

Resist

A STUDY IN JONAH

BY JESSICA POOL



Arise

A study of the book of Jonah

The Well Church
www.twcmustang.com

*To my brothers and sisters at The Well Church:
May this stir your affections for our Father. Thank you for
helping me love Him more.*

*And for Beth, Jane, and Micah:
May you be like trees planted by streams of water, yielding
good fruit, sustained by the Lord, prospering in all that you
do.*

Preface

The vision and mission of The Well Church is to pursue the power and presence of God for the renewal of all things. This cannot be accomplished apart from the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. Because of this, we encourage all believers to pursue the Lord by reading and studying His Word.

At The Well Church, we believe that:

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)¹

The purpose of this study involves three things:

- **Renewal of our minds.** Romans 12:2 calls us to “be transformed by the renewing of our minds.” The Word of God is essential to this.
- **Renewal of our hearts.** Reading God’s Word doesn’t make Him love us more, but it certainly helps us love Him more.
- **Renewal of our church.** As we gather around the Word of God, our hope is that the Spirit of God will unify us and stir us up to be agents of renewal in our city.

This study is not just for the super-christians (there’s no such thing) or the super-bookish; the Bible is for everyone! Whether you’re brand new to reading scripture or have read

¹ All scripture references are from the English Standard Version.

through the entire Bible multiple times, pressing into the Word of God in the book of Jonah will benefit you and our entire church.

Over the course of this study, we'll be walking through the book of Jonah slowly and steadily, considering how this book fits into the overarching narrative of scripture. This means we'll do some background work before diving in and lots of reflection after we've finished. Each section is broken up into two parts: personal study and group discussion. We recommend completing the personal study section each week before your community group discussion.

PERSONAL STUDY

Each personal study section is broken up into a few parts: Read and Reflect, Meditate and Memorize, and Want More? In the Read and Reflect section, you'll be asked to read the passage for the week and answer some questions based on the text. You'll encounter three types of questions: observation, interpretation, and application.

Observation questions can be answered directly from the text. They answer the question "What does the text say?"

Interpretation questions require us to make some inferences or draw conclusions about the text. They involve us answering the question, "What does the text mean?"

Application questions allow us to spend time not just understanding the text, but asking the Lord to apply it to our hearts. These questions ask, "What does this text mean for me?"

MEDITATE AND MEMORIZE

Each Meditate and Memorize section will give you direction for mulling over the Word of God and praying through what you've read. In *Want More?* you'll have the opportunity to continue studying scripture as it connects to the book of Jonah.

You'll use each group discussion section in your community group. If you are not part of a community group, you can still go through this study, but we'd encourage you to reach out to Steven Giblett at sgiblett@twemustang.com to get connected.

In each personal study section, you'll pray, read, and answer questions about the text; the questions will help you think about what the text says, what it means, and what it means for us. You may find that certain questions or exercises are more helpful and others less so. That's ok! Our goal is not to tell you, "Read the Bible this way!" Rather, we want to equip all members of The Well Church to engage with scripture prayerfully and thoughtfully. Discussing each section with your community group will help deepen your understanding of the Bible, as well as encourage you as you pursue the Lord in His Word.

Let's read the book of Jonah together as a means of pursuing the power and presence of God for the renewal of all things.

Introduction



*“I called out to the Lord, out of my distress,
and he answered me;
out of the belly of Sheol I cried,
and you heard my voice.”*

Over the next several weeks, we’ll be reading the book of Jonah multiple times. Luckily for us, it’s a very short book. Before we dive in, let’s take a look behind the scenes; we don’t want to jump right in and ask what the book of Jonah says about our lives because it’s not actually about us. Instead, let’s take some time to think about the context in which this book was written.

Thanks to the work of scholars and theologians, there are many resources available to help with this. A good study Bible, like the *ESV Study Bible*, and websites like *The Bible Project* or *The Gospel Coalition* are great places to start. We could spend lots of time researching information about the book of Jonah, but in our first personal study section, we’ll begin by answering 5 simple questions:

1. *Who wrote it?*
2. *When was it written?*
3. *To whom was it written?*
4. *In what style was it written?*
5. *Why was it written?*²

² Wilkin, J. (2019). *Women of the word: How to study the Bible with both our hearts and our minds*. Crossway.

