



JONAH

.....
LOIS ENGELBART

EDITED BY
ROBERT WOLFF

LIVING WAY
BIBLE STUDY

Living Way Bible Study, Inc. (LWBS) is an auxiliary of the Pacific Southwest District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). All studies are written and/or edited by LCMS pastors. We have been providing studies to churches throughout the U.S. and Canada since 1982.

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WELCOME TO LIVING WAY BIBLE STUDY (LWBS)

LWBS is a practical course of study with a special emphasis on the application of God's Word to the life of the individual. While emphasizing practical application, LWBS presents each book of the Bible as the holy, inspired Word of God, the confessional position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Our purpose is to help equip believers to live joyfully in God's redeeming love and to share with others God's plan of salvation.

It is our prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this study to help you grow in your knowledge and appreciation of our God and His Word. *"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 3:18).

STUDY STRUCTURE

LIVING WAY BIBLE STUDY SUGGESTS THIS FOUR-STEP METHOD

- 1. PERSONAL** – The student prays for guidance from the Holy Spirit and answers the Personal Application (P.A.) questions at home using only the Bible (no commentaries).
- 2. SMALL GROUPS** – The class meets for an opening and divides into small groups of 8–10 people. The small group leader guides the group through the P.A. questions, encouraging each to share their answers and discuss further as time allows.
- 3. THE MESSAGE** – The lecture or message is given by a pastor or layperson who has researched the material and presents the study, giving personal insight and augmenting, but not duplicating, the author's comments.
- 4. THE NARRATIVE** – The author's comments or narrative, along with the P.A. questions for the next lesson, are given out at the end of the class. At the next class meeting, before answering the P.A. questions, the small groups may choose to review the author's comments of the last lesson, and share what each has highlighted as meaningful or important.

With this four-step method the student has the opportunity to study the particular section of Scripture covered by the lesson from four different approaches. This emphasizes the Bible text and gives the student an understanding and ownership for each section studied.

Each lesson should be stapled together according to the number of the lesson in the right-hand corner of the page. The P.A. questions for the next week should be attached after the author's narrative for the current week, as they will be the home study for the next class session.

The first meeting of the class is an introduction to the study. Since the members of the small groups have no P.A. questions to discuss at the first meeting, they may use the time to get acquainted or to tell what they hope to receive by studying this course. At the first meeting, the lecturer presents background information about the course, using the Introduction lesson as a guide.

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Jonah

LOIS ENGELBART

6 Lessons

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Bibliography

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Criticism of the Book of Jonah

