

# JONAH: LIFE. LESSONS.

A VERY HONEST PRAYER - JONAH 2:1-10



## SERMON NOTES:

### BIG IDEA:

Honest \_\_\_\_\_ take us to heavenly \_\_\_\_\_.

1. Honest prayers are \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Honest prayers are \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Honest prayers are \_\_\_\_\_.

### NEXT STEPS:

1. Today, I will admit I need some help and I will go to [www.tbclife.net/sunday](http://www.tbclife.net/sunday) to find resources to help me deal with the distressful situation(s) I am currently facing.
2. This week, I will search the Bible for a verse or passage I can memorize, lean on, and trust in times of trouble.
3. This week, and for the entire month of June, I will read one Psalm a day for next 30 days.
4. Today, I will write a note of thanks to someone who has blessed and encouraged me in some aspect of my life.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Open your group in prayer, and remember that this is only a guide. Feel free to discuss each of the provided questions and Next Steps above, or simply dive deeper into just one. Before you close with prayer, take a few minutes to look over the three essential questions at the end before the Digging Deeper Section. **NEW:** Check out the section called Toolbox that gives you practical tools to take this further!

### **OBSERVE | *What Do I See?***

1. Place a box around each connecting word in the passage. (Refer to “Observation Task: Box Connecting Words” in the Appendix.)
2. Underline all setting details in this passage (i.e. – belly of fish, etc.)

### **INTERPRET | *What Does It Mean?***

3. How does Jonah’s attitude and perspective about death change from his experience in the storm of chapter 1 to his experience within the whale here in chapter 2?
4. Should verse 8 be regarded as a personal confession on Jonah’s part? Why or why not?
5. What kind of spiritual change do we see in Jonah within this passage? What might still be lacking within Jonah even as this chapter ends though (Hint: read chapter 4)?
6. What is the significance of Jonah being in the whale for “three days and three nights?” Specifically, how does Jonah’s rescue foreshadow humanity’s greater rescue from sin (Matthew 12:39-41; 16:4; Luke 11:29-32)?

### **APPLY | *How Does It Work?***

7. What does your prayer life reveal about your spiritual dependency on the Lord? Specifically, do you only pray when you are in the midst of great difficulty? How do you think God views your struggle with mixed motives in your prayers? When is thanksgiving prayer appropriate?

8. How have you experienced God's rescue from sin and death in your life?

9. What steps can you take this week to deepen your prayer life in the following areas?

*Your personal relationship with the Lord :*

*Your spiritual community :*

*Those far from God:*

Create a personal application statement that expresses how you will apply this truth in your life:

### THREE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

If you have more time, the following questions are intended to be open-ended and encourage members to consider how they felt and what they, or the group, can do as a result of hearing the message!

1. **What do you think?** How did this message challenge, change, or affirm your thinking? What point in this message was most impactful for you?
2. **What will you do?** How will you or your group put into practice what you've learned today?
3. **How can you help others in your group?** How can you encourage, affirm, pray for, and keep accountable the commitments they put into practice?

## TOOLBOX:

- **Interest-Creating Story** | Read through this tool in the Appendix and discover how to start a spiritual conversation. Spend some time this week thinking about and practicing “marking yourself as spiritual” in conversations with family and friends. Pray for opportunities to share with people all around you!
- **Every Neighbor Prayer** | As a group, spend time praying for those on your group’s board, adding names as led. **Pray together for the names on the board. Read through the ideas behind Every Neighbor Prayer tool. See Appendix.**

## DIGGING DEEPER:

### God’s Holy Temple (2:4, 7)

When King Solomon dedicated the temple in Jerusalem, he asked God for this special favor (1 Kings 8:38-40 NKJV):

*Whatever prayer, whatever supplication is made by anyone, or by all Your people Israel, when each one knows the plague of his own heart and spreads out his hands toward this temple: then hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and forgive, and act, and give to everyone according to all his ways, whose heart You know...that they may fear You all the days that they live in the land which You gave to our fathers.”*

Jonah claimed that promise. By faith, he looked toward God’s temple and asked God to deliver him; and God kept His promise and answered his call. (Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Amazed, OT Commentary Minor Prophets* [Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook Publishers, 1996])

### Salvation (2:9)

Old Testament salvation usually refers to a concrete, objective act of deliverance from danger and despair. It can be expressed by several Hebrew words, many of them related to the verb *yasha’*. In general, the root *yasha’* implies bringing help to people in the midst of their trouble rather than in rescuing them from it. It is almost exclusively a theological term with Yahweh as its subject and His people as its object. This word is used especially to describe God’s victory for Israel in the exodus (Exod. 14:13).

