

# OVERBOARD

Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church  
Jonah 1.1-3 | January 5th, 2020  
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## I. Introduction to this Series and Study

Have you ever felt like running from God? Or like everything was going better for everyone else? Or like life had tossed you overboard? If so, you are not alone.

This new year we begin a new series in the book of Jonah, engaging those very questions – and many more. As we will see, God can use those very difficulties and dilemmas to draw us deeper into the rhythms of grace through a Christ-centered life in His family. For this reason, Jesus compared himself to Jonah, the prodigal prophet! (see **Matthew 12.38-45** or **Luke 11.29-32**)

## II. Connect with One Another

Think about the trajectory of your life. How would you answer the question, “Where are you?” (not geographically, but spiritually, emotionally, relationally)

## III. Study the Text

- a. Find a comfortable chair, your Bible, and read the whole book of **Jonah** aloud in one sitting (you can do it – it’s just 48 verses!).

Imagine you are reading it for the first time. Pause periodically and ask yourself what you think will happen next. How does the story defy your expectations? What details had you missed before? How do these details aid to your understanding of the message of Jonah? How would you sum up the message of this book in one sentence?

- b. Read **Jonah 1.1**.

The book of Jonah begins similarly to other prophetic books: God’s Word is made known to his messenger (for other examples, see **Joel 1.1**, **Micah 1.1**, **Jeremiah 1.4**).

Why do you think these prophetic books begin with “the Word”? What is the significance? What do you think of when you think of “the Word”?

- c. Jonah means “dove” and Amittai “truth.” So, Jonah’s name is literally “Dove of Truth.” In a time when names carried great significance, what would you expect from a prophet with this name?

- d. Read **Jonah 1.2**.

God’s instructions address the wickedness of a distant city in a foreign land. How does this reveal what troubles the heart of God?

- e. Jonah prophesies in the temple in Jerusalem. Why do you think God would send one of his own prophets to evil Nineveh of all places?



Imagine you're writing a modern-day version of this story. Where would Jonah work? To whom would he be sent? Why?

f. What do you think it means to "preach against [Nineveh]"?

g. Read **Jonah 1.3**.

Jonah tries to escape God's presence (literally, he runs from God's "face").

Again, imagine you don't know the story: Does Jonah's behavior line up to your expectations for an Israelite prophet named "Dove of Truth"? Why or why not?

h. When has God called you to do something you didn't want to do? How did you respond?

i. Instead of travelling east toward Nineveh, Jonah charts a boat to the westernmost location in the Ancient Near East. What is Jonah trying to accomplish? Why? Do you think he will be successful?

j. How do you think our disobedience affects God's plans? Why?

k. Find some time this week to meditate on **Psalm 139**.

#### IV. Pray

a. Ask God's blessing over this 8-week study, that we would clearly see our place in our spiritual journeys and receive God's courage to take the next right step,

b. Lift up leaders by name – at our church, in our nation, and around the world – that they would hear God's call and respond faithfully to his guidance,

c. Pray for those you know who are far from God, who have run the other direction from his face and ask that the Holy Spirit would equip you to invite them into life in God's family.

#### V. Digging Deeper

a. **2nd Kings 14.23-25** reveals a bit of Jonah's theological perspective. Tim Keller explains, "His contemporaries, Amos and Hosea, were against the corruption of the royal administrations. Jonah, however, appears to have deliberately ignored the king's wrongdoing in his nationalistic zeal to build up his country's power and influence." How does this insight help you understand Jonah's actions in chapter 1?

b. Read **Psalm 94.8-11** and **Jeremiah 23.23-24**. What do these passages tell us about God's ability to see the hearts of all people?

c. Read **Genesis 3.1-9**. Have you ever tried to hide or escape from God's presence? If so, why? What was the result?

d. Jonah's decision to travel in the opposite direction of God's calling contrasts with other prophets. Read **Isaiah 6.1-8** and **Hosea 1.1-3**. How did these prophets answer God's call on their life? When has God called you into his service? How have you responded?

For further resources click onto [gdshp.ch/jonah113](http://gdshp.ch/jonah113)