A few notes about these questions:

When considering the date, don't just look for a year. What was happening during the time of the story? Where does it take place on the timeline of the Old Testament?

Why does style or genre matter? The genre of a text (the category or type of literature it is) determines how we read and understand it. For example, we don't read someone's biography the same way we read a poem, and we don't read a fairytale the same way we read a user manual. Often, the genre of a text directs its purpose.

We might not find an exact answer to every question. And that's ok! A good study Bible or one of the resources mentioned above can help get us close.

Now let's get started!

PERSONAL STUDY

Take a few minutes to browse through a study Bible introduction to the book of Jonah or check out one of the online resources mentioned above to answer these questions:

Who wrote it?

When was it written?

To whom was it written?

In what style was it written?

Why was it written?

READ AND REFLECT

Read 2 Kings 14:23-28. This is the only other time Jonah is mentioned by name in the Old Testament.

1. Based on this passage, what can you infer about Jonah?

2. What can you infer about Jeroboam II, the king during this time?

3. What does this passage show about God's character?

MEDITATE AND MEMORIZE

Spend time this week thinking about the last sentence of Jonah 2:9: *Salvation belongs to the Lord!* Thank God for saving you and ask Him to save the lost in your life.

WANT MORE?

Get a jumpstart reading the book of Jonah! Try to listen to or read the entire book in one sitting. You can also head to bibleproject.com to watch a helpful overview of Jonah.

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What do you already know about the book of Jonah? What did you learn from answering the background questions above?
2. Based on 2 Kings 14:23-28 and the background information you learned about Jonah, what was going well in Israel during Jonah's life? What wasn't going so well?
3. What are you looking forward to or feeling apprehensive about in regard to this study?
4. As a group, spend some time in prayer. Ask the Lord to renew minds, renew hearts, and renew our church as we work through the book of Jonah together.

Jonah 1



“And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.”

This week, we’re digging into Jonah chapter 1. Try to read or listen to this chapter multiple times this week. As you read, keep in mind what you already know about Jonah, and don’t just speed through it; you may have heard this story or a version of this story as a kid, but really tune in to what the Word actually says. Each week, pay special attention to what the book of Jonah says about the character of God.

PERSONAL STUDY

READ AND REFLECT

Pray. Ask the Lord to help you understand His Word and listen to Him.

Read Jonah 1. This first time, just read it. Don’t worry about the questions ahead; just read.

Now **read Jonah 1 again.** This time, as you read:

- **Mark** any repeated words or phrases.
- Put a **?** by anything confusing.
- **Mark** anything that jumps out at you.
- **Jot down** any questions that come to mind.

It might be helpful to go through this process a few times, especially with sections that are confusing or stand out to you. Spend some time thinking through each verse, and even

INTERPRET

5. Why did Jonah run away?

6. The word “fear” is used to mean profound reverence or awe several times in this chapter. Compare and contrast the sailors’ obvious fears with Jonah’s self-proclaimed fears (v. 9).

Sailor’s Fears	Jonah’s Fears

APPLY

7. In verse 2, God speaks very clearly to Jonah, but Jonah disobeys. How does true fear of the Lord lead us to obedience to the Lord?

8. Read Psalm 139. Thank God for being worthy of reverence and awe.

MEDITATE AND MEMORIZE

Once you've read Jonah 1 a couple of times, employ your sanctified imagination to see the events of Jonah 1 like a movie in your mind. Try to picture Jonah hearing from the Lord, imagine him boarding the ship and interacting with the sailors. Think about what Jonah and the sailors felt at different stages. Imagine the storm, the spray of water, and the waves. Put yourself inside the story as an observer, looking for how the Lord's character is displayed in different scenes.

WANT MORE?

Read the account of Jesus calming the storm in Mark 4:35-41. Think about how this story is different from the events of Jonah chapter 1.

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What did you find most challenging about Jonah 1? What did you find most encouraging?
2. What are your initial thoughts about the prophet Jonah?
3. What did you find surprising or unexpected about the sailors?
4. What does Jonah 1 show about the character of God and the nature of man?
5. Spend some time praying for your group. Ask Him to reveal Himself to you and your group through His Word in Jonah.