God's Verification of Jonah

The Message of Jonah

History of Jonah

Israel's Spiritual Life

Jonah, One of 13 Minor Prophets

Miracles in the Book of Jonah

Seeing Ourselves in Jonah

Personal Application – Jonah 1:1-10

JONAH 1:1-10

God's Call To Jonah – Jonah 1:1-2

Jonah's Response – Jonah 1:3

God's Intervention – Jonah 1:4

Storms in Our Lives

The Frightened Crew – Jonah 1:5-6

Sin Has Consequences

Casting Lots – Jonah 1:7

Jonah's Trial – Jonah 1:8-10

Conclusion

Personal Application – Jonah 1:11-16

JONAH 1:11-16

The Origin of Storms

The Storm Continues to Rock Jonah's Ship – Jonah 1:11

The Sailors Seek Advice from Jonah

Jonah's Answer – Jonah 1:12-13

The Sailors Follow Jonah's Direction – Jonah 1:14-15

The Sailors' Response – Jonah 1:16

Jesus, the Very Son of God

LESSON 1

i Conclusion 12

i Personal Application – Jonah 1:17- 2:10 13

ii JONAH 1:17-2:10 LESSON 4

Jonah is Swallowed by a Great Fish – Jonah 1:17 15

Jonah Lives Inside of the Great Fish 15

1 Jonah Prays – Jonah 2:1-9 16

1 Fear and Faith Take Turns in Jonah's Heart 16

1 God Speaks to the Great Fish – Jonah 2:10 17

2 Conclusion 17

2 Personal Application – Jonah 3:1-10 18

2 JONAH 3:1-10 LESSON 5

2 God's Word is Given to Jonah a Second Time – Jonah 3:1-3 20

2 The City of Nineveh 20

2 God's Preparation 21

3 Jonah Preaches to the Ninevites – Jonah 3:4-10 21

2 The King of Nineveh Responds to God's Word 21

5 Jesus Speaks of Jonah 22

6 Jeremiah's Confession 22

6 Conclusion 23

6 Prayer 23

6 Personal Application – Jonah 4:1-11 24

6 JONAH 4:1-11 LESSON 6

7 Jonah Becomes Angry with the Lord – Jonah 4:1 26

7 Jonah Vents His Anger – Jonah 4:2-4 26

7 Our Reaction to God's Question 26

8 God is a God of Compassion 27

Jonah is Familiar with God's Word 27

10 Jonah in the New Testament 27

10 Jonah's Prayer Life 27

11 Jonah Waits for God's Destruction of Nineveh – Jonah 4:5-7 28

11 Jonah Again Becomes Angry – Jonah 4:8-11 28

11 God's Unanswered Question Invites Our Answer 29

11 Epilogue 29

11 Similarities with Two Psalmists 29

LESSON 2

LESSON 3





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1 & 2 Kings

Jonah

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THE MESSAGE OF JONAH	2
HISTORY OF JONAH	2
ISRAEL'S SPIRITUAL LIFE	2
JONAH, ONE OF 13 MINOR PROPHETS	2
MIRACLES IN THE BOOK OF JONAH	2
SEEING OURSELVES IN JONAH	2
PERSONAL APPLICATION – JONAH 1:1-10	3

“God understands our human frailty and He is willing to forgive, correct and redirect our lives when we fail to obey Him.”

INTRODUCTION

We have all heard exaggerated stories beginning with “the biggest fish I ever caught,” followed by a description of the “fish that got away.”

The story of Jonah might be titled, “the biggest fish that caught me, when I was trying to get away”...from God’s call on my life.

CRITICISM OF THE BOOK OF JONAH

The book of Jonah has been a point of contention among theologians for centuries. It has been labeled fiction by some, a myth by others and a parable by still others. Many refuse to believe that the God who made the heavens, the earth, the starry hosts and the sea, could have miraculously saved one of His wayward children in the belly of a great fish, which He had created, and then spit him out unharmed on the Mediterranean shore.

Skeptics may want to read the “Weekly World News” of June 16, 1987 which stated, “Shark swallowed fisherman then spit him out alive.” Mikado Nakamura gave an interview from his hospital bed in Kanazaw, Japan.

But Jonah’s encounter was vastly different from Mikado’s. There is no record of Jonah being hospitalized for bodily harm. God cared for and preserved His prophet for future use, inside of the great fish.

GOD’S VERIFICATION OF JONAH

God not only placed His mark of ownership on this often criticized book by placing His name in its contents 38 times, but Jesus personally verified this wonderful account. When speaking to the Pharisees of His day, He said of Jonah, “The men of Nineveh will stand up at the Judgment with

this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now [One] greater than Jonah is here.” (Matthew 12:41)

THE MESSAGE OF JONAH

The book of Jonah speaks strongly and clearly about obedience to God, but it also speaks about God’s forgiveness when we fail to obey. God understands our human frailty and He is willing to forgive, correct and redirect our lives when we fail to obey Him. That is what He did for Jonah, and that is what He has done for each of us countless times when we come to Him with repentant hearts. But perhaps its greatest message is God’s pity upon the heathen multitudes and His desire to save them.

HISTORY OF JONAH

Jonah was born in Gath-Hepher near Nazareth where Jesus lived as a child with His parents. Jonah’s father’s name was Amittai.

The Pharisees of Jesus’ day were wrong when they said, “no prophet has arisen out of Galilee.” (John 7:52) Jonah was a prophet of God who had come from Galilee.

Jonah lived during the reign of King Jeroboam II, who reigned over Israel for 41 years. God gave Jonah the privilege of bringing a pleasing prophecy to King Jeroboam II. He told Jeroboam that his kingdom would be expanded (2 Kings 14:25). Most likely this placed him in good standing with the king.

ISRAEL’S SPIRITUAL LIFE

Jeroboam II was blessed militarily just as Jonah had prophesied. He recovered much of the territory Israel had lost to the Syrians, but Israel’s military successes did not help its spiritual life. Israel remained committed to two golden calves which Jeroboam I had instituted as a replacement for the worship of Jehovah.

