

JONAH

MEETING THE GOD OF THE SECOND CHANCE

O.S. HAWKINS



Developed as a study course by Emmaus Correspondence School, founded in 1942.

Jonah: Meeting the God of the Second Chance

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STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS

Jonah is not only one of the most popular books in the Bible—it is also one of the most controversial. Its historical validity is questioned by skeptics and scholars alike. It is the actual account of a man who rebelled and was swallowed by a great fish. But it is so much more.

It is the story about someone like you and me. It is the story of Jonah’s struggles, calling, disobedience, problems, and prayer life. It is the story of his encounter with God and of God’s gracious dealings with him. It is the story of a man, and of an entire city, that got a second chance.

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Course Components

This course has two parts: this study course and the exam booklet.

How To Study

This study has six chapters, and each chapter has its own exam. Begin by asking God to help you understand the material. Read the chapter through at least twice, once to get a general idea of its contents and then again, slowly, looking up any Bible references given.

Begin studying immediately, or if you are in a group, as soon as the group begins. We suggest that you keep a regular schedule by trying to complete at least one chapter per week.

Exams

In the exam booklet there is one exam for each chapter (exam 1 covers chapter 1 of the course). Do not answer the questions by what you think or have always believed. The questions are designed to find out if you understand the material given in the course.

After you have completed each chapter, review the related exam and see how well you know the answers. If you find that you are having difficulty answering the questions, review the material until you think you can answer the questions.

How Your Exams Are Graded

Your instructor will mark any incorrectly answered questions. You will be referred back to the place in the course where the correct answer is to be found. After finishing this course with a passing average, you will be awarded a certificate.

If you enrolled in a class, submit your exam papers to the leader or secretary of the class who will send them for the entire group to the Correspondence School.

See the back of the exam booklet for more information on returning the exams for grading.

INTRODUCTION TO JONAH

Novels. Short stories. So many excellent works of fiction are waiting to be discovered in our city and church libraries. Who could forget the pathos of Ernest Hemingway's *Old Man and the Sea*? I am pleased to have come upon the writings of Jeffrey Archer of England. His *Quiver Full of Arrows* is one of the finest collections of short stories ever written. But the little book of Jonah tucked away in the Old Testament has them all beat. It is filled with suspense, drama, lessons for life—and it really happened. It is not fiction.

Although Jonah is one of the most popular books in the Bible, it is also one of the most controversial. Its historical validity is questioned by skeptics and scholars alike. Jonah is the story of a man who rebelled and then was swallowed by a great fish. Why should we think it strange that God could prepare a fish to swallow Jonah? If you were in my city today, I would take you to Port Everglades. Docked in that port, you would find a nuclear submarine, a great vessel of human ingenuity and engineering that can keep persons alive for several months under the sea. If human beings can prepare an iron fish like that, why do some of us have difficulty believing that the God who made the world and flung the stars in space could perform a miracle as mundane as preparing a fish for a runaway prophet named Jonah?

But the book of Jonah is not about a fish; in fact, only three verses deal with the fish. The other forty-five verses tell us the real message of Jonah's story. It is the story of someone like you and me. It is the story of his struggles, calling, disobedience, problems, and prayer life. It is the story of second chance, both successes and failures.

**Jonah is the story
of second chances,
both successes and
failures.**

The book of Jonah is a book about Jesus. Jesus? In the Old Testament? Yes. In fact, our Lord himself said:

“A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here” (Matt. 12:39-41).

The late G. Campbell Morgan, formerly pastor of Westminster Chapel in London, said, “Men have been looking so long at the great fish they have failed to see the great God!” In this present book that is what we want to avoid. We want to see this great God and follow his will.

