

# Jonah 1 – a man with a mission?

**Question:** Have you ever been told to do something you really didn't want to do?

- How did you feel?
- How did you act?

God told Jonah to go to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria and he really did not want to go. God wanted him to prophesy to the people there and tell them that he planned to destroy the city because of their wicked ways. Jonah may have been scared to go there but he had other reasons to rebel too. He knew that if he prophesied as God said, the people of Nineveh may repent and then God would forgive them. And Jonah felt they should be punished. He had been given a clear mission but did not want to go so he ran away.

## Questions

Why do you think that:

God chose Jonah to go to Nineveh?

God wanted to warn the people of Nineveh?

Do you think we should offer help to people who we think don't deserve it?

Why? or why not?

Can you think of some examples?

In Genesis, Adam and Eve tried to hide from God too – Christian faith is clear that, however hard people try, no one is really able to hide from him. Read Psalm 139 to learn more about the impossibility of hiding from God.

## Prayer

*Lord,*

*We know your world is far from perfect and that we often fail you.*

*Help us to see clearly the work that you want us to do and give us the faith and courage we need.*

*Grant us wisdom so that we can follow the right path.*

*Amen*

# Jonah 2 – the eye of the storm

**Question:** Have you ever suffered because of something someone else did wrong? How did that make you feel?

By trying to run away from God, Jonah ended up in real trouble and brought trouble to others. Although the sailors did not share Jonah's religion, they recognised that disobedience to his God was a bad idea, telling him "That was an awful thing to do!" It is Jonah himself who suggests they throw him overboard to save themselves from the storm, but the sailors resist doing this at first.

**Questions:**

Jonah knew he was responsible for the storm.  
Does your opinion of him change when he offers to be sacrificed to the sea?  
Were the sailors right to refuse to throw Jonah overboard?  
How do you think these events affected Jonah's faith in

Matthew's Gospel (12: 40) says "In the same way that Jonah spent three days and nights in the big fish, so will the Son of Man spend three days and nights in the depths of the earth."  
Are there any other ways that Jonah's story is reflected in the story of Jesus?

**Prayer**

Lord,  
You teach us that you are always there and that you always love us.  
Help us to reflect your love in the way we treat others whether the going is easy or tough.  
Give us your strength when we are weak, your mercy when we are angry and your wisdom when we are unsure.  
Amen

# Jonah 3 – the eye of the storm

**Question:** Have you ever suffered because of something someone else did wrong? How did that make you feel?

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**Questions:**

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- Were the sailors right to refuse to throw Jonah overboard?
- How do you think these events affected Jonah's faith in God?
- Have difficult times affected how you feel about God?

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Amen

# Jonah 4 – only human

The book of Jonah shows that God wants to forgive people – wants them to say sorry and make changes to their behaviour. This makes Jonah angry; he cannot understand why God would choose to forgive the people of Nineveh and he shares his frustration with God who shows Jonah that he has no right to be angry.

The parable in Luke 15:11 -32 (sometimes called 'The Prodigal Son') gives another example of someone who is angry about compassion being shown when someone else repents. How does the older brother's behaviour mirror Jonah's behaviour?

## Questions

- Can you be happy for others who receive good things? .... Even if you think they may not deserve them?

## Questions

- What makes you angry?
- Is there anything you find hard to forgive?
- Does the story of Jonah have anything to teach us about finding it hard to forgive?
- Do you think that the story of Jonah is about a historical person or is it a parable—a story to help readers reflect on their own lives and on God?

## Prayer

Lord,

*However hard we try, we often fail to do the right thing.*

*Help us not to try and hide our failings from you but*

*come to you for help and forgiveness.*

*Help us also to forgive others as you forgive us.*

*Amen*