jonah meaningful to me. I want to grow in Jesus Christ, so I ask that You use this book to increase my spiritual maturity and awareness of Your divine hand upon this earth. For Christ's glory I pray, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In these studies, we use Pastor Chuck's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method so we can rightly understand and apply God's Word. This method incorporates four steps to help us create our own spiritual meals.

1. *Observation*: We read what the text says, perceiving how each word fits in sentences, how each sentence fits in paragraphs, and how each paragraph fits in the book.
2. *Interpretation*: We understand what the text means, delving into word studies, ancient culture, history, and theology.
3. *Correlation*: We compare the passage with other biblical passages that address similar topics whether they be historical, theological, or applicational.
4. *Application*: We integrate into our lives biblical truths and principles, obeying Jesus' commands, believing Jesus' promises, and walking with Jesus always.

Since we're at the beginning of a series, it's a good time to add to your library of Bible-study resources. Pastor Chuck recommends you add one per month. Below, we've provided a few to consider if you don't already have them.

1. *Bible Dictionary*: This invaluable tool compiles hundreds—if not thousands—of articles explaining what you find in the Bible. Free online Bible dictionaries include the [Holman Bible Dictionary](#) and the [Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#) at [studylight.org](#). Pastor Chuck prefers [The New Unger's Bible Dictionary](#) available for purchase at [insight.org](#).

Jonah: The Reluctant Prophet

Selections from Jonah

2. *Study Bible*: We recommend [The Swindoll Study Bible](#) available for purchase at insight.org. If you already have it, Pastor Chuck also likes the New Living Translation *Life Application Study Bible* and the New American Standard Bible *Ryrie Study Bible*. All of these study Bibles complement each other.
3. *Commentary*: If you don't have a commentary set, we recommend either *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* or *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. If you want a stand-alone commentary on Jonah, we recommend *The NIV Application Commentary: Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*.

Before examining each fruit in the spiritual orchard of Jonah, this study provides a bird's-eye view of the flow of the story. To aid you, review Pastor Chuck's overview chart of Jonah.

JONAH OVERVIEW BIBLE CHART

	RUNNING FROM GOD	RUNNING TO GOD	RUNNING WITH GOD	RUNNING AGAINST GOD
	Jonah 1	Jonah 2	Jonah 3	Jonah 4
	First commission of Jonah Results of disobedience	Prayer of Jonah Communication with the Lord	Second commission of Jonah Results of obedience	Prejudice of Jonah Lessons from the Lord
THEME	God's infinite mercy for all people and our reluctance to share His mercy			
KEY VERSES	Jonah 2:9; 4:11			
CHRIST IN JONAH	Jonah's three days in the fish anticipate Christ's death and resurrection (<i>Matt. 12:38–45</i>). The Ninevites' salvation represents the salvation available to all people through Christ.			

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See something especially insightful? Record that below.

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Observation

For observation, we'll simply read through Jonah and answer four basic questions summarizing each chapter. Consider doing so with [multiple translations](#), such as the New Living Translation and the New American Standard Bible.

In chapter one, how did Jonah run **from** God?

In chapter two, how did Jonah run **to** God?

In chapter three, how did Jonah run **with** God?

In chapter four, how did Jonah run **against** God?

If you're trying to run from God, don't waste your time. You'll find that He'll be there waiting for you. But Jonah, of course, is caught up in himself.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Interpretation

In the Old Testament, the book of Jonah is classified as prophesy. What was the role of an Israelite prophet? How did God use prophets? Answer these questions by looking up [prophet](#) and [prophecy](#) in your Bible dictionary. Summarize your research below.

Next, read an overview of the book of Jonah. You can consult Insight for Living's [overview](#) at insight.org in the section “Insights on the Bible,” as well as your dictionary’s entry for [Jonah](#). Note the time period in which the prophet lived and the message the book contributes to the biblical account of God’s divine saga.

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Selections from Jonah



Correlation

Jeremiah loved hearing from God. Jonah dreaded it . . . until a fish swallowed him. We have such a privilege, by God's grace, to be able to study His Word. So for correlation, we'll read a paragraph penned by the apostle Peter near the end of his life.

Read [2 Peter 1:12–21](#). How did Peter describe God's Word? How does God's Word benefit us when we pay close attention to it?

Anticipating Jesus

In Pastor Chuck's book *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, he writes, "The Bible is divided into two major sections: the Old Testament, which anticipates the coming of Jesus, the Messiah; and the New Testament, which presents Jesus as the Messiah and explains His ministry and purpose."¹ So as we study Jonah, we will take time to consider ways this Old Testament book anticipates the person and work of Jesus Christ. Based on this overview of Jonah, what is one way this book anticipates our Lord?



Application

Here are four principles to consider as we embark on this study of Jonah.

1. *From Jonah 1*: Running from God is a theological impossibility.
2. *From Jonah 2*: Running to God is a personal necessity.
3. *From Jonah 3*: Running with God is a remarkable discovery.
4. *From Jonah 4*: Running against God is a pitiful catastrophe.

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Selections from Jonah

Reflect on your life over the past year and record how these principles have proven true.



A FINAL PRAYER

Consider your current season of life. How would you like your relationship with Jesus to grow? What would you like Jesus to do for you through this series on Jonah? Express your answers to these questions by writing a prayer below.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 4.

For the 2025 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2018, 2019, 2025 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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Study 1 • Page 7

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