Perhaps no other book in the Bible is as ridiculed as this one. There are at least three basic ways in which the book can be understood. Some view it as an allegory, a long story with a hidden meaning. Those who see it allegorically equate each major character to some event of historical significance. For example, they might see it as an allegory of the Babylonian captivity. In that view, Jonah is Israel, Nineveh is pagan idolatry, the sea is world politics, the ship is diplomacy, the storm is the Babylonian overthrow of Assyria, Jonah inside the fish is the Babylonian exile, and Jonah’s deliverance is the return from exile. Others who see it allegorically see it as the church during the persecution and its deliverance when Jesus returns.¹

Others approach this book as though it were a parable; that is, it did not happen historically. Rather, it is a cleverly written short story dating to the postexilic period. It is a parable with one main point: the deliverance of Israel. If, however, Jonah is to be treated as a parable, then it is certainly found in strange company, being in the midst of all the other historical prophetic books.

Then there are those like myself who hold to the literal historical approach. That is to say, there really was a man named Jonah, who was actually swallowed by a fish. We do know that Jonah was a figure of history. Second Kings 14:25 gives his further historical significance:

“He was the one who restored the boundaries of Israel from Lebo Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, in accordance with the word of

the LORD, the God of Israel, spoken through his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath Hepher.”

One characteristic of a parable in the Bible is that a person’s name is never mentioned. For example, there is the parable of the prodigal son. We do not know his name, nor his father’s, nor his older brother’s name. There we have an indication that Jonah, the main character, was not parabolic, but a literal and historical figure.

The main reason I believe in a literal Jonah is that our Lord Jesus obviously believed in his historicity. Therefore, when people question the historicity of Jonah, in reality they are questioning the integrity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord related Jonah to his own resurrection; and if Jonah’s experience was not historical, such an association would not have made sense.

Those who discount the authenticity of Jonah are subtly undermining the deity and integrity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Was he deceitful? Did Jesus tell us a lie when he said that Jonah was in a fish’s belly three days and three nights? Of course he didn’t. Was he deceived? Did Jesus actually think that

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Jonah was an allegory or a parable? Of course not. He is “the Truth.” Our confidence in the word of God doesn’t allow us to take from its historicity simply because something is miraculous.

In effect, Jesus was saying that Jonah was a sign that prophesied his own death and resurrection (Matt. 12:39-41) Think about that. Is it any wonder that the book of Jonah then is one of the most openly attacked books in the Bible? You see, if the story of Jonah is fiction, so is the gospel. Jesus said “For as Jonah was . . . so the Son of Man will be . . .” If the book of Jonah is not true, what confidence can we have in Matthew Mark, Luke, or John being true? Here is a test of true orthodoxy. If you want to know whether a man or woman is orthodox or not, ask them their opinion of Jonah. If they deny the historical authenticity of Jonah, I suspect that they will also deny the authenticity of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Any time someone says it doesn’t matter whether this book is historical or not, don’t you believe it. It does matter We are dealing here with a real man who lived in and around 800 B.C. and whose message is as relevant today as the morning newspaper.

What is the message of Jonah? I believe that this book gives us tremendous insight into our own relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the story of a man's pilgrimage and God's providence.

The Story of a Man's Pilgrimage

Rejection

We can write across the first chapter of Jonah the word *rejection*. In chapter 1 God called Jonah to go to Nineveh and be the agent of revival. But Jonah went in the opposite direction, choosing to reject the will of God for his life. He went down to the seaport town of Joppa and boarded a ship sailing for Tarshish.

How do *you* relate to the will of God? Jonah was afraid of God's will, so he ran. Many people find themselves living in chapter 1 of Jonah—that is, rejecting the will of God for their lives.

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**Jonah gives us
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Reflection

Across chapter 2 we can write the word *reflection*. There in the belly of the fish Jonah began to reflect. He prayed and praised God. The fish eventually regurgitated him up on shore.

This is where many people live today. Some people have to go down, down, down, before they surrender to God's will. Often the adversities of life bring us to this moment of reflection.