But the term is most at home in worship and prayer. Nearly half the psalms use some form of the root, and about 40 percent of its total occurrences appear in the Book of Psalms. Theologically, Israelite worship and instruction supremely associated Yahweh with salvation.

When Old Testament believers raise laments or complaints to God, they often cry out *hoshi’ah*, “Save!” (Ps. 12:1; 71:2). Often God answers with the promise to save (Jer. 15:20). God is thus known as “my salvation” or “my help” (Mic. 7:7).

People like Jonah who see their prayers answered look back at the experience and testify that God has given them salvation (Isa. 25:9). They know that God alone can bring deliverance because human help is in vain (Hos. 14:3). But God expects the person being delivered to trust him and to repent of his sins (Isa. 30:15).

Jonah joined a long line of his ancestors in seeking God in his temple and lamenting, asking for salvation. He also joined a long line of people who had experienced God’s deliverance and could proclaim, “Salvation comes from the Lord.” (Trent C. Butler, *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Holman New Testament Commentary* [Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005])

## APPENDIX:

### OBSERVATION TASK - BOX CONNECTING WORDS

These important words indicate the logical connection between words, phrases, and clauses. Here are eight types of common connecting words to look for:

1. Comparison either points out similarities between two or more related ideas or simply joins like ideas. Comparison words include: and, like, as, just as, also, so also, even so.
2. Contrast points out dissimilarities between ideas. Contrast words include: but, rather, yet, however.
3. Purpose indicates the intended goal of an idea or action, whether or not it was realized. Purpose words include: that, so that, in order that.
4. Result is similar to “purpose,” but indicates the actual consequence, whether or not it was intended. Result words include: that, so that, as a result, with the result that.
5. Cause expresses the basis or cause of an action. Cause words include: because, since, and sometimes for.
6. Explanation is what follows and further explains the previous idea, giving reasons why it is true, why it occurred, or simply adding additional information. Look for the key word “for.”
7. Inference provides a logical consequence, conclusion, or summary to the previous discussion. Inference words include: therefore, for this reason.
8. Condition presents a condition that must occur before a certain action or conclusion can take place. The statement may or may not reflect reality (i.e., it could be hypothetical). Key word is “if”.

### INTEREST CREATING STORY - HOW TO START A SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION

These important words indicate the logical connection between words, phrases, and clauses. Here are eight types of common connecting words to look for:

The parables that Jesus told created an interest in His Kingdom- the characteristics, the hopes, and the realities of the gospel. Sometimes, Jesus wouldn't even mention that He was Messiah; sometimes He did pointedly. Jesus made the gospel accessible to those who would hear and didn't apologize for who He was.

Sadly, we have become conditioned to put on a filter and not speak of Jesus- because we imagine that it is awkward, pushy, or politically incorrect. We need to take off this filter and grow in boldness and love as we share stories about who He is and what He is about. There was no doubt that He was marking himself as special, as a spiritual being, and often, much more than that!

Likewise, “marking ourselves as spiritual” can help us gauge whether others are interested in God and His message. Some people will “lean in” as you speak about such topics, asking additional questions, sharing their own beliefs, telling about their own journey. Some will not; they will “lean back” and change the topic, become silent, or shut down altogether. Allow the Holy Spirit to prompt you as you initiate and let Him do the work of speaking to a person's soul.

Practice talking with your spouse, children, or friend about two or three of the following “interest creating” topics:

*Recently, God/Jesus has been teaching me that...*

*I am realizing more and more that God has blessed me by...*

*I use to struggle with (insert fear, stronghold, idolatry) but now I see God wants me to believe...*

*I decided to follow Jesus because...*

Think of common topics that come up as you meet people - for example: career, living situation, family history, educational background. Pick one of these and tell how God changed your path in the past, or how He is guiding you in the present.

As you practice talking about these things, try to end with a learning question such as, “Have you ever considered God in this way before?” OR “Do you think God is teaching/blessing/asking you to believe anything right now?” Your questions are to gauge a response and to allow space for them to interact with your story. Now, be prayerful and alert as to who God wants you to share with this week!

### *Prayer Stories*

Another way to create interest is prayer stories. Most people in today’s world still value prayer. Think of someone in your Live, Work, and Play network who has expressed a need, struggle, or unmet desire. Can you do one of the following this week?

Share how God has answered a prayer in your life, something specific and real and transforming.

**EVERY NEIGHBOR PRAYER** At the heart of Every Neighbor, there is a desire to be observant, expectant, and involved in who God is putting into our paths where we Live, Work, and Play. He wants us to pray- that many will know Him as Father and as Savior, as He draws them to Himself and His Kingdom (John 6:44). As well, Jesus modeled prayer for those who were like “sheep without a shepherd (Mark 6:32- 34).” Jesus’s own ministry of compassion (Matthew 14:14, 15:32) to those who were on the fringes of society, those who had no status or reputation, was a beautiful example of who we are to be praying for and seeking to include in our daily lives- those who are outside our comfort zones, but fully loved and wanted by our God.

