

# JONAH

## THE RELUCTANT PROPHET

### STUDY EIGHT

## Ticked Off to the Bitter End

*Jonah 4:5–11*

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*God's love and mercy were far greater than Jonah's hatred and prejudice.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**W**HEN Adam and Eve overstepped the divine boundary, eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they birthed into the world a cataclysmic chaos just after God finished establishing a blissful order. That single overstep disrupted all relationships: human to human, human to beast, human to habitat, human to self, and human to God. It catapulted humanity into spiritual isolation—void of knowing the true God and the blessing His unhindered presence brings.

From that spiritual isolation, we further distance ourselves from each other, not only inciting hatred, prejudice, anxiety, depression, and paranoia but also rape, suicide, and mass murder. This godlessness bankrupts us spiritually.

Thankfully, isolation does not have the final word because God sent His Word to get our attention. He intervened to awaken us, so we can connect with Him and live as we are made to live.

*Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe. (Hebrews 1:1–2)*

It's that kind of grace-driven, divine intervention that we will explore as we study Jonah 4:5–11.

We'll not only view Jonah's stubborn heart but also God's fatherly heart that compelled Him to speak a word to enlighten Jonah's mind and appoint a plant to shade Jonah's head. As we will see, that same fatherly heart compelled Him to send us His Son at just the right time.



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## PREPARE YOUR HEART

Read the prayer below and make it your own as you prepare to engage the last passage of Jonah. Because the Bible is God-breathed, we always pray before, during, and after our study that God might soften our hearts, transform our minds, and renew our lives.

*Father, this passage comes as an indirect rebuke to all who live lives of selfishness and self-serving motivations. So please deliver me from my own agenda, my own plan, and my own desires caused by my own narrow-mindedness. There is none better to restore my life than You, none better to guide me in life than You, and none better to satisfy my life than You.*



## TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

*The Lord has preserved His Word to make us aware of who He is, and then by way of reflection on that, of who we are. And the beautiful thing about Scripture is that there is nothing like it. I hope you never take for granted the privilege of having the Bible in your own language. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



## Observation: An Isolated and Raging Prophet

Begin this first step, observation, in your Bible-study method by reading [Jonah 4:5–11](#) several times and taking a few notes on what you see.

## God's Intervention

You'll remember from the last study that Jonah prayed to die because he hated to see the Ninevites avoid God's calamity. Then God reached out to Jonah: "The LORD replied, 'Is it right for you to be angry about this?'" (Jonah 4:4).

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What additional ways did God reach out to get Jonah's attention in Jonah 4:5–11?

## Jonah's Response

How did Jonah respond to God's attempts at getting his attention?

## Observing the Emphases

If you read the New Living Translation, then you probably noticed the author used "God arranged" three times. What three objects did God arrange in this passage?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



## Interpretation: A God Abounding in Mercy and Steadfast Love

During interpretation, we discover the biblical author's intention, so we can better understand God's ways and God's will, which, in turn, helps us discern how to respond appropriately to God's Word.

## Irony: "Arranged"

As we have seen previously, the author used wordplay to emphasize his point. The last bit of irony we will examine comes from the author's use of the Hebrew word *manah*, which means "arrange" or "appoint." Above, we noted that God arranged, *manah*, the "leafy plant" (Jonah 4:6), "worm" (4:7), and "scorching east wind" (4:8). Previously, God had arranged one other significant object:

*"Now the LORD had **arranged** [manah] for a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights." (1:17, emphasis added)*

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Throughout this account of Jonah, God used both words and nature to get Jonah's attention. What did God want Jonah to learn from His arranging the natural world?

*Unlike his God, who is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance, Jonah was not willing that any of the Ninevites should live by coming to repentance. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

## The Character of God

To teach Jonah what he should've already known, God compared Jonah's relationship to the plant with His own relationship to the Ninevites. What does the last statement in this book teach us about the character of God?



## Correlation: The Mind of Christ

Jonah's sails followed the winds of his selfishness. His hardened heart had no room for the welfare of the Ninevites. But God's heart did, and it's that same heart of compassion and mercy we see, on greater display, through the person and work of Jesus Christ. For this reason, we will correlate this last passage of Jonah with a portrait of Jesus, which Paul put before the saints at Philippi that they might emulate the One who perfectly lived in the divine image.

Take a moment to read [Philippians 2:1–11](#). What did Paul say about Jesus?

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As Christians, how do we share in that divine nature, and how should we embrace it (*bearing in mind that Jonah did not embrace it*)?

*When God gave His son, He gave us the gift that is too wonderful for words. And we, who would otherwise be sitting in darkness, because we have faith in the Savior, can trust in Him and know a life we could never otherwise know . . . and live a life we could never otherwise live. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



## **Application: Getting Rid of the Jonah in Us**

All of us have a bit of Jonah lingering in our hearts. Some have a lot of Jonah. We're fallen creatures with the propensity to be selfish. But through the Holy Spirit, we have the mind of Christ who loves us and gave Himself for us.

Take a moment to reflect on your life—the innerworkings of your heart and the habits of your mind. Note the ways you are tempted to be a Jonah.

*Let me be direct. It's easy in this day and age to become that selfish. It's easy. Just follow the direction of the majority. Plan for yourself, live for yourself, think of yourself. Work for yourself in the sense of your plans, your future, your salary. Care little about those who are lost and press right on in that lifestyle, and I will tell you, little by little your world will revolve around only you. How empty it is to live that way. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

Now in reflection upon Christ—His love for you and the power He has already worked in your life—how can you develop a more selfless mind-set and a more caring heart, even for someone you might despise?

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## A FINAL PRAYER

To close this study, reread Jonah 4:5–11 and Philippians 2:1–11. Based on how God moves your heart, write a prayer below exulting the character of God according to these passages and asking for the grace to do what glorifies Him.

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 8 • Page 6