Correction

Across chapter 3 we can write the word *correction*. As he sat on the shore "the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time." He got up, obeyed the word of God, went to Nineveh, and a mighty revival ensued. Yes, God is the God of the second chance. Jonah corrected his ways.

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**God is the God of
the second chance.**
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There is a tragic truth here. Warren Weirsbe is correct in observing that it took God longer to prepare his servant and get him to obey his call

than it did for the entire godless city of Nineveh to repent. Things haven't changed much, have they? It still takes God longer to get Christians right than it does to get sinners to repent.

I'm so glad that God is the God of a second chance. If I did not believe that human beings could be made whole, if I did not believe that the gospel was a gospel of the second chance, I would never preach or write again.

Objection

Across chapter 4 we can write the word *objection*. One would think that Jonah's heart would have leaped for joy when revival came to Nineveh. There he was in the will of God, used by God in a mighty way. But no. He was angry that God sent revival. He wanted God to destroy the city. He objected to the fact that God poured out revival on heathen Nineveh.

Jonah laid bare his soul for us here. If we had written the book, most of us would have ended it at Jonah 3:10, with the account of the great revival. But Jonah went on and added the fourth chapter to show us his shortcomings and how prone we all are to this spirit of objection. Some of us live here in chapter 4. We get in the will of God and are being used by God, and then he does something and we object to it. God blesses someone else, and we get jealous.

We already see that Jonah is far more than the story of a man and a fish. It is the story of a man's pilgrimage, but it is more than that.

The Story of God's Providence

The purpose of the word of God is to reveal the God of the word. This too we see in Jonah: the beautiful story of God's providence.

Election

Looking from God's point of view, we can write across chapter 1 the word *election*. One cannot read the first chapter of Jonah without seeing the sovereignty of God. God

chose Jonah. God called Jonah. God is in control. Can you see him here? God controlled the ship. God controlled the wind. God controlled the sailors' dice. God controlled the waves. God controlled the fish.

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**We see in Jonah the
 beautiful story of
 God's providence.**
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God elects his own people, assigns their duties, appoints their places. He calls particular people to particular places for particular purposes. In this case, he called Jonah to Nineveh for revival. What a wonderful picture we see of our Lord here. He is concerned for you. He calls you. And the truth is that you cannot run from him.

Protection

Across chapter 2 we can write the word *protection*. God protected his man even when he was in rebellion. He “prepared” a great fish to consume Jonah and keep him from drowning.

Here too we see a picture of our Lord Jesus. When we go our own ways in willful disobedience, he continues to pursue us. Even in our rebellion he protects us until we come to ourselves. The very thing that some people are lamenting today—their mishaps in life—just may be a giant fish that God has prepared to protect them from themselves and their rebellion.

Perfection

Across chapter 3, from God’s point of view, we can write the word *perfection*. The Bible says that God perfects what concerns us. The Bible admonishes us not to be conformed to the world but to be transformed that we might prove what is that “good, and acceptable, and *perfect* will of God” (Rom. 12:2 KJV).

In chapter 3 God sent a mighty revival. God’s will was finally done. When we obey his will and share his word, we can see his blessing. The psalmist said, “Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?” God is more interested in revival than we are. He is about the business of perfecting all things that concern us. What a picture we see of our Lord Jesus also here in chapter 3. He is just waiting to send revival. His problem is that it takes him longer to get us ready than it does for whole cities to repent.

Affection

Across chapter 4 we can write the word *affection*. Here God taught Jonah a lesson. Jonah was ecstatic about the vine that God had sent, and then God sent the little worm. Sometimes we get our eyes fixed on lesser

things, when the main thing is to keep the main thing always the main thing. What a wonderful picture we see of our Lord here too as he appealed to Jonah by saying, “Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?” (4:11).

God has compassion for sinners. His heart beats with concern for the lost and ungodly. We may shun them but our Lord Jesus doesn't. He has compassion and affection for those in need of salvation.