JONAH 2



*“But I with the voice of thanksgiving
will sacrifice to you;
what I have vowed I will pay.
Salvation belongs to the Lord!”*

Jonah 2 consists almost entirely of a prayer, but it isn't just a prayer. It's actually a prayer about a prayer. At the end of chapter 1, a few things happen abruptly: Jonah is thrown overboard and the storm stops. Then we have one verse detailing the response of the sailors (awe and worship) and one verse detailing Jonah's fate (swallowed by a fish, where he remained for 3 days and 3 nights). By the time chapter 2 begins, three days have passed. Thankfully, Jonah's prayer recaps some of the events that have taken place since the sailors tossed him to sea, including a synopsis of the prayer he prayed after he was thrown overboard. To get the full picture, you might go back and reread chapter 1 before you jump into chapter 2. As you read, keep an eye out for how God's character is displayed.

PERSONAL STUDY

READ AND REFLECT

Pray. Ask the Lord to open your mind to understand and your heart to believe.

Read Jonah 2. Put your pencil down and just read.

Now **read Jonah 2 again.** This time, as you read:

- **Mark** any repeated words or phrases.
- Put a **?** by anything confusing.
- **Mark** anything that jumps out at you.

Jot down any questions that come to mind.

OBSERVE

1. Jonah 1:15-17 takes Jonah abruptly from the deck of the ship to the belly of the fish. In Jonah 2:2-7, Jonah recounts what happened in between. Summarize these verses.
2. In verse 2, Jonah says he cried out to God from Sheol and God heard his voice. What does the word Sheol mean? Look this up in a dictionary or online.
3. In verse 9, Jonah references a vow he made to the Lord. What might he be referring to?

INTERPRET

4. How would you describe Jonah's prayer? (grateful, repentant, etc.) What is his attitude or disposition toward the Lord as he prays?

5. In verse 8, Jonah mentions “those who pay regard to vain idols.” Who might he be thinking of when he says this?

6. At the end of verse 9, Jonah declares, “Salvation belongs to the Lord!” There are many layers of meaning in this phrase. In what ways have we seen this statement to be true in these first two chapters of Jonah?

APPLY

7. Jonah spent the first chapter of this book running from God. Finally, at the bottom of the sea, he cried out to the Lord and God heard him. Is there something you’re holding back or trying to hide from God? Spend time asking God to search you. Cry out to Him with whatever is on your heart. He is the God who hears.

8. When Jonah called out to the Lord to rescue him, he probably did not anticipate spending the next three

days inside a fish. Can you think of times when you've asked the Lord to move, and then been confused at His response? What does Jonah's experience and your own experience teach us about what God is like?

MEDITATE AND MEMORIZE

Verse 6 ends with this: "Yet you brought up my life from the pit." This is true for everyone who is in Christ. God has rescued us from death to life. Spend some time praying through this verse and rejoicing in your salvation!

WANT MORE?

Read Psalm 42. How is it similar to Jonah's prayer? How is it different?

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What did you find most challenging about Jonah 2? What did you find most encouraging?
2. Do you think Jonah's time in the belly of the fish was a punishment from God? Explain.
3. You've probably never spent 3 days in the belly of a fish, but you've likely experienced some dark times. Share about a difficult time when the Lord heard your cries and drew near to you.
4. What does Jonah 2 show about the character of God and the nature of man?
5. Spend some time praying for your group. Pray specifically for anyone in your group who may be going through a hard time right now.

JONAH 3



“And the people of Nineveh believed God.”

We are halfway through the book of Jonah, and the Lord gives the prophet another chance to obey God’s initial call for him. This time, Jonah actually goes to Nineveh. At this point, it might be helpful to reread chapters 1 and 2 again before you start chapter 3. Pay attention to how Jonah’s interaction with the Ninevites parallels his interaction with the pagan sailors from chapter 1. And be on the lookout for how God’s character is displayed in this chapter.

PERSONAL STUDY

READ AND REFLECT

Pray. Ask the Lord to speak to you through his Word.

Read Jonah 3. You know the drill, just read it through.

Now **read Jonah 3 again.** This time, as you read:

- **Mark** any repeated words or phrases.
- Put a **?** by anything confusing.
- **Mark** anything that jumps out at you.
- **Jot down** any questions that come to mind.

