



## How Far Will He Go?

Text: Jonah 1:1-17

Grow Group and Discipleship Director Luann Riley

1. Many of us think we know the story of Jonah, but far too few of us have ever carefully and thoughtfully read through the book of Jonah. The good news is that if we do, we will come to a greater understanding and embrace of the depth of God's love for us. Prior to Luann's message, what did you know about the book of Jonah and where did your knowledge and understanding of Jonah's story come from? If you had to summarize in a sentence what you thought the main point of Jonah's story was, prior to hearing Luann's message, what would it have been?
2. Read Jonah 1:1-3.
  - a. What is something God has commanded you to do that you find incredibly difficult to obey?
  - b. What makes it so difficult?
  - c. What is your Tarshish? In other words, what methods do you use in order to try and escape God's presence? (Examples: You bury yourself in work, numb with entertainment. Etc.)
  - d. What practical steps can you take towards obedience?
3. Luann shared the challenging truth that it took only one day for Jonah to go from "faithful prophet" to "runaway rebel." What are safeguards we can put in place to prevent a similar experience in our lives or to wake us up when we are "asleep"?
4. Read Jonah 1:4-17. In her sermon, Luann described her own personal storm, like Jonah's, that served as her wake-up call.
  - a. Have you ever experienced a "wake-up call" regarding your own disobedience? What happened?
  - b. Did you consider this "wake-up call" to be an act of punishment or grace? Why?
  - c. What was your reaction to the "storm" in your life?
  - d. Was it a moment of clarity that led to humility and repentance? Or, did you press further into the storm to try and outrun God's presence? How did that turn out for you?
  - e. What did it teach you? Are you able to thank God for the storm?

Challenge: Where do you find yourself in Jonah's story? Are you running from God's call? Are you struggling with obedience? Are you currently in a storm? Share with the group how they can specifically be praying for you in this season.

## Prayer: A Prayer About Tarshish Looking Good

Jesus, Tarshish is looking pretty good to me today and it wouldn't be very hard to buy a ticket to start sailing in that direction. As I start my day, I'm more aware of the demands of the gospel than the delights of the gospel. That's not news to you, but it's good for me just to "get it out there." If I could only offer God selective obedience, there'd be no problem. But the Father's asking me to go to some places and some people I'd just as soon not see till heaven.

I understand Jonah's struggle, but more importantly, you understand mine. No one has wrestled with doing the will of God more than you. No one has been more honest about the price of obedience. No one counted the cost more carefully than you.

You sweat blood, I only sweat water. You were thinking about the great needs of others, I'm thinking primarily about me and how much I want a hassle free... mess free... conflict free life.

That's why it's so easy for me to come to you today without editing my feelings... repackaging my angst... or spinning my thoughts. Because I'm one of those people you were thinking about as you prepared to go to the cross. As you cried out, "Father, forgive them... they don't know what they're doing"... you had me in view. As you crushed the head of the serpent... you had me in mind. As you were raised from the dead... you had me in your heart. When you spoke the words to Mary, "Don't be afraid," it wasn't just for her benefit, but for mine as well.

Just talking to you this morning, I'm feeling better, Jesus. It's not that all-of-a-sudden I now want to go to Nineveh. But I am feeling a little less inclined to break in line at the ticket counter to pay my fare to Tarshish. Thank you for being so welcoming, patient and understanding.

Jesus, you paid our fare for a life in the new heaven and new earth, and you'll walk with us every step of the way and be with us every moment of the day until then. Even as I'm not thrilled about my current and future assignments to Nineveh, to know that you are with us and for us should be enough. Surprise me with the power of the gospel. Make my resigned heart and a willing and glad heart. So very Amen, I pray, in your loving name.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/scotty-smith/a-prayer-about-tarshish-looking-good/>

## STUDY DEEPER

### JONAH 1:1—IS THE BOOK OF JONAH FACT OR FICTION?

**PROBLEM:** Traditional Bible scholarship has held that the Book of Jonah records events that actually took place in history. However, because of the literary style of the book and the amazing adventures that are said to have befallen the prophet Jonah, many modern scholars propose that

it is not a book of actual historical events, but a fictional story designed to communicate a message. Did the events of Jonah actually happen or not?

SOLUTION: There is good evidence that the events recorded in the Book of Jonah are literal historical events that took place in the life of the prophet Jonah.

First, the tendency to deny the historicity of Jonah stems from an anti-supernatural bias. If miracles are possible, there is no real reason to deny that Jonah is historical.

Second, Jonah and his prophetic ministry is mentioned in the historical book of 2 Kings (14:25). If his supernatural prediction is mentioned in a historical book, why should the historical nature of his prophetic book be rejected?

Third, the most devastating argument against the denial of the historical accuracy of Jonah is found in Matthew 12:40. In this passage Jesus predicts His own burial and resurrection, and provides the doubting scribes and Pharisees the sign that they demanded. The sign is the experience of Jonah. Jesus says, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." If the tale of Jonah's experience in the belly of the great fish was only fiction, then this provided no prophetic support for Jesus' claim. The point of making reference to Jonah is that if they did not believe the story of Jonah being in the belly of the fish, then they would not believe the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. As far as Jesus was concerned, the historical fact of His own death, burial, and resurrection was on the same historical ground as Jonah in the belly of the fish. To reject one was to cast doubt on the other (cf. John 3:12). Likewise, if they believed one, they should believe the other.

Fourth, Jesus went on to mention the significant historical detail. His own death, burial, and resurrection was the supreme sign that verified His claims. When Jonah preached to the unbelieving Gentiles, they repented. But, here was Jesus in the presence of His own people, the very people of God, and yet they refused to believe. Therefore, the men of Nineveh would stand up in judgment against them, "because they [the men of Nineveh] repented at the preaching of Jonah" (Matt. 12:41). If the events of the Book of Jonah were merely parable or fiction, and not literal history, then the men of Nineveh did not really repent, and any judgment upon the unrepentant Pharisees would be unjust and unfair. Because of the testimony of Jesus, we can be sure that Jonah records literal history.

Finally, there is archaeological confirmation of a prophet named Jonah whose grave is found in northern Israel. In addition, some ancient coins have been unearthed with an inscription of a man coming out of a fish's mouth.

[http://defendinginerrancy.com/bible-solutions/Jonah\\_1.1.php](http://defendinginerrancy.com/bible-solutions/Jonah_1.1.php)