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## A WORD FROM THE GLOW STAFF

Glow in the Dark™ is passionate about helping you know and pursue Jesus Christ above everything else in your life. We are committed to publishing material that is focused on exalting Christ through the study of His revealed, written Word. We believe that Christian teens truly desire to know and understand God's Word. However, many who read God's Word quickly become intimidated, discouraged, or lack the tools to grow. This study will guide you through Scripture so you not only understand what God is saying, but you also learn how to read and study the Bible for yourself.

To accomplish these goals, you will walk through the Bible piece by piece (chapters, paragraphs, verses, words). It is important that you let Scripture communicate for itself. This will take time and dedication, but you cannot mature your faith unless you earnestly seek God's Word and let it impact your life!

# A GUIDE *to* STUDYING SCRIPTURE

Anyone taking a journey or expedition must at some point **embark**.

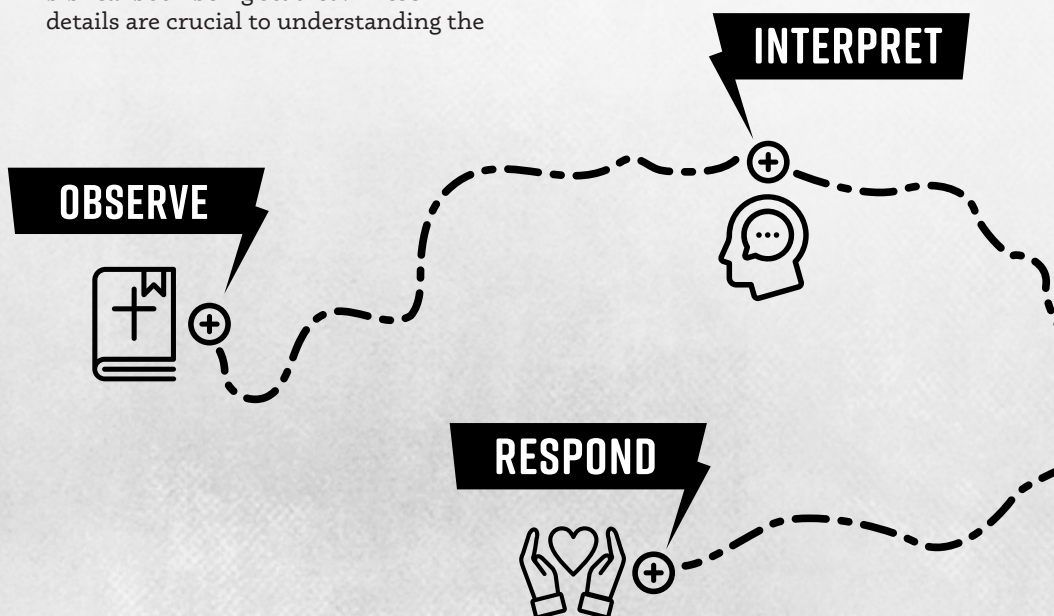
It is not enough to know that adventure and progress lay ahead, you must begin; you must embark!

This series is meant to help you get started on this incredible journey of growing in Christ through Bible reading and study. Understanding the tools and skills necessary for this adventure will prepare you for a life-long process of knowing and pursuing Jesus Christ through His Word.

Any journey you take must have a map. Each Embark book begins by looking at the background and context of the biblical book being studied. These details are crucial to understanding the

overall message of the biblical book and they help you see the course charted through the daily studies. Because of this, each day begins by focusing on a passage of Scripture. Over time, as you grow in the Word, you will find Bible study to be an exciting and joyful part of your spiritual journey.

When your course has been charted, there are also directions or steps that need to be followed. Although we do not take time in each daily study to highlight these steps, our goal is to model them. As you grow in God's Word, you will form right and healthy study habits. What is important at this point is to understand what these steps are, and in what order you must follow them. As you study, spend time in prayer and depend on the Holy Spirit to open your eyes and teach you.





