

JONAH

THE PRODIGAL PROPHET



THE BIGGER STORY: READING JONAH WITHIN THE LARGER BIBLICAL NARRATIVE

1. **Humanity:** Humans have rebelled against God, and we cannot save ourselves.
2. **Yahweh:** A gracious God who loves rescuing the lost.
3. **Israel (is supposed to be):** The blessed ones who bless—the people God wants to partner with to rescue the nations.
4. **The Nations (like Ninevah):** The focus of God's rescue mission—Israel is supposed to be God's representative to the nations.
5. **Jonah:** Jonah's job is to participate with God's mission to rescue and bless the nations.

THE CAST OF JONAH:

1. **Jonah:** The prodigal prophet.
2. **Ninevah:** The wicked nation that unexpectedly repents.

AN X-RAY OF JONAH'S HEART:

1. **Jonah is a prodigal prophet:** Prophets are supposed to share God's message and mirror God's heart. Jonah does the opposite. He's an anti-prophet.
2. **Jonah is a hypocrite:** he wants God's mercy for himself, but doesn't want God to extend that same mercy to his enemies.
3. **Jonah is Nineveh (but worse):** Sinful, rebellious; in need of mercy.

THE BIG IDEA:

Does your heart mirror God's heart? Or is your heart like Jonah's?

KEY THEMES: IMPORTANT IDEAS THAT APPEAR THROUGHOUT THE STORY

1. **The MERCY of God:** The immensity of God's mercy.
2. **The MISSION of God:** God loves rescuing lost people (even the ones you hate).
3. **The SOVEREIGNTY of God:** Nothing is hard for God.
4. **Our need for HEART SURVERY:** Jonah is a scalpel aimed at revealing and transforming your heart.

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LITERARY DESIGN:

Jonah is an intentionally crafted story that employs repetition, symmetry, irony, and wordplay to draw our attention to the book's central themes.

Jonah	Ninevah
God speaks to Jonah (1:1)	God speaks to Nineveh (3:4)
Jonah runs from God (1:3)	Nineveh has rebelled against God (1:2)
God pursues Jonah (1:17)	God pursues Nineveh (3:2)
Jonah faces destruction (Jonah 2:2–6)	Nineveh faces destruction (3:4)
Jonah cries out (2:2)	Nineveh cries out (3:8)
God shows Jonah mercy (2:10)	God shows Nineveh mercy (3:10)
Jonah DOES NOT REPENT (4:9)	Nineveh REPENTS (3:10)

A READING GUIDE: AS WE READ THROUGH EACH CHAPTER, LOOK FOR...

Chapter 1	• The prodigal prophet—Jonah runs from God's mission. • Contrast: The prophet rebels; pagan sailors worship. • Jonah's heart: He would rather die than obey.
Chapter 2	• Jonah's heart: He God's mercy for himself, but is unwilling to extend that mercy to Nineveh. • Jonah's prayer is a patchwork of Israel's Psalms • Jonah faces death for three days, then is "raised to new life" so he can invite the lost to be rescued (sound familiar?)
Chapter 3	• Jonah's heart: His obedience is begrudging. • Contrast: The prophet continues to rebel; the pagan city quickly repents. • The city is "great"—in size <i>and</i> importance to God's heart.
Chapter 4	• Jonah's heart: He is mad that God is gracious—he is the older brother. • Contrast: Jonah remains unrepentant; Nineveh model repents • The story ends with a question—which invites us to ponder: Is my heart like God's heart or Jonah's heart?