The account of Jonah has been said to parallel Israel. It is narrow, selfish, with no love for the world beyond itself.

JONAH, ONE OF 13 MINOR PROPHETS

The book of Jonah is unique among the books written by the minor prophets: it contains only one prophecy. Each of the other 12 books, written by minor prophets,

contain prophetic utterances. Instead, it is an account of the actions of one of God’s prophets. It recounts Jonah’s disobedience to God’s call, God’s intervention, and finally God’s will being carried out by His prophet.

MIRACLES IN THE BOOK OF JONAH

The book of Jonah contains many miracles:

- The raging sea — the calming of it.
- God’s preparation and direction of a great fish.
- Jonah being swallowed by the great fish.
- The fish not digesting Jonah.
- Jonah remaining alive in its belly for three days.
- The fish vomiting Jonah onto dry ground.

But the greatest recorded miracle is the repentance of the pagan Gentiles of Nineveh.

SEEING OURSELVES IN JONAH

The book of Jonah is a beacon especially to disgruntled or half-hearted Christians. It is a call to wake up.

As we journey through this wonderful book, we will become aware of God’s individual call on each of our lives and also of our personal failure to obey God’s trustworthy demands on our lives.

Jonah failed God

We fail God

But

God forgave Jonah and then used him.

God has forgiven each of us by sending His Son to bear our sins on a cross — on a hill called Golgatha. It is there that He set us free to be people of God that can now be used to bring Him glory.

As we examine the contents of Jonah, we will become aware of its authenticity in every detail. It was inspired by God; its facts performed by God. The book of Jonah clearly bears God’s signature.

Let us then approach the study of Jonah as trusting children of the Heavenly Father, who desire to know Him better, love Him more and serve Him with willing hearts.

PERSONAL APPLICATION – JONAH 1:1-10

*Heavenly Father,
 You call each of us to work in Your Kingdom.
 What high and holy privilege You have given us.
 May Your Holy Spirit enable us to carry out
 Your mission with thankful and joy-filled hearts.
 Amen*

Jonah 1:1-3

1. We are told that the “word of the Lord” came to Jonah. List ways that the “word of the Lord” comes to us today.

2. Why was Jonah being sent by the Lord to Nineveh?

3. How do you think the Lord views our nation today?

4. How did Jonah react to God’s call on his life?

5. Using a map in your Bible, try to locate Joppa, Nineveh, and Tarshish. Which direction (N.S.E.W.) had Jonah been told to go?

Which direction did Jonah go?

6. Has God placed a call on our lives today? (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19-20; Philemon 6; Colossians 3:16-17; Romans 12:6-8)

7. When Jonah boarded the ship in Joppa, what was he attempting to do?

Is that ever possible? (Psalm 139:7-10)

Jonah 1:4-6

8. How did the Lord stop Jonah?

9. Was Jonah the only one affected by God's action? What does that tell us about sinful conduct in our own lives?

10. How did the sailors aboard the ship react to the storm?

11. Where was Jonah and what was he doing?

12. Who addressed Jonah and what did he say?

Jonah 1:7-10

13. What action did the sailors take to determine the person responsible for the storm? Who determined the outcome? (Proverbs 16:33)

14. When the lot fell to Jonah, list the questions which the sailors addressed to him.

15. Write Jonah's answer and comment on it.

16. Which part of Jonah's reply do you think most terrified the frightened sailors?

17. What information had Jonah already given the sailors?

18. Relate Proverbs 9:10 to the heathen sailors aboard the ship.

19. When Jesus was ministering here on earth, what did a woman listening to him cry out? (Luke 11:27) How did Jesus answer her? (Luke 11:28) Apply Jesus' answer...

To Jonah

To yourself



JONAH'S RESPONSE – JONAH 1:3	6
GOD'S INTERVENTION – JONAH 1:4	6
STORMS IN OUR LIVES	6
THE FRIGHTENED CREW – JONAH 1:5-6	6
SIN HAS CONSEQUENCES	6
CASTING LOTS – JONAH 1:7	7
JONAH'S TRIAL – JONAH 1:8-10	7
CONCLUSION	7
PERSONAL APPLICATION – JONAH 1:11-16	8

“Thankfully we serve an omniscient God who not only sees us when we attempt to hide from Him, but He also ‘perceives our thoughts from afar and is familiar with all our ways.’ (Psalm 139:2-3) He forgives us and restores us, because of Jesus’ sacrificial atonement, won for us on Calvary. We are never out of His mind. We are forever objects of His love and care. Let us continually trust and obey, praise and worship Him, our Creator and our Redeemer.”