OBSERVE

1. Use a dictionary to define the following words:
 - Relent

- Sackcloth

2. What was the message Jonah took to Nineveh?
3. How did the people of Nineveh respond to Jonah's message? What action did the king of Nineveh take?
4. How did God respond to the Ninevites?

INTERPRET

5. What can you infer about the people of Nineveh based on their response to Jonah's message?
6. Why did the people put on sackcloth and ashes and begin fasting?

7. How is the Ninevites' response to Jonah's message similar to the pagan sailors' response to Jonah? How is it different?

8. Is the Ninevites' repentant response surprising to you? Why or why not?

APPLY

9. In verse 10, God said He would destroy Nineveh, but after they fasted and cried out to Him, He relented. What does this tell us about who God is or what He is like?

10. Think back to Jonah 2:9 when Jonah prayed, "Salvation belongs to the Lord!" How does Jonah 3 exemplify this statement?

11. The Ninevites were not seeking God, yet God came after them. Spend some time praying for folks who are far from God, or even hostile to Him, and ask God to pursue them and save them.

MEDITATE AND MEMORIZE

This week, spend some time praying through Jonah 3:10. Think about how God has been gracious to you and thank Him for that.

WANT MORE?

Psalm 32 is a song of repentance and forgiveness. Read over it and rejoice in the Lord!

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What did you find most challenging about Jonah 3? What did you find most encouraging?
2. What can we learn from the Ninevites' response to Jonah's word from the Lord?
3. What does Jonah 3 show about the character of God and the nature of man?
4. Spend some time praying for your group. Pray specifically for folks you love who are far from the Lord; ask the Lord to save them!

JONAH 4



"for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster."

We've made it to the final chapter of Jonah! In chapter 3, Jonah had a second chance to obey God's call to go to Nineveh. Nineveh responded to Jonah's message in a surprising way: with fasting and repentance. Now, chapter 4 follows Jonah's reaction to what's happening in Nineveh. It may be helpful to start back at chapter 1 and read the whole book through before diving in this week. Keep an eye out for God's character in chapter 4.

PERSONAL STUDY

READ AND REFLECT

Pray. Ask the Lord to help you understand His Word and listen to Him.

Read Jonah 4. Ignore the questions for now. Just read.

Now **read Jonah 4 again.** This time, as you read:

- **Mark** any repeated words or phrases.
- Put a **?** by anything confusing.
- **Mark** anything that jumps out at you.
- **Jot down** any questions that come to mind.

OBSERVE

1. What is Jonah so mad about in verses 1-4?

2. Jonah is pretty up and down emotionally in this chapter. Fill in the chart with Jonah’s emotions and their causes over the course of this chapter.

EMOTION	CAUSE

3. Make a list of everything God “appointed” in this chapter.

4. In your own words, retell what happened with Jonah and the plant.

INTERPRET

5. What do you think God means when He asks Jonah, “Do you do well to be angry?”
6. The statement Jonah makes in verse 2 is actually how God has described Himself in scripture: it’s a true statement. What is Jonah trying to express when he says this to God?
7. Do you think Jonah means what he says in verses 3 and 8? Why or why not?
8. What lesson do you think God is trying to teach Jonah through this plant?

APPLY

9. Does Jonah have a right to be angry with God? Explain. It's easy to call out Jonah's selfishness and pride in this story, but try to put yourself in his place.

10. Are there times when you've questioned God's goodness or struggled to understand something about His character? How could the truth of verse 2, that God is "a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster," help with those questions?

MEDITATE AND MEMORIZE

Jonah uses the self-descriptive words of God from Exodus 34:5-7 as an accusation. Spend some time meditating on the character of God outlined in these verses, and thank God for who He is.

WANT MORE?

Read Psalm 103 and rejoice in the compassion and steadfast love of the Lord!

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What did you find most challenging about Jonah 4? What did you find most encouraging?
2. In verse 2, Jonah outlines his reason for fleeing from God in chapter 1. Spend some time dissecting Jonah's explanation. Why is he actually mad in chapter 4?
3. How does the Lord treat Jonah as He's teaching him this lesson at the end of chapter 4? What is God's disposition toward Jonah?
4. What does Jonah 4 show about the character of God and the nature of man?
5. Spend some time praying for your group. Ask the Lord to make you humble, to send you to the lost, and to give you joy at seeing his name glorified.

