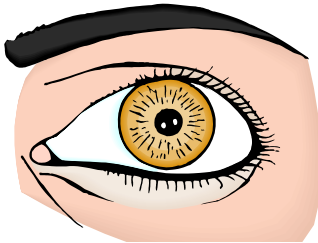


## NORTH CHRISTIAN CHURCH PREP SCHOOL LESSON

### Jonah Part 7

As we finish up our study on Jonah, we need to remember that Jonah finally accepted the Lord's command to give the warning message to the Ninevites. Because of this message, the Ninevites repented causing God to "change His mind". Now, did God really change His mind? He is perfect and never makes mistakes, right? So, why does the Bible say that then? Well, God wrote the Bible in a way that our human minds can understand. So, when you see things written like, God "changed His mind", the "hand" of God, or it made God "happy", this is what we call language of accommodation. That means that God had the Bible written so it would be clear and understandable to us. It would be like you having to tell a four year old about how the human eye works. You would have to think of something simple that could be used as an example so a four year old could understand you. Well, we are the four year olds here and God is super, super smart! Let's continue our story, shall we?



**Jonah 3:10** *When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.*

God not only showed mercy on Jonah in Chapters 1-2, but He is now showing mercy towards the Ninevites. Let's remind ourselves how Jonah reacted to God's mercy.

**Jonah 4:1-3** *But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry. He prayed to the LORD and said, "Please LORD, was not this what I said [to myself] while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness, and one who relents concerning calamity. Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life."*

Jonah admits, in his angry prayer to God, that he ran away from God's plan (breaking his vow) in order to frustrate it! He didn't want to deliver the message that might save Nineveh from the wrath of God! His attitude all along was that he did NOT want God to deliver his enemies.

Can you see how the miracle of the big fish is really not the main theme of this story? God can do them all day long and to Him they are not miracles at all. They are just who He is and it really is no big deal to Him. What is a big deal to Him, however, is teaching His people how to handle REAL problems in life. We have enemies. We have people we just don't like and there are people that just don't like us! This is the REAL problem because God can't make us all like each other. God chose to give us all a free will, so the REAL miracle is when human beings start thinking like God and

thinking of others FIRST! Selfish, mean human beings revealing God to other human beings is a HUGE miracle! God is excited when this happens. OK, maybe God does not really get “excited”, but you know what I mean. When His creatures choose to think and live like He wants them to, instead of being selfish and uncaring, He is glorified.

This book offers much more than we ever expected. It is teaching us things like what deserved suffering is and gives us an example of how to take time to look inside and examine ourselves. It also shows us how WE create our own misery by making selfish decisions. We can't relate to a big fish swallowing us, or then being saved from the ocean, but we CAN relate to not liking others and being jealous and feeling sorry for ourselves, yes?! The book of Jonah represents something “real” to us, even today. We have to remember to thank Jonah when we get to heaven. He had personal details of his life written out for us all to see and learn from! Not only that, Jonah admits to his failure! It is not very often that we fall on our face and while we are face down say “I did this to myself.” Jonah basically says, “I really wanted over 120,000 people to die and NOT get the Gospel message!” He admits what he did! That takes humility, my friends.

Okay so back to our friend Jonah. God is very clear in His response when he sees Jonah's reaction to the mercy He shows to the Ninevites.



**Jonah 4:3-4** *“Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life.” The Lord said, “Do you have good reason to be angry?”*

When you make a statement that is plain truth, it has a way of shutting up any people around you who are acting like babies! God's response may have shut Jonah up, but He did not listen. If Jonah had listened to God's encouragement on this matter, it would have spared himself a LOT of self-induced misery!

**Jonah 4:4-5** *The Lord said, “Do you have good reason to be angry?” Then Jonah went out from the city and sat east of it. There he made a shelter for himself and sat under it in the shade until he could see what would happen in the city.*

While Jonah is waiting out the remainder of the 40 days, God takes the opportunity to teach him a lesson.

**Jonah 4:6-11** *So the Lord God appointed a plant and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort. And Jonah was extremely happy about the plant. But God appointed a worm when dawn came the next day and it attacked the plant and it withered. When the sun came up God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he became faint and begged with all his soul to die, saying, “Death is better to me than life.” Then God said to Jonah, “Do you have good reason to be angry about the plant?”*

**And he said, "I have good reason to be angry, even to death." Then the Lord said, "You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work and which you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight. "Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?"**

Let's pretend that we are Jonah and remember why Jonah has this terrible attitude toward Nineveh. Back in Jonah's day, Nineveh was a big and powerful city in the Assyrian Empire. Throughout the Bible, God uses Assyria to show His anger towards and to punish the people of Israel. Let's be honest here. If a country invaded the United States and destroyed our country, would you want to go and give God's message of grace and love to them? Think about that for a minute! Jonah has no desire to show mercy towards his enemy, which is why he broke his vow in the first place (**Jonah 4:2**)! God's mercy is always better than man's mercy because God always uses clear thinking and not emotional thinking. God wants to show mercy because He loves us with an unconditional love!

I have questions for you. Why did God grow up the plant, which would provide shade for Jonah, just to have it die? Why was Jonah even sitting there that he would need shade? Do you remember that Jonah was sitting outside the city in hopes that God would destroy it?! So, let me get this straight. He wanted thousands upon thousands of people to die? WOW!! Then, He got angry and asked for death because the plant was eaten, eliminating his shade? Well, I think God was using that as a visual aid for Jonah to show him (and us) that he had more compassion for the plant, and cared more about his own personal comfort, than all of the people in Ninevah. Hmmmmm... sounds like God still has some work to do with Jonah. Kinda like He has with us, right?

I can't believe that this is the end of our study on Jonah. WOW!! We have learned a lot from this very short, but important book of the Bible. What is the moral of the story you ask? Well, there are several, but let's focus on this- learn God's Word so you can learn His will for your life, understand that you WILL fall flat on your face in this life, but He will be there to help you to get back on your feet. He loves you- never forget that!!!