Each week, we gather to pray for these people. Who did God impress upon you when you drew out your Live, Work, and Play network? Who are the people who might be seeking His Kingdom, who are asking hard questions, who are far from Christ and need a better Hope? Using your Live, Work, and Play network, who do you need to purposively add to the Every Neighbor Prayer board? On this board, collect the names of those you are hoping to bless with the gospel through service, acts of love, conversation, and/or Bible study. Pray boldly for God to reveal Himself to them and open their eyes to His power and freedom.

You may meet someone new this week or renew an old relationship from the past. Is this someone God is asking you to put on the Every Neighbor Prayer board, to actively pray big for their salvation? Add them to the board. Each week, take time to update your group, and let’s see what God will do! Another tool that’s useful is [www.blesseveryhome.com](http://www.blesseveryhome.com).

**LIVE, WORK, PLAY MAP** The word “oikos” is a Greek word that means family. In Jesus’s time, a family would include workers, extended family, and people residing in their home. Basically, this was their greatest circle of influence. For us, this can also include not only our family, but our friends, coworkers, and acquaintances. It can include the guy at the gas station that you see at each fill up, or the barista that serves you that mocha latte each morning. It is anyone that we commonly encounter on a regular basis, giving you the ability to have influence in their lives.

So what does this have to do with us, and how does it help us spread the gospel? “Oikos” is used around 120 times in the New Testament. Often when Jesus or his disciples found people that were open to the gospel, He would eventually share the message with the entire network, their oikos and their communities. Jesus met the woman at the well (John 4), and after revealing His message and who He was as Messiah, she was amazed and told her oikos, her whole town, AND many believed! We want to see the same happen. Every Day and Every Neighbor means that we are participants in a Greater Story of God’s plan of salvation and we can be ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5) wherever and with whomever we find ourselves.



Draw your own network: Think about the people in your spheres of influence. With whom do you live, work, and play? Be as exhaustive as possible and brainstorm away! Also, think about people who are just beyond your normal spheres. People who are that next step out- perhaps an acquaintance whom you don’t know well, a neighbor who is different from you ethnically or social-economically, a community member whom the Holy Spirit has put in your path but is more a stranger than friend? Be creative and think outside the box on this one!

## KIDS' DISCUSSION:

God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and tell the people about God. But Jonah didn't listen to God. Jonah got on a boat going the other direction. A big storm came and tossed the boat around. The sailors on the boat threw Jonah into the sea and the storm stopped.

But what happened to Jonah? Jonah was thrown off a boat in the middle of a storm. Instead of drowning, he was swallowed by a big fish. God sent a big fish to come and swallow Jonah up. Inside the fish, Jonah prayed to God, and God heard Jonah's cries for help. For one day, Jonah was inside the fish's belly. For two days, Jonah was inside the fish's belly. For three whole days, Jonah was inside the fish's belly. What was Jonah going to do? Jonah prayed to God. Jonah praised God for being good and great. Jonah asked God to help him. God hears us when we pray. God heard Jonah. God commanded the fish, and the big fish spit Jonah onto dry land. Jonah was free! God heard Jonah when he prayed. God hears us too.

Pastor David told us in his sermon, "Honest prayers are simple and scriptural. When we don't know what to pray, pray scripture." Pray these verses out loud with your child's name in them:

God,  
May \_\_\_\_\_ (child's name) have a heart that recognizes You as the Lord. (Jeremiah 24:7a)

God,  
Help \_\_\_\_\_ (child's name) cast all his/her anxieties on You because You care for  
\_\_\_\_\_ (child's name.) (1 Peter 5:7a)

We know that God's word is His will, and we can have confidence in praying God's word back to Him.

## KIDS' ACTIVITY:

Items Needed: Blue balloon, black marker, paper Jonah

Cut out of paper the small outline of a man. Place inside the balloon. Inflate the balloon and tie off. Draw eyes, mouth, and fins onto the balloon to look like a fish.

Directions:

Say, "When we talk to God, He hears us. He talks back to us through His words and through answered prayers. We can have a back and forth relationship with God. Just like if I hit the balloon to you and you hit it back to me." Hit the balloon to your child, and have them hit it back to you. Your whole family can play. Spend some time tossing the balloon around trying not to let the balloon hit the ground. Remind them that when Jonah was inside the fish, he cried out to God for help. God heard Jonah and answered him. God hears us too.