GOD'S CALL TO JONAH – JONAH 1:1-2

When God placed a call on His prophet Jonah's life, His call was specific, clear and understandable. It even included an explanation.

Go...to Nineveh

Preach...Against it

Explanation...its wickedness has come up before Me.

As we read God's reason for sending Jonah to Nineveh, we likely will become aware of wickedness in our own nation which is presently coming up before God. Our nation, which began as a people of God, has drifted and fallen into every imaginable sin.

- Violence is commonplace on our streets.
- Homosexuality is paraded.
- Illegal drugs are available in our schools.

- The idolatry of secular humanism is being taught to our children while...
- The 10 commandments have been banned from our schools.

We are a fallen nation. Could it be that God is calling out to us, His children, that remain committed to Him, much like He called Jonah?

Go...Stand for righteousness.

Speak out...Against wickedness.

Call My wayward people back to Me.

JONAH'S RESPONSE – JONAH 1:3

Instead of heeding God's call, Jonah turned his back on God's call by running away from it. Nineveh was about 500 miles east and a bit north of Palestine, but Jonah boarded a ship at Joppa headed the opposite direction. He was headed for Tarshish which was approximately 2,000 miles west of Palestine, in modern day Spain.

At the time, Tarshish was a remote trading post on the fringes of civilization, while Nineveh was the greatest metropolis of its day.

Jonah's travel plans reveal Jonah's misconception of Jehovah, whom he had been called to serve. His perception of God's call given to him possibly went like this, "Since Jehovah is the God of Israel, I can escape His call on my life by leaving Israel." Jonah's perception of God was faulty and it was dwarfed. It is impossible to flee from the God Who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and sustains them. (Hebrews 1:3a)

Jonah did not have the heart of David who said, "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence? ... if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there Your hand will guide me. Your right hand will hold me fast." (Psalm 139:7-10)

GOD'S INTERVENTION – JONAH 1:4

Jonah's attempt to run from God's call on his life was unsuccessful. God did not allow His servant to do so. He pursued Jonah with a mighty storm.

Have you ever been in a boat when the wind suddenly began to blow and the shore was not in sight? A young man familiar with sudden storms on the Great Lakes tells this story. "I waded out after the storm had subsided to rescue the passengers in a yacht which had been driven by the storm into a reef and crashed. The man and woman aboard the sinking ship said that several years earlier they had been forced, during a similar storm, to land their single engine plane in a field in unknown territory. But nothing so terrified them as their encounter with the wind and the waves." I believe the men on board Jonah's ship would add their "Amen" to the above account.

STORMS IN OUR LIVES

We, like Jonah, often foolishly ignore or disobey God's call on our lives. But the "Hound of Heaven" does not allow us to become comfortable in our rebellious state. His repeated call comes to us in various ways. Hurricanes, earthquakes, rebellious children, the storm of poor health or poverty, wars and rumors of war, can all be used to bring us to our knees and back to the God Who created us and Who redeemed us.

THE FRIGHTENED CREW – JONAH 1:5-6

The terrified sailors cried out to their gods. Every man to his own god ... except Jonah. He was comfortable in his sin and was sound asleep in the hull of the ship.

It was a pagan captain that God used to awaken His sleeping prophet. A pagan, who feared God even though he did not really know Him. The inner recesses of the captain's heart were bearing witness to him that there is a God who holds the whole world, the wind and the waves, in His hand. God's invisible quality — His eternal power — was clearly seen by him. (Romans 1:20)

SIN HAS CONSEQUENCES

Once Jonah was awakened, he undoubtedly was aware of the crisis he and the crew were facing. He also was aware of why they were all in danger. His sin was not hurting just him, it was hurting every man on board the ship. Sin is like that! It has far reaching consequences which we are not always aware of.

Our personal sins of pride, criticism, ingratitude, temper, bitterness or an unforgiving spirit often hurt the people we profess to love the most, our family and our friends.

