

## Notes



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### **Meeting With God Bible Reading Notes**

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#### **Week 28: Jonah (A character study)**

That Jonah was a real person is shown by a reference to him in 2 Kings 14:25, indicating that he lived during the 8th century BC. Who actually wrote the book *Jonah* remains unknown. It could be autobiographical, but nowhere is the first person used. Its main message is that God loves Jew and non-Jew and offers salvation to both. Peter was given a similar message, through a vision, resulting in the conversion of a Roman centurion. Peter then realized that 'God does not show favouritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right' (Acts 10:34-35, NIV).

#### **Day 1. What me? No way Lord!**

##### **Jonah 1:1-6**

Jonah was a prophet, one bringing God's special messages to the people, particularly concerning future events (2 Kings 14:25). In this role he would have expected God to speak to him from time to time, giving directions to go to a certain place and deliver God's word to a certain person or people. From Joppa (Jaffa), Tarshish (possibly in Spain) was in the opposite direction to Nineveh.

Nineveh, the last capital of Assyria, an enemy of Israel, had temples, palaces and a famous library. Water was provided by dams and canals. The metropolitan district would have taken three days to cross (3:3). The inhabitants worshipped a national god, Ashur, and a local goddess of war and love, Ishtar.

1. List all the information given in these verses, concerning Jonah. What does this tell us about his character?
2. How did God deal with his rebellious servant?
3. Can you see any parallels in your own experience with that of Jonah in both his rebellion and God's response?

Pray that you may be willing to obey God as he speaks to you through Scripture.

## **Day 2. It's your fault**

### **Jonah 1:7-16**

The casting of lots was used also by the Jews: for example, the choice of a goat for sacrifice (Leviticus 16:7-10) and the choosing of Matthias as a disciple (Acts 1:21-26) were decided by lot.

1. What more do we learn here concerning Jonah's character? Add to your list of yesterday.
2. As Jonah talks with the terrified sailors, how does his attitude begin to change?
3. What has the Lord taught you, following times of disobedience?

Pray that you may have a willingness to recognize the need for repentance and act upon it.

## **Day 3. Help, help!**

### **Jonah 1:17 - 2:10**

Jonah's vivid prayer from inside the 'great fish' has been likened to a Psalm.

1. As Jonah considered his position before the Lord, what were his feelings? Why do you think the Lord sometimes seems to withdraw his presence from us?
2. What does Jonah's prayer teach you about a repentant heart and the response of a forgiving Lord?

Praise God for his forgiveness in salvation and in daily experience!

## **Day 4. Repent!**

### **Jonah 3**

Jonah now faces the great city of Nineveh, its king and people having been given a second chance. Sackcloth, a coarse black material, was worn as a sign of mourning or penitence for sins. The people of Nineveh seem to have worn it as a robe over their other clothes. Repentance (v.9 RSV) on the part of God has more the meaning of relenting (NIV).

1. What did Jonah preach and what was the depth of the response as

measured by the king's decree?

2. In what sense is Jesus 'greater' than Jonah? Read Matthew 12:38-41 and Luke 11:29-32.
3. Contrast the rapid response of Nineveh with that of Jonah's attitude from the beginning of the book.

Consider the thought that it is best to obey first time! Pray about your own attitude to obeying God.

## **Day 5. All is revealed!**

### **Jonah 4**

Jonah has been described as a 'narrow little nationalist' (Bishop J. B. Taylor). But was he angry because his ability as a prophet could be questioned if they repented? In this chapter you will see what kind of man he really was. God has to teach him a lesson which is hard to learn.

1. What is now revealed as Jonah's real motive for sailing towards Tarshish? What did he hope would happen (v.5)? Why did he now want to die?

Jonah was sorry for the plant but not for Nineveh, angry over the former's death and the latter's reprieve.

2. Write, in your own words, God's answer to Jonah, noting particularly how patient he was with his servant.
3. From God's dealings with Jonah, how can you better understand the merciful way in which he has dealt and is dealing with you?

Pray that you may not be selfish with your faith, reserving it for those you consider 'worthy', but love to 'give it away' to all.

## **Weekend**

1. Re-read the book and write a personality profile of Jonah. Where can you identify with him? What have you learnt about the way God deals with disobedience?
2. Jonah was in a missionary situation. What situations similar to Nineveh exist today? What principles does the book teach about missionaries and missionary work?
3. Read *'I Dared to Call Him Father'* by Bilquis Sheikh (Kingsway), a book that reveals God's love for people of other religions.