## OBSERVATION

This first step begins with what the text says. As you read a section of Scripture, observation seeks to answer the questions, "What does the text say?" and "What do I see?" At this step, the main concern is content, context, and facts.<sup>[i]</sup> Observation also answers the simple questions of *who*, *what*, *when*, *where* and *how*? These observations are necessary to move in the right direction!



## INTERPRETATION

This second step helps us understand to whom the text was written and why. This step does not focus first on us, but on them and then (who the book was written to and what was going on when it was written). In order to be confident that our understanding of the text is right, it is crucial that we remember that God's Word was first given to an original audience for a particular reason. Proper interpretation answers the questions "What truth is being communicated to the original hearers?" and "What is the meaning of this text?"



## RESPONSE

This last step ends with how God's word will impact you today. Ultimately, the end of this journey is worship. For this reason, while you may be most familiar with the word "application," we have chosen to use the word "response." Some passages of Scripture include imperatives (commands to follow). However, every passage first draws our attention to God as great or man as needy and dependent on God. Because of this, we believe it is more helpful to consider how each text is calling us to respond by faith in worship. Worship will be seen in a life lived for God's glory.<sup>[iii]</sup>

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*Embark with us on this  
spectacular journey  
through God's Word!*



*Jonah is not primarily  
about the great fish but  
instead about Jonah's  
great God.*

# JONAH:

## GREAT FISH AND GREATER GOD

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### *What Kind of Literature Is This?*

Prophecy is a unique and special part of Scripture. People usually assume prophecy only gives a glimpse into the future. While prophecy does foretell future events, there is a bigger purpose for prophecy in Scripture. Consider this: many of the prophesied events we see in the Old Testament have already happened, yet we still have these prophets' books for our doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction (2 Tim. 3:16).

More than simply providing information about the future, prophecy functions much like the "jaws of life." It's dramatic literature that rips into hard and calloused hearts and exposes sin which has been overlooked and ignored. It then calls the hearer toward faith in God. This faith is characterized by repentance from sin and trust in the promises of God.

Yet Jonah is different than the other prophetic books. Every prophetic book was addressed to God's people, but Jonah was sent with a message to Israel's enemy, Nineveh. Also, it is unique in that it is written as

historical narrative prose (a true historical story). In fact, the literary quality of Jonah has been admired and studied for generations. This biblical book shows masterful use of narrative, suspense, poetic imagery, typology, and many other literary devices.

### *What Is This Book All About?*

The book of Jonah's purpose is difficult to confine to one or two things. Instead, this short book is focused on a great big God and touches on a far-reaching range of truths. Many people have mistakenly assumed the story of Jonah is the biggest fish story in the world. Perhaps even wrongly implying that it is exaggerated and untrue. However, Jonah is not primarily about the great fish but instead about Jonah's great God. Jonah is about God's judgment and God's mercy. It is about God's sovereignty and His patience. It is about His love and presence and ultimately it is about His gift of salvation. This book addresses worship, repentance, obedience, anger, pride, and selfishness for all people on the earth. The purpose of Jonah is for us to ponder our big God and then ask, "what now?" as we consider our own lives.

# MAPPING *the* EXPEDITION

## **Preparing for the Journey** *(Jonah 1:1-2)*

STUDY 1 - The Beginning (Jonah 1-4)

STUDY 2 - Characters in the Book (Jonah 1:1-2)

STUDY 3 - God of Covenant (2 Kings 14:23-27)

## **God Speaks and Jonah Responds** *(Jonah 1:1-17)*

STUDY 4 - God Speaks (Jonah 1:1)

STUDY 5 - God Speaks to All People (Jonah 1:1-6)

STUDY 6 - Jonah Responds (Jonah 1:1-6)

STUDY 7 - God is Sovereign (Jonah 1:4-7)

STUDY 8 - The Purpose of God's Sovereignty (Jonah 1:8-9)

STUDY 9 - Jonah and a Terrified Crew (Jonah 1:10-13)

STUDY 10 - The Mercy of God (Jonah 1:13-16)

STUDY 11 - Who Do You See? (Jonah 1:1-16)

STUDY 12 - Big Fish or Tall Tale? (Jonah 1:17)

