

JONAH: THE RELUCTANT PROPHET

STUDY NINE

Lessons Learned from a Stubborn Preacher

Selections from Jonah

The Bible stabilizes us by teaching us that we can have a relationship with the One who made us and who stays with us all through our lives. We discover what's essential about our God.

—Charles R. Swindoll

THE Bible contains the divine deposit of information, spiritual gold, stored nowhere else on the planet—nor the universe for that matter. No other piece of literature, no human mind, no leaf, no star, and no mountain can convey what God teaches us through His Word. In it, we learn:

- 1) What's essential to know about God
- 2) What's essential to know about others
- 3) What's essential to know about ourselves

From these, we gain inner-security, self-awareness, and discernment. That's why we immerse our minds in God's Word, anchor our hearts to His promises, and set our highest affection on the Lord Jesus Christ. By doing this, we obey the psalmist's command: "Forget none of His benefits" (Psalm 103:2 NASB).

In this final study of Jonah, we will reflect upon the lessons we have learned from a stubborn preacher, Jonah, who wanted to withhold from the Ninevites those benefits he had enjoyed from God's Word and God's presence.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Begin by reflectively praying with Chuck Swindoll.

Father, if ever we love You, we love You now. Now in this treacherous time in which we live. Now, when our world is a dangerous and difficult place to serve Christ. Now, when we face challenges and threats. Lord, if there's ever been a time we've loved You, we want You to know we love You now. And because of that we set apart this time that's before us. We pray that our walk with You will be consistent. That our relationship with You will be real. That our time with You will be meaningful. That our response to You will be obedience. All this we pray in Jesus' name that You may have the glory. Amen.
—Chuck Swindoll



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

First, we will complete our study of the book of Jonah by perusing Chuck's overview chart once more.

JONAH

	Running from God	Running to God	Running with God	Running against God
	First commission of Jonah	Prayer of Jonah	Second commission of Jonah	Prejudice of Jonah
	Results of disobedience	Communication with the Lord	Results of obedience	Lessons from the Lord
	CHAPTER 1	CHAPTER 2	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTER 4
Theme	God's infinite mercy for all people; our reluctance to share His mercy			
Key Verses	2:9; 4:11			
Christ in Jonah	Jonah's three days in the fish anticipates Christ's death and resurrection. The Ninevites' salvation represents the salvation available to all people in Christ.			

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Observation: A Verse to Treasure

Through our studies, we've walked through the book of Jonah, gathering principles for our lives from the life of God's reluctant prophet. By now, we have examined the author's wordplay, discovered the author's theology, and witnessed the blatant shenanigans of Jonah against God. It's fitting that we should end with one more *read-through* of this forty-eight verse book. Do that now and record one verse below that you have come to treasure from your study of the book of Jonah.

In this book, we learn who God is. We learn what He does, and we get a little glimpse of why He does what He does, though some of the mystery remains. The Scriptures are like a vault of truth that is profound. —Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Truths to Live By

During interpretation, record three important truths as well as their significance for your life—truths which you would like to remember from the book of Jonah. During the application step, we will examine Chuck's four takeaways, but for now, create your own below.

Important Truths

Truth One

Truth One's Significance



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Truth Two

Truth Two's Significance

Truth Three

Truth Three's Significance

Anticipating Jesus

Now, reflect on the way in which the book of Jonah anticipates the person and work of Jesus Christ, God incarnate. Record one example in which this book anticipates the coming of our Lord and Savior.



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Any person who is willing to deliver God's message is a messenger God is willing to use. Even Jonah. In spite of the battle that raged within him. In spite of his own prejudice against the people of Nineveh. He used the words that God gave him, and he delivered those words to the Ninevites. God graciously looked past all the things Jonah was not in his person, and He used the message to grip the hearts of the hearers, and the Ninevites turned to God. —Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: The Benefits of God's Word

We began this study with a meditation upon the benefits of God's Word. For this step, simply read a section of Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the Bible. In 176 verses, it reflects on the life-giving and life-enriching nature of God's Word. Let the selection below affirm what you already know about God's Word and inspire you to let its work continue in you.

