

Running From God

A Study in the Book of Jonah

LESSON ONE

Jonah's Attempt to Flee from God (Jonah 1:1-6)

In verse one, Jonah is named as the son of Amittai. The name Jonah means “Dove” and his father, Amittai’s, name means “Truth” or “My Truth.” This seems to indicate that Jonah’s upbringing was probably built on a foundation of faith, and his ancestors were truth-seekers of God. Jonah’s call from God to be His prophet, His mouthpiece and representative, was a calling of great honor.

We see Jonah mentioned only one other time in the Old Testament, found in **2 Kings 14:23-25**, where it records the prophecy God spoke through Jonah to Jeroboam II, a prophecy God fulfilled, bringing Israel into a time of great prosperity and wealth, and although God used Jeroboam to restore and expand Israel’s borders, Israel also remained in a state of great spiritual depravity.

Prayerfully read Jonah, chapter one, verses 1 - 6.

1. Looking at **verse 2**, what was the “Word of the Lord” that came to Jonah? What **three things** did God tell him to do?
2. What reason did God give to Jonah for this commission, seen in the last part of verse 2?
3. This was a very uncommon commission, for God to call a prophet to go to a foreign land to rebuke them of their sin and call them to repentance. There were probably many reasons Jonah was reluctant to go. Still looking at verse 2, how did God describe Nineveh in this verse? What two descriptions did He use?

4. To get a good description of the wickedness of Nineveh, read **Nahum, chapter 3**. In fact, the whole book of Nahum is dedicated to Nineveh and her evils, as well as God's wrath regarding her. Looking at **Nahum 3:1-4** jot down some of the key descriptions of the wickedness of this city.

5. The city of Nineveh was the Assyrian capital, and it was not only wicked and great in size, but it was also a city of great wealth and culture, known for its great conquests and military innovations, such as iron weapons of war. Assyria's dominance and power played a fearsome and crucial role in Israel's history. Looking at **Jonah 1:3**, record Jonah's response to God's call.

6. God told Jonah to go **east** to Nineveh. Instead, he fled and went **west** to Tarshish. Nineveh was east of Israel and Tarshish was as far west as you can go, on the coast of what is now called Spain. Jonah actually thought he could get far away enough to flee God's presence. This was foolishness. Look up and record the following verses below that reveal how foolish this thought was.

Psalm 139:7 -

Psalm 139:8 -

Psalm 139:9 & 10 -

Psalm 139:11 -

7. Looking at **verse 4** of Jonah, chapter 1, record what God's response was to Jonah's "escape."
8. Apparently, Jonah forgot **Who** his God was! What does God say about Himself in **Jeremiah 23:24**? Record that verse below.
9. How is God described in the following Scriptures?
- Amos 4:13 -**
- Amos 5:8 -**
- Amos 9:6 -**
10. The symbol of the Dove is most often associated with the Holy Spirit, and is attributed to characteristics of gentleness, harmlessness, or innocence, as Jesus indicates in Matthew 10:16. Jonah's name, associated with a dove, seems to be **contradictory to his actions**, but before we get too critical of Jonah, we need to look into **our own** hearts. We, as believers, are called the **sons and daughters of God** and the **bride of Christ**. Yet do we always act in ways that are reflective of those titles? What does Paul tell us concerning our behavior in **Ephesians 5:8-10**? Look up these verses and record them below.

11. How many times have **we** resisted God's calling and sought to "flee" from His presence? Man's human nature has oftentimes fallen into this foolishness from the very beginning of his existence. Look up **Genesis 3:8** and record the futile attempt of Adam and Eve to hide from God.
12. God, the Maker of heaven and earth, went after Jonah by causing a mighty wind to come after him, threatening to break up the ship he was "hiding" in. Have you ever found yourself in a situation where God caused a storm in your life to apprehend you while you were trying to run away from Him? Do you have an experience you can share?
13. It is because of **God's mercy and love** that He apprehends us with storms in our life in those times when we have turned away from Him. What do the following Scriptures tell us concerning this?

Psalm 119:67 -

Psalm 119:71 -

Psalm 119:75 -

14. What assurance do we find in **Revelation 3:19** that these storms of discipline are born out of God's love for us? Record the verse below.
15. As we look at **verses 5 & 6**, we are reminded that our actions never just affect us alone. The consequences of our actions always affect others as well. What were the circumstances Jonah brought to others in the boat with him, described in **verses 4 & 5**?
16. What does **verse 5** tell us about how the ship captain and crew **responded** to these circumstances? What did they do?
17. What does **verse 5** say **Jonah was doing** while the men were crying out to their gods and trying to save the ship?

One thing that happens to us when we're running away from God, is that all of our thoughts and focus turn inward. We become absorbed in our own feelings to the neglect and awareness of the people and circumstances around us. This was certainly true of Jonah. Jonah paid no attention to the storm going on around him, He was too consumed with the storm going on inside him, which was a result of having run from God and His calling. The **Bible Knowledge Commentary** states, **"What an object lesson to God's people then and now to awaken from apathy as crying people perish on the sea of life."**

18. What response did the captain have towards Jonah's "sleeping" in **verse 6**? What does he say to him and what does he ask him to do?

19. We too, can fall into apathy, unaware and uncaring of what's going on around us. God's Word warns us, just as the captain of the ship warned Jonah to **wake up** out of our "sleep." Look up and record the following verses.

Romans 13:10 & 11 -

Ephesians 5:14 – 17 -

1 Thessalonians 5:5 & 6 -

These men, who did not know the living God, were instinctively crying out to every "god" they could think of to intervene and save them. But the prophet of God Almighty laid sleeping and oblivious to the dangers surrounding himself and the entire crew. Bible commentator, **Charles Feinberg** states, **"It is well known how often sin brings insensibility with it also. What a shame that the prophet of God had to be called to pray by a heathen."**

20. How do Jonah's actions speak to your own heart? Do you have a thought, a question or an experience to share with the group that relates to Jonah and his actions?

21. What is the ship captain hopeful for as he asks Jonah to pray to his God?
Looking at the end of **Verse 6**, what does he say?

22. In **Psalm 107** the loving kindness of the Lord on the repentant sinner is beautifully displayed. He is a God whose ear is open to the brokenhearted. Write down some of the verses from this psalm below, that describe how the Lord saves those who call upon Him.

Psalm 107:17-19 -

Psalm 107:25 -

Psalm 107:27-29 -

Psalm 107:31 -

Psalm 107:43 -

23. What is your greatest take-away from this first portion of our study of Jonah?

This study was written and prepared by Shawn Van Hook, 2026