## **God's Merciful Rescue** *(Jonah 1:17-2:10)*

STUDY 13 - How Big is Your God? (Jonah 1:17)

STUDY 14 - A Strange Classroom (Jonah 2:1-5)

STUDY 15 - Starting Back Up (Jonah 2:6-8)

STUDY 16 - Praise From the Depths (Jonah 2:9-10)



## **God Speaks and Jonah Obeys** *(Jonah 3:1-4:2)*

STUDY 17 - God's Holiness and Judgment (Jonah 3:1-3)

STUDY 18 - The Messenger Arrives (Jonah 3:4-5)

STUDY 19 - Nineveh's Repentance (Jonah 3:5-8)

STUDY 20 - Fear of God (Jonah 1-3)

STUDY 21 - Jonah Wrestles With Mercy (Jonah 3:9-4:1)

STUDY 22 - The Mercy of God - Revisited (Jonah 4:2)

## **God's Merciful Counsel** *(Jonah 4:1-10)*

STUDY 23 - Jonah's Growth (Jonah 4:1-4)

STUDY 24 - God Counsels Jonah (Jonah 4:5-10)

## **Jesus Christ and Jonah** *(Selections from the New Testament)*

STUDY 25 - The Good News in Jonah (Matthew 12:38-41)

STUDY 26 - The Good News of Jesus (John 3:10-21)

STUDY 27 - Jesus Christ is Greater (Hebrews 1:1-4)

## **Final Thoughts From Jonah** *(Jonah 4:10-11)*

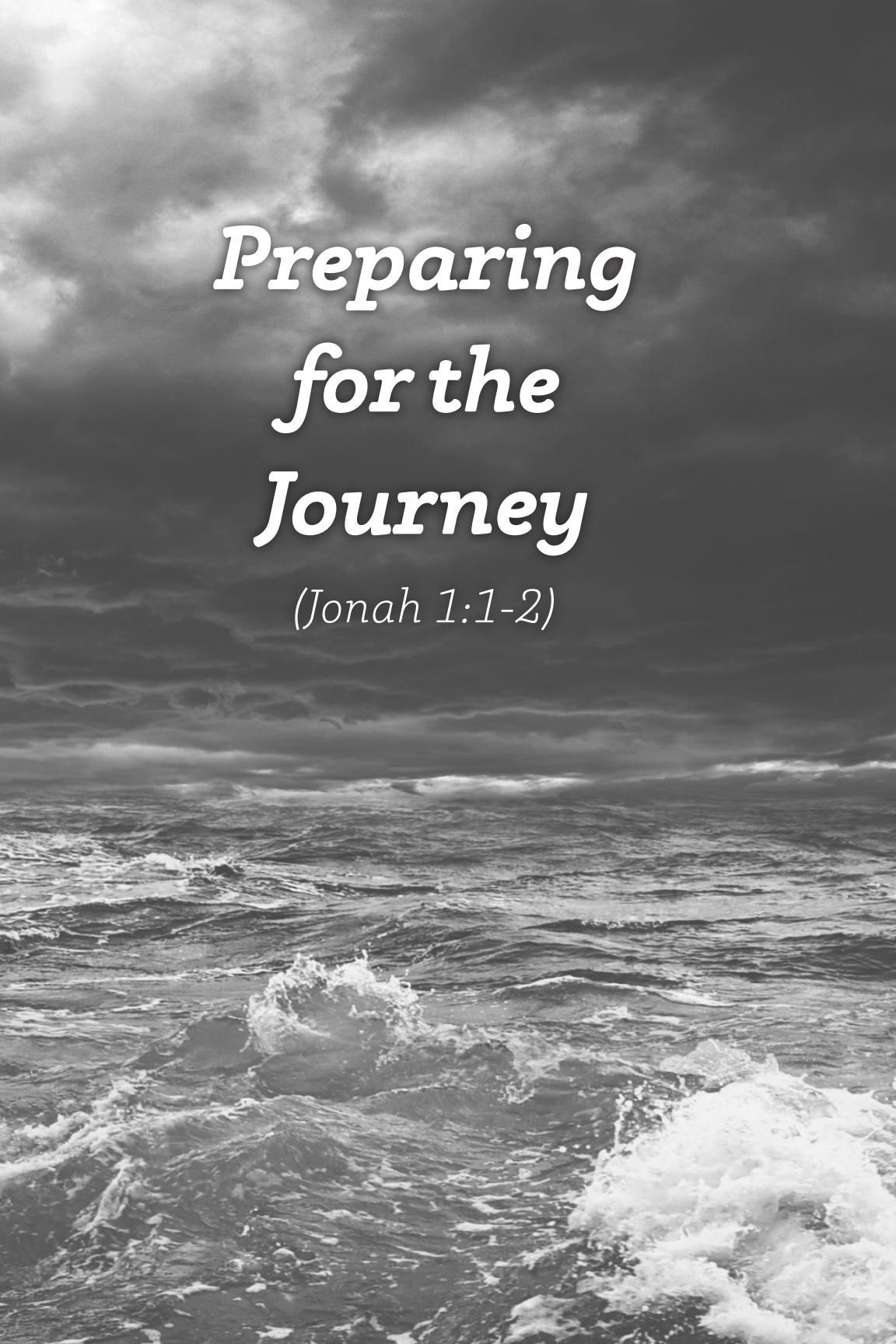
STUDY 28 - A Call to Transformation (Jonah 1-4)