A lot of boats are sailing for Tarshish today. But the red flag of warning is that a storm is raging on that route. Perhaps you already have been quickened by the fact that God has called you to Nineveh and you are thinking about going down to Joppa and finding a boat to Tarshish. The way to Nineveh is the way of revival. The way of Tarshish is the way to ruin.

For those who sail for Tarshish, we read that the word came to Jonah “a second time” (3:1). What good news. God is the God of the second chance. Moses broke the tablets of the law, but God gave his law to him a second time. Samson sinned, but God gave him a second chance. Peter cursed the Lord, who then met him on the shore and gave him a second chance.

Some people have written across their lives the word *rejection*. Perhaps this chapter has brought some readers to the word *reflection*. The intent of this devotional volume is to move us all to the word *correction*, that we might know the will of God for our lives and do it.

¹ John A. Huffman Jr., “Running Away from God” (Printed Sermon, 1985), 2.

1

HERE AM I . . . SEND SOMEONE ELSE
(JONAH 1:1-3)

God calls particular people to particular places for particular purposes. In Jonah’s case, we find God calling him to Nineveh to preach against its sin. But when God called Jonah, he replied, “Here am I . . . send someone else. I’m on my way to Tarshish!”

What a contrast that response was to the call of the prophet Isaiah. When God asked, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” Isaiah’s response was, “Here am I. Send me!”

Many Christians today are like Jonah. It may be that Nineveh for some of us is reconciliation. The Nineveh to which God calls others may be repentance. Still others may be called to the Nineveh of restitution.

A lot of us are on boats that are sailing for Tarshish while God is saying, “Go to Nineveh.” Where are you headed? There are really only two roads



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in the Christian life. One leads to Nineveh, the other to Tarshish. One road is the will of God; the other is disobedience to his will.

Somewhere there is a job for you that no one else can do quite the way you can do it. Each of us is indescribably valuable to God. Each of us has a special part in the body of Christ. No one is unimportant.

Jonah's Call

“The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: ‘Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me’” (Jonah 1:1-2).

Personal

The call of the Lord is personal. Jonah was a real person who lived in a real city just like you and I, and God called him for a special task. The Bible says, “The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai.” It was a personal call. It was “to Jonah.” God did not call Habakkuk nor Amos nor Obadiah, nor any of the other prophets to go to Nineveh.

This was not the word of man; it was “the word of the LORD.” Men do not call us; it is God who calls us. Jonah had a God who spoke to him.

I don't know how God talked to Jonah. He did not have the word of God, the final complete written revelation, as we do today. Perhaps God spoke to him audibly, as he did to Abraham. Perhaps God spoke to him in a vision, as he did with Peter on the rooftop or with Ezekiel. Or maybe it was in a dream, as it was with Joseph. It may simply have been an impression on his heart. How he spoke to him is not important. What is important is that the word of the Lord got through to a human being.

God still speaks to his servants today, and his call is just as personal.

We have a God who speaks to our hearts in a still, small voice. It is strange how it never occurs to some believers that the same God who spoke to the prophets in the past now speaks to us directly by the Holy Spirit through his word. Some people have no difficulty whatsoever believing that God spoke to this man Jonah, but that God would speak to them is extremely difficult to believe.

Has the word of the Lord come to you this week? If not, you have not spent time with him. God still speaks to us personally. The writer of Hebrews put it like this, “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe” (Heb. 1:1-2). What are we doing about the fact that God speaks to us personally? It is no wonder that later in Hebrews we read, “Today, if you hear his voice do not harden your hearts” (Heb. 3:7-8).

I remember a Friday evening all-night bus ride from Matamoros, Mexico, to Fort Worth, Texas. I was a college pre-law student but that night on that bus God spoke to me and called me into the ministry. I cannot explain it but I know he did it. It could not have been more real had he been seated beside me physically on that bus. God spoke to my heart and called me to preach and I've known from that moment that I could not find happiness in a court of law or in doing anything else. God still calls particular people to particular places for particular purposes—and not just preachers. He calls teachers and lawyers and business people and housewives and bank tellers and scientists, if we would but listen. David said that God makes known to us the path of life, and in his presence is fullness of joy (Ps. 16:11). And a good thing to remember is that God doesn't call the equipped; he equips the called.