*Oh, how I love your instructions!
I think about them all day long.
Your commands make me wiser than my enemies,
for they are my constant guide.
Yes, I have more insight than my teachers,
for I am always thinking of your laws.
I am even wiser than my elders,
for I have kept your commandments.
I have refused to walk on any evil path,
so that I may remain obedient to your word.
I haven't turned away from your regulations,
for you have taught me well.
How sweet your words taste to me;
they are sweeter than honey.
Your commandments give me understanding;
no wonder I hate every false way of life. (Psalm 119:97–104)*



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Selections from Jonah



Application: Chuck's Four Takeaways

Chuck provided four lessons—one per chapter—for us to review as we end our study of the prophet Jonah, that stubborn preacher of old. Review each lesson and write a brief reflection on their relevance for your spiritual journey.

- 1) *Jonah 1: Any attempt to escape from the Lord is an act of futility.* Jonah fled west to escape God's presence, but God was waiting for him . . . because God is everywhere. We labor in vain to run away from the Lord's notice or reach. If God has called you to go and speak, He will make sure you go and speak.
- 2) *Jonah 2: Any time and any place we call on the Lord is an acceptable time and place.* That's good news for us because, no matter where we are or when we are, it's God's mercy that can keep us from continuing down the wrong road and His grace that can restore us to the right one. Who can receive that mercy and grace? Those who ask.
- 3) *Jonah 3: Any person who is willing to deliver God's message is a messenger God is willing to use.* God does not rely on our ability to persuade and woo, nor does He depend upon our eloquence and infinite learning. You have the simple message. The Spirit has given you the divine power. As an ambassador of Christ, deliver His message and trust in the work of God.
- 4) *Jonah 4: Any desire we have that conflicts with God's plan requires a change in our desire.* Immoveable and unshakable, God in His infinite wisdom connects with us—not to confer with us on what He should plan or do but to convey to us what we should plan or do. It's to His calendar we adjust and according to His directions we travel. After all, He's the one who made the sun and moon, the land and sea.



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A FINAL PRAYER

In light of God's mercy toward the Ninevites and toward Jonah, it's fitting to close with a hymn that extols the mercy of God. Meditate on the hymn below, then close with your own prayer exalting God for His mercy toward us in Jesus Christ, who did not rebel when God said to go but came to purchase us as His own.

There's a Wideness in God's Mercy

*There's a wideness in God's mercy,
like the wideness of the sea.
There's a kindness in God's justice,
which is more than liberty.
There is no place where earth's sorrows
are more felt than up in heaven.
There is no place where earth's failings
have such kindly judgment given.
For the love of God is broader
than the measures of the mind.
And the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.¹*

Prayer

ENDNOTE

1. Frederick William Faber, "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy," Hymnary.org, https://hymnary.org/text/theres_a_wideness_in_gods_mercy.



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STUDY NINE

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

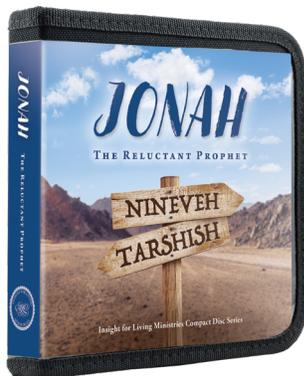
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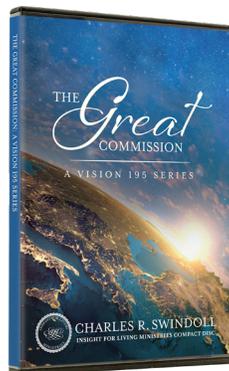
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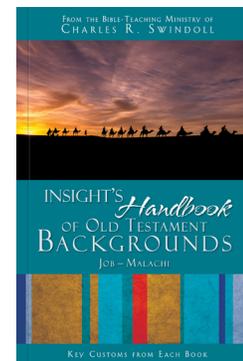
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2019 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Aaron Massey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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8