STUDY 29 - A Call to Evangelism (Jonah 4:10-11)

STUDY 30 - The End (Jonah 1-4)



STUDIES 1-3



*Preparing  
for the  
Journey*

*(Jonah 1:1-2)*



# The Beginning

*Read Jonah 1-4 for Context.*

**T**his study is going to be an eye opening, stigma shattering, dive into the truth of God’s Word. The book of Jonah raises powerful questions and reveals even more powerful answers. One person described the book as “a little atom bomb, just loaded with power and with a program of God.” This book was written for God’s people, but the events recorded tell of a message sent to enemies. As such, it is easily applicable to every person alive. In a very real sense, God’s message to enemies remains the same and the truth for His people is also unchanged.

As we begin, will you try an experiment with me? Will you answer a few survey questions? We will come back to these later on, and I think it will be refreshing to see how God’s Word has changed (or perhaps confirmed) your thoughts during your time in Scripture. If you are not sure about your answer, don’t worry, we will work through these questions in more detail as we continue.

If you read this story to someone who has never heard it, what might be their first thought? \_\_\_\_\_

What is this book most known for? \_\_\_\_\_

Can you remember the last time you actually read this book of the Old Testament? \_\_\_\_\_ When? \_\_\_\_\_

What are three reasons you believe we have been given the account of Jonah?

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

As we begin, I want to make it clear that this book is not about a great fish. It may be the first thing people think of when Jonah is mentioned but the fish is only mentioned in 3 verses. Some may wrongly consider it to be the greatest “fish

story” ever told, insinuating it is exaggerated and untrue. This faulty accusation will be addressed more fully further into the study. Let’s just say for now that all of Scripture is true and reliable, including Jonah. While the great fish is definitely a memorable piece of the Jonah account, it has distracted some readers from the true focus. A famous preacher named G. Campbell Morgan once said about Jonah, “Men have been looking so hard at the great fish that they have failed to see the great God.” If this makes sense to you, and since you have already read through Jonah, there are a few more questions you can consider. Once again, we will answer these questions fully as we continue, but take a moment to answer these questions as a mental starting point. We will refer back to these later.

If the book of Jonah is first about God, what might it be teaching us about Him?

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Did you know Jesus Christ used the man Jonah as an example of Himself? Why?

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If Jonah helps us see ourselves, what might it be teaching us? \_\_\_\_\_

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If Jonah helps us see life, what might we be able to learn? \_\_\_\_\_

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The prophet Jonah (whom the book is named after) lived and prophesied around the year 760 BC. This was around the reign of Jeroboam II, a wicked ruler who led the people of Israel away from God. While Jeroboam II and the Israelites rebelled against God, we see in 2 Kings 14:23-25 that He still kept His promises. God had spoken through the prophet Jonah foretelling the reinstatement of land that the nation had lost previously. This probably already raises some questions in your mind.

