

JONAH 3:1-10

GOD IN TRUTH

FOR FURTHER STUDY

The artistry and style of this brief prophecy continues in **Jonah 3**. In this short chapter we see the second call of the prophet, the sweeping transformation of a people and the mercy of God in truth.

3:1—This sentence is word-for-word identical with **Jonah 1:1** with a few obvious exceptions: “a second time” replaces “son of Amittai.” This repeated call of God is significant to Jonah and us. It means that we can never truly “miss out” on the calling of God for our lives. We can run from it, disregard it and disobey it, but we can never cancel it out forever. God always calls.

3:2-3—God’s call to “rise and go” is again identical to **Jonah 1:2**, but this time Jonah’s response is obedience instead of flight.

The reference to an “*exceedingly great city/a three days’ walk*” is best understood as a view to the growing Nineveh and its surrounding districts or suburbs. It would take about this time to proclaim Jonah’s simple message throughout this area, probably about 1700 acres or more.

3:4—Jonah’s sermon is five words long in the original language.

3:5-6—The people’s response to the message is quick, sharp, deep and broad in contrast. The “*believed in God.*” This terse statement is not meant to be understood any other way. These people become believers. This dramatic mania reached the king himself. His proclamation is over seven times longer than Jonah’s

3:7-9—After they believed, they commit to change their lifestyle, especially in regard to their wickedness and violence. Here is yet another resounding note of contrast to **2:1-10**: Jonah does not exhibit clear confession or repentance in the fish but the entire city of Nineveh apparently does.

3:10— “*Then God relented...and He did not do it.*” This appears at first like a theological quandary. *Does God change His mind?* The best answer to that question is actually, *it all depends!* God does not change in His essence or character. God does not break a promise. God cannot lie. (**Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29; Psalm 110:4**) But Jonah’s proclamation in **3:4** concerning Nineveh’s future is not an unconditional Divine decree or promise. It is a conditional announcement of intention, which appear often in our Bible. God often does change His mind about these. See **Exodus 32:12-14; Amos 7:3-6; Joel 2:13-14; Jeremiah 18:5-10** and several others. A great example for Jonah is the prophecy of **Nahum**, given to Nineveh about 150 years later.



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APPLICATION

I hope that by now you are beginning to appreciate the delicate and challenging nuances of the book of Jonah: abundant irony, artistic structure, masterful narrative, clever word plays, intentional use of dialogue and the facets and features of Hebrew tragedy.

Our difficulty lies in sharpening these elements into practical life change instead of simply admiring them as they are. The fact is, Jonah demands something of us. We ought to be different by reading it, heeding its warnings and following its positive teaching.

What are your impressions of the book so far?

How have your thoughts and impressions changed as we've gone through it?

We've talked about Jonah's flight from God's call and how that too often parallels our own running from our Lord.

But what about your calling?

Do you know where and how God specifically designed you to operate?

If not, how do you think God has specifically gifted you?

If you don't know ask a Christian friend who knows you very well.

God's calling will intersect the way He has gifted you.

Have you run from this calling?

Do you feel like you've missed it altogether?

God's calling on our lives has no expiration date. It is an open invitation to experience the joy and life that He has designed for you.

But joining God's calling almost always demands great faith.

It can even seem scary and "foolish" at times.

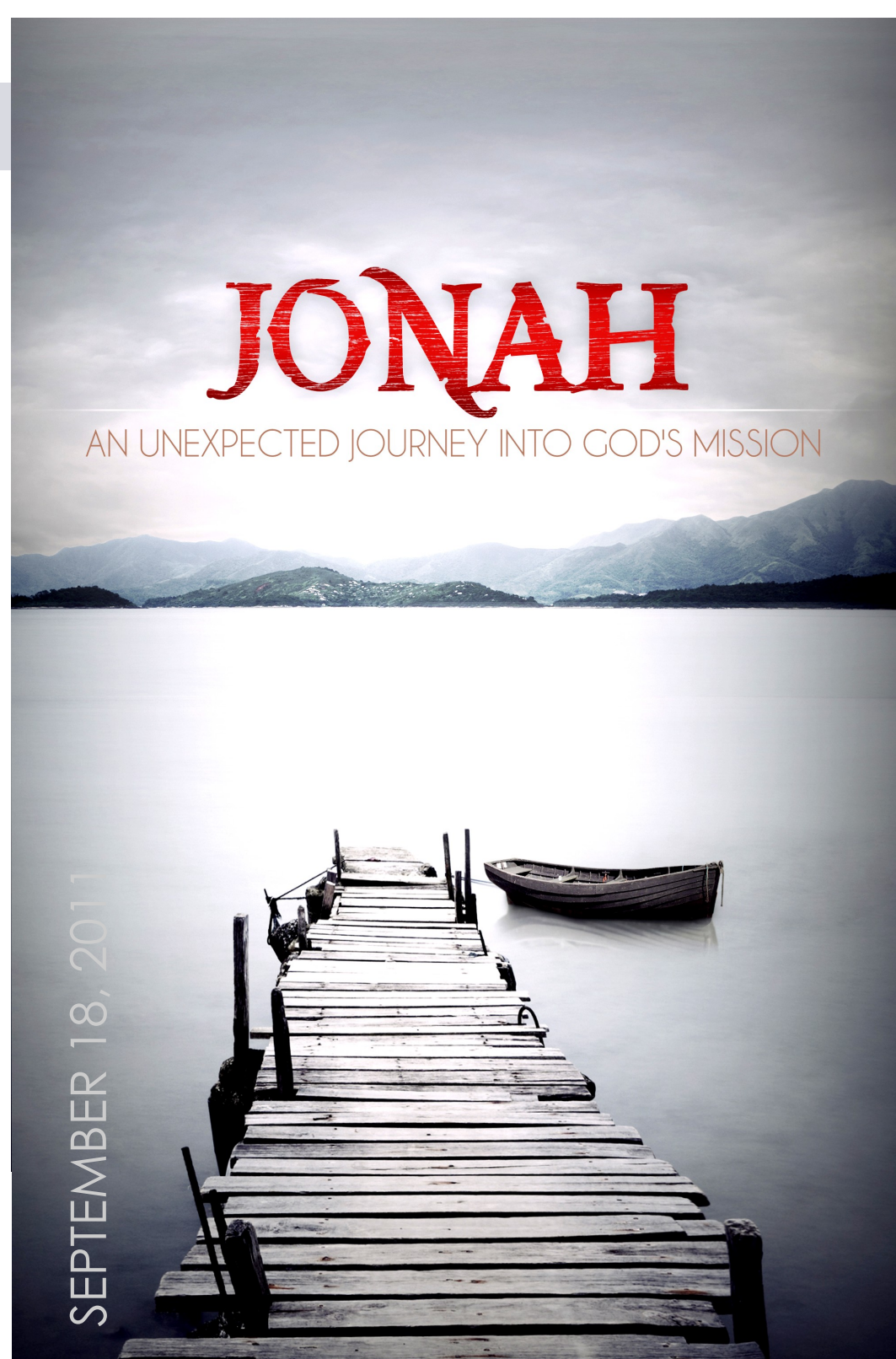
But it is always the best place for you to be. And the safest!

Special Application:

Think of one friend or acquaintance or neighbor that does not know Jesus. Ask God to bring the name of just one person to your mind.

Send us only their FIRST name, or even write it down this morning, so that we can join you in prayer for these people that God so loves.

Are you willing to be used by God in the life of this one person?



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