WRAP-UP



We've come to the end of the book of Jonah! This week, we'll be reflecting on the book as a whole, so it would be wise to reread the entire book from start to finish. For our group discussion, we'll be sharing our thoughts from our personal study time, so take your time and be thoughtful.

PERSONAL STUDY

READ AND REFLECT

Read Jonah 1-4. Take it slow and enjoy! Then answer the following questions.

1. At the end of Jonah, God uses a plant to teach Jonah about compassion. What lessons can we learn from reading about these events in the prophet Jonah's life?

2. In Jonah 2:9, Jonah prays, "Salvation belongs to the Lord!" How is this truth exemplified or proven in the book of Jonah?

- 3. Throughout the book of Jonah, God is consistently compassionate while Jonah is consistently not compassionate. Make a list of instances where God’s compassion is displayed and Jonah’s lack of compassion is evident.

GOD’S COMPASSION	JONAH’S LACK OF COMPASSION

- 4. Read Matthew 12:38-41. According to Jesus, Jonah’s time in the belly of the fish actually foreshadows and parallels Jesus’ death and burial. Why does Jesus go on to say, “Behold, something greater than Jonah is here?”
- 5. In one sentence, explain what the book of Jonah is really about.

MEDITATE AND MEMORIZE

Read Matthew 12:38-41 again. Think about verse 41 specifically, and spend time praying for the lost of our generation. Ask the Lord to send us as messengers of the gospel just as He sent Jonah to Nineveh, and ask the Lord to reap a harvest.

WANT MORE?

Read Matthew 26:36-28:20. Spend some time thanking God for Jesus, who is so much greater than Jonah in every way.

GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Share your answers from the personal study section with your group.
2. What part of this study was most meaningful for you?
3. Spend time praying for your group. Thank God for his compassion, and ask Him to stir your hearts with compassion for others. Ask Him to send your group to your neighbors and the nations with the gospel.

THE GOSPEL

The gospel is the good news that Jesus has come to save sinners ([Luke 19:10](#); [John 1:29](#)). The Bible teaches that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God ([Romans 3:23](#)) and that all deserve the wrath of God. However, Jesus came to redeem sinners so that we can have a relationship with God!

Therefore, *the gospel* is the good news that you can be saved by trusting in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus ([1 Corinthians 15:1-3](#))!

The gospel is a historical event where God *really* did become man, he *really* did die on a cross, he *really* did absorb the wrath of God that we deserved, and he *really* did rise again, defeating death and bringing eternal life to all who believe in Him!

The gospel is all about God's glory and what he has done to adopt enemies into his family.

The gospel is the only hope for anyone to have a relationship with God, full of joy and satisfaction, forever and ever.

The gospel affects every aspect of your life as the forgiveness of God transforms you from the inside out.

The gospel transforms you as the Holy Spirit draws you to Jesus, making you more like Christ.

The gospel is the good news of great joy!

If you would like to know more about believing the gospel and following Christ, connect with us at hello@twcmustang.com or talk with your community group leader. We would love to speak with you!

NEXT STEPS

Now that you've finished this study, what's next? Hopefully, you've gained a hunger for the Word of God and are ready to dive into another book of the Bible. The good news is you don't have to wait for our next TWC Bible study to get started! You've got everything you need to press on and keep studying.

Choose another book of the Bible (the Gospel of Matthew is a great place to go next!), either on your own or with your community group, and get to reading! The questions we used in the intro to this study will apply to any book of scripture. Use them as a starting point. Then employ the same structure we used each week:

- Read.
- Reread and make notes.
- Write down questions, things you notice, or insight you gain.
- Make lists or charts, draw pictures, and paraphrase (write in your own words) passages to help you understand.
- Use cross-references, the dictionary, and other translations of the Bible.
- Pray and meditate on scripture.
- Discuss what you read and learn with your family, friends, and community group.

The Lord has not only given us His Word, breathed out by His Holy Spirit, recorded and preserved by faithful believers for centuries, but He's also given us beautiful, complex minds to read and understand His Word! God's Word is for all believers, including you.

**PURSUING THE POWER AND
PRESENCE OF GOD FOR
THE RENEWAL OF ALL
THINGS.**