*Why would God help these people by giving them land back while they were actively disobeying Him? And why does it seem God is ignoring the sins of Israel by sending Jonah with a message of judgment to an enemy nation instead of addressing their own sins?*

These questions prepare us for a look at God’s relationship with Israel. God had entered into a covenant relationship with the Jewish people. We will explore these questions very soon since it provides the foundation for understanding how God relates to His people during the time of Jonah. For now, I would encourage you to stop and pray that God will use His Word to work inside your heart and transform your life. Pray specifically that God will use the truth in the book of Jonah to help you see and know Him. Take a moment to write down what you will pray here:

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# 2

## Characters in the Book

*Read Jonah 1:1-2 for context.*

The book of Jonah has three key figures who we need to learn a little more about. Finding out all that we can about people in a particular passage of Scripture is often a very helpful tool to deepen our understanding of what is happening. This will involve looking for other places in the Bible where these people are mentioned and perhaps even doing some reading about history.

### Read Jonah 1:1-2

Who do you think the three main characters in Jonah are? (Hint: They're all specifically named in Jonah 1:1-2)

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

If you have started into this Bible study, I think I can assume you know something about God. But what about Jonah and Nineveh? Perhaps you just know them from hearing stories or perhaps this is the first time you have ever heard about them. Let's take some time to set the stage.

### Nineveh

The city of Nineveh was infamous in the ancient world. It was located approximately 500 miles northeast of Israel. This city served as one of the capitol cities of the nation of Assyria and at its height was one of the greatest cities in the world. However, what Jonah would have mainly known Nineveh for was their extreme cruelty. We will see this mentioned in Jonah chapters 1 and 3 and it is well documented through archeology and historical studies. Take a moment and read Nahum 2:8-3:4 to see what God says about Nineveh. How is Nineveh described in Nahum 3:1-4? \_\_\_\_\_

The Assyrians (and Ninevites) were sickeningly cruel. The atrocities and tortures they dreamed up for their enemies are worse than a horror story. Their victims were wickedly abused and slaughtered. Besieged cities that refused to surrender would have the heads of their countrymen launched over the walls to spread fear and disease. The examples could go on for why the Ninevites were famous. However, around the time of Jonah it appears that Assyria had lost some of its power, but its influence still shadowed the ancient world. This is where God sent Jonah.

## **Jonah**

The Old Testament only has one other mention of Jonah, which we read earlier in 2 Kings 14:25. In both passages we see that Jonah is an Israelite and his father's name is Amittai. What village does 2 Kings 14:25 say Jonah is from? \_\_\_\_\_

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This village is in territory given to the Israelite tribe of Zebulun (Joshua 19:13) and is in the northern part of Israel. In fact, the village where Jonah lived was on the edges of the Jezreel Valley and would have given Jonah a front row seat to witness the cruelty of Nineveh and the Assyrians. Their invading armies would have swept through the Jezreel valley leaving chaos in their wake. The Bible doesn't specifically tell us, but what do you imagine Jonah thought about Nineveh? \_\_\_\_\_

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Jonah's feelings towards Nineveh would have been complicated to put it mildly! The context can help us partially understand why Jonah responds the way he does. Jonah, a recognized prophet of God, had just been presented with an overwhelming message to a hostile audience. This is that story.

## **God**

The most important figure in the entire Bible is God. All Scripture was given by God to show us Himself and so it should be impossible to read any verse without ultimately connecting it back to Him. The story of Jonah makes it very easy to see God working. In fact, the first words of the book show us the Lord. He speaks, He pursues, He rescues, He warns, He counsels, He creates, He controls, He is present. You cannot read Jonah without noticing the working of God. Read through Jonah chapter 1 again and count how many times God is mentioned. How many did you find? \_\_\_\_\_ This study will encourage you to look closely at Him (who He is and what He does).

The book of Jonah, even though short, masterfully lets us look at each of these key figures. Interestingly, our expectations may be shattered as we see things unfold in unexpected ways.