CASTING LOTS – JONAH 1:7

Jonah watched as sailors resorted to the casting of lots to determine who was to blame for their frightful condition. Jonah was fingered by God. It was He who determined the outcome of the lots being cast. God's Word tells us, "the lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord." (Proverbs 16:33)

JONAH'S TRIAL – JONAH 1:8-10

The sailors held a brief but fair trial. Jonah was questioned by the pagan sailors:

Who is responsible for the trouble we are facing?

What is your occupation?

Which country do you come from?

Jonah's answer is perhaps the one bright spot in the entire account. Jonah confessed that he "worshiped the Lord God, Who made the sea and the land." Jonah still remembered Who he belonged to and unashamedly confessed his faltering faith in the Lord God.

His confession of faith brought terror to the pagan sailors who did not know Jonah's God. They had many gods but they did not have a god who could make such a claim and then back that claim by sending wind and waves to crash against their once seaworthy ship.

The terrified seamen asked Jonah one rhetorical question, "What have you done?" Jonah had already answered their question. He was running away from the Lord.

Jonah, God has called you, can't you hear His voice?

Souls of men are dying as you run and hide.

CONCLUSION

Jonah was trying to do the impossible... run away from God. There are times in each of our lives when we become "Jonahs" by running away from God ... thinking He doesn't see us:

- When we fail to read His Word.
- When we do not take time to pray.
- When we forego receiving His body and blood to strengthen our faith.
- When we decide a football game (or anything else) is more important than attending church.

Thankfully we serve an omniscient God who not only sees us when we attempt to hide from Him, but He also "perceives our thoughts from afar and is familiar with all our ways." (Psalm 139:2-3) He forgives us and restores us, because of Jesus' sacrificial atonement, won for us on Calvary. We are never out of His mind. We are forever objects of His love and care. Let us continually trust and obey, praise and worship Him, our Creator and our Redeemer.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I am so much like Jonah.

I have often buried myself in the bottom of a ship

When I should be out proclaiming Your salvation to the people You have placed around me.

Forgive me and use me to tell each of them about You...

My wonderful Savior

Amen

PERSONAL APPLICATION – JONAH 1:11-16

*Heavenly Father,
 You allow storms to enter each of our lives,
 But You never make us go through them alone.
 You are always with us, holding us secure in Your loving arms.
 We thank You for Your constant love and protection,
 But most of all for Your salvation won for us by
 Your Son Jesus Christ, our Savior.
 Amen*

Jonah 1:11-16

1. God, Who made the heavens and the earth, spoke to Job out of a storm. Using Job 38:8-11, describe in your own words how God made the sea. What words in Job 38:8-11 line up with God's account of creation in Genesis 1:3,6,9,20 and 24? According to Job 38:11, how are storms stopped?

2. When Jesus was here on earth, what action did He take to quiet storms? (Mark 4:37-41) (Luke 8:22-25)

3. How is the storm which pursued Jonah described in 1:11?

4. Whose advice did the sailors seek?

5. Since the sailors were familiar with the sea and its storms, why do you think they sought advice from Jonah? (v. 9)

6. What advice did Jonah give them? Why might Jonah have been willing to make this suggestion? (Psalm 51:3) (1 John 1:8-9)

7. Did the sailors immediately take Jonah's advice? What did they do? What did all of their effort accomplish?

8. Tell of a personal "storm" such as sickness, death of a loved one, financial difficulties, family problems, etc. which you have encountered. How were you able to handle your storm? Whose help did you seek?

9. When facing your personal "storm," did its intensity remain the same, decrease or increase?

How did you finally gain peace? (John 14:27)

10. When all else failed, what did the beleaguered sailors finally do? (Jonah 1:14a)

11. These heathen sailors did not have God's written word. Apply what we are told in Psalm 19:1-4a to their situation.

12. Who did the pagan sailors pray to? (Jonah 1:14)

13. What words do they use to describe Jonah?

Is their description accurate?

14. How is God's action acknowledged by the sailors? (Jonah 1:16)

15. What "word of the Lord" were the seamen unknowingly acting on? (Psalm 107:28)

16. What did the sailors finally decide to do? Describe the result of their action and relate it to Psalm 107:29.

17. How did the sailors react to God's marvelous miracle? Relate their action to Psalm 107:30-31.

18. Remembering storms in your own life, relate Psalm 107:28-32 to your personal storms.