# God of Covenant

*Read 2 Kings 14:23-27 for context.*

You may have been surprised the Scripture reading for today pointed you outside of the book of Jonah. You may be wondering, “I thought we were studying Jonah!” Yes! We are, and our study is helped when we are able to connect Scripture with other passages that can provide context or further insight into what is being said. As we mentioned previously, 2 Kings 14 helps give us the immediate historical context for the events surrounding Jonah’s life. This left us with the questions about God blessing Israel in spite of their sin and why Jonah was sent to Nineveh. Let’s explore a little more closely.

## **God’s Covenant**

What is your response when you see someone rebel? \_\_\_\_\_

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If you answered something like disappointment, disgust, anger, or retaliation then you are human. And yet, that isn’t how we see God responding to the rebellious children of Israel. Jonah brought a message of restoration and God fulfilled it. The generous fulfillment was because of God’s covenant relationship with Israel. A covenant is simply a binding commitment. It is more than a promise and it means God is committed to the good of this nation (see also Rom. 8:28-31). God had entered an agreement with Israel called the Mosaic Covenant. The terms of the agreement included blessings for faithful obedience but curses for unbelief and disobedience (you can read about it in Deuteronomy 28). The main emphasis in Jonah is that God is committed to His people. However, the two sides of the covenant are important for our view of this book. Let’s look at the disobedience first. What does Deuteronomy 28:47-52 say would happen to God’s people if they ignored and disobeyed Him? \_\_\_\_\_

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The Ninevites were used by God to judge and wake up the people of Israel so they would acknowledge and turn from their sin. The oppression of Assyria was



punishment from God in accordance with the Mosaic covenant. However, God desires to bless and promises good gifts as part of His covenant. What does God promise to Israel if they listened and obeyed Him? Read Deuteronomy 28:1-14.

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So, to return to our questions from the very beginning of our study book, God is not ignoring Israel's sin but is blessing them in spite of it. God is rescuing and restoring Israel because of His covenant commitment to them even though they have broken their end of the agreement (See Exodus 19:1-8). This is undeserved favor. The Bible term that we often use for an undeserved gift from God is grace. This is grace. We will see more gifts of grace as we continue studying through the account of Jonah.

There was one other question that we were wanting to answer. Why would God send Jonah to Nineveh instead of telling him to stay and speak to Israel? What do you think? \_\_\_\_\_

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We will explore further as we continue in our study, for now here are two answers for you to consider. First, God is sending Jonah to Nineveh with a message of judgment to rescue Israel from their oppression. Nineveh's destruction or transformation would cause the attacks on Israel to stop, thus rescuing Israel. Second, God sends Jonah to Nineveh to teach Jonah (and Israel, and us) more about His gracious mercy.

God desires for His people to see how He interacts with this brutal, wicked nation. He also wants His people to see how a nation of unbelievers responds to His message. Just like Israel, we have much to learn from Jonah, both the prophet and the Old Testament book. The covenant commitment is very helpful to understand as we study and learn from the Old Testament. These covenant truths will be seen woven throughout Jonah, so to help make them clear, review a summary of what we have discussed.

- God entered a formal covenant (commitment/agreement) with Israel in Exodus 19:1-8 (also seen in Deuteronomy 28) called the Mosaic Covenant.
- God's covenant commitments to Israel (through Abraham previously and now Moses) mean He will never leave His children or give up on His people.
- Israel's breaking of the covenant is why Assyria was oppressing Israel. Israel's sin deserves the consequences of disobedience that they agreed to in the covenant.
- God's grace and covenant commitment is why He is rescuing Israel in spite of their rebellion. He graciously restores their land (2 Kings 14:23-25) and sends Jonah with a message of judgment against their oppressors.



# God Speaks

*Read Jonah 1:1-6 for context.*

**W**e have already mentioned that God is the most important figure in all of Scripture. So, as we begin studying the account of Jonah more closely, I want to go immediately where the text goes! Read Jonah 1:1 again.

## Read Jonah 1:1

What do the first words of Jonah tell us about God? What is He doing? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

There is much that we will see and study in this book, but here is a crucial point to consider. God Speaks! Why is it a big deal for God to speak to humanity? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The Hebrew name of the LORD used in Jonah 1:1 is Yahweh. This was exclusively the name of the God of Israel and was the covenant name revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14. Yahweh is built on the Hebrew for “I AM,” which speaks of His existence, pre-existence, power, eternity, and sufficiency. Pause and think. What might it be like to have God speak directly to you like Jonah experiences in verse 1? Now stop and remember that God does! God doesn’t have to do this. You should be emotionally overwhelmed, you should be awed, your heart should swell at the realization that God loved humanity (and you) enough to speak. To further explain, let’s spend some time in 2 Peter 1:16-21.

## Read 2 Peter 1:16-21

Aesop’s Fables, superhero comic books, and the Chronicles of Narnia all have something in common. They are fictional writings. They have been made up, or “devised” by skillful human authors. In your own words, what does 2 Peter 1:16 tell us that believers have NOT followed? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

In these verses, Peter goes on to further describe the foundation of the Christian faith. He is continuing to speak of the Word of God. This passage in 2 Peter is helpful in so many areas and it is going to teach us some important truth for

our study in Jonah. In 2 Peter 1:17-19 God the Father speaks to Jesus Christ audibly. Even though that is amazing, what does Peter say is better for us? \_\_\_\_\_

God the Father is speaking to Jesus in an audible way that allowed the surrounding crowd to listen in (Matthew 17:5). What an incredible moment! However, Peter encourages us in verse 19 that the written Scriptures are a “more sure word.” While our memories of an event may fade or falter, we know Scripture will always be a light shining into our darkness. 2 Timothy 3 gives us some further teaching on the importance and powerful work of Scripture.

### Read 2 Timothy 3:14-16

Paul is mentoring young Timothy and desires to encourage him as he looks at the words of God. Verse 15 says Timothy had been taught Scripture since he was a young child and knew that it was “able to make \_\_\_\_\_”

Scripture is powerfully able to save people from their sin through faith in Jesus Christ. However, the beauty of God’s Word does not stop there. 2 Timothy 3:16 is well known, and perhaps you have heard it before, but look at it with me again. God’s Word is profitable for:

- “\_\_\_\_\_” – Teaching God’s truth to be believed
- “\_\_\_\_\_” – Showing what does not match God’s truth
- “\_\_\_\_\_” – Making it clear how to correct the wrong
- “\_\_\_\_\_ in righteousness” – Growth in what is right

The end goal is that the child of God would maturely represent Christ in life through their love and good works. The Word of God is powerful and alive (Hebrews 4:12). It should be sought and treasured above all else.

Unfortunately, as sinful humans we often take this privilege for granted. We neglect God’s Word and listen instead to our own ideas. Most of us are blessed with numerous avenues of ingesting Scripture (print, ebooks, audio formats, websites, etc.), yet we can be tempted to ignore or hide from God’s Word. The Bible is a message that carries divine importance. It must be filling our lives, and we have an opportunity to carry the message so it may fill others. Wow! What a privilege it is that God speaks. Jonah was an honored man, and we are an honored people. Yahweh speaks, what will we do with it? Consider this prayer as you finish: “Dear Lord, I am so grateful for your Word and that you have, by grace, given it to me. Please help me in my desire for your Word. I know that even today, my fleshly desires will be revealed when I want something more than your truth. In those moments, I need your grace to love you and your words of life more. Thank you for speaking the words of truth. I am grateful.”



This Old Testament account of a reluctant prophet is sometimes famous for all the wrong reasons! With this study we will look beyond the big fish and learn about our great God. We will notice the mercy of God, but in an unforeseen place. Jonah knew God but had much to learn. This story may be familiar to you, but allow God's word to help you rejoice in the judgment and mercy of God.

**OBSERVE**



**INTERPRET**



**RESPOND**




## A GUIDE TO STUDYING SCRIPTURE


The Embark series is designed to help you engage in Bible study by taking an in-depth look at Scripture. It is our desire to encourage a complete journey through the context of Bible books and passages. We passionately believe this will help readers mature spiritually. It is vital for believers to meditate on the depth and beauty of the knowledge of God.

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