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The Gold Coast of Florida, including the greater Fort Lauderdale / Miami area, has become one of the large metropolitan areas of the world, with over three million people now residing in this beautiful tropical paradise. A lot of people come to our city to get lost in the teeming masses. It is easy to become nameless here. No one knows you. No one is watching you. But we all need to remember that God knows us. God knows our names, addresses, and telephone numbers. He knows our backgrounds, our parents, and brothers and sisters. Even before we were formed in the womb, he said, "I knew you. Before you were born I set you apart" (Jer. 1:5). The beautiful thing about life in Christ is that he gives purpose and personhood. God calls us personally to himself. It is a happy day in the life of any believer when he or she comes to realize that the Lord Jesus is interested in them personally: at school, on the ballfield, at the office, in the home, at the grocery store, struggling with the finances, in good times and in bad times.

Pointed

The call of the Lord is pointed. God said, "Go to Nineveh." It was a clear call. It was pointed. It was urgent. God did not tell Jonah to go to Jerusalem or Shechem, or Joppa, or anywhere else. His call was to Nineveh, a city founded by Nimrod shortly after the confusion of tongues at the tower of Babel.

Nineveh was a great city in what is modernday Iraq. Its streets were twenty miles long and its walls one hundred feet high. The walls around Nineveh were so wide that three chariots could be driven abreast across the top of them. Historians believe that the population exceeded hundreds of thousands; the Bible tells us that one hundred and twenty thousand did not know their right hand from their left (perhaps a description of small children). It was a city of great wickedness and it was the capital of Assyria.

Why would God call Jonah to go to Nineveh, when Nineveh was a Gentile city, and God was working with the Jews? Surely Nineveh was not on Jonah's preaching schedule. We don't know why God picks certain places. For example, why were you born where you were born and not in another country or century with different parents? I was born on August 16, 1947, in Fort Worth, Texas. It would have made a profound difference in my life had I been born three years earlier in Hiroshima or Nagasaki.

Like other Israelites, Jonah believed that God blessed his people in two ways: first, by directly blessing Israel spiritually and temporally; and second, by sending adversities on their enemies. Thus, a famine in Nineveh would be considered a blessing to Israel. Things haven't changed much, have they? Many of us feel as if someone's victory is a defeat for ourselves. And some people even believe that someone else's downfall in some way lifts them up. A call to go to Nineveh went against the grain of a Jewish prophet like Jonah. In fact, a comforting hope Israel held to was the hope that some day God would pour out wrath on Nineveh. Now, instead of that, God was calling Jonah to go and preach to them the message of salvation. It seems that even in Old Testament times our Lord was giving us a glimpse of what he would one day say on a Galilean hillside: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:44).

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**"Love your enemies
and pray for those
who persecute you."**
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Those ancient Jews had it in their minds that God loved them and them alone. What a surprise Jonah must have felt when he received word from God to "go to the great city of Nineveh." Had God commanded him to go to Jerusalem or Bethlehem or some other city, it might have been different. But Nineveh? A pagan city?

Before we are quick to point a finger of accusation, however, we must understand that in some ways we are no better than Jonah. We too can get

to thinking that God loves us more than he does others. We live in America, a so-called Christian nation. We are the so-called “people of God.” When we read that God called Jonah to go to Nineveh, it ought to remind us of our commission to take the gospel to the entire world. This pointed call smacks in the face of any exclusivism or cliquishness on our part. Can you sense its missionary spirit?

God loves the Soviets, the Iranians, the Lebanese, the Syrians, the Israelis, the Palestinians. The Bible says, “For God so loved the *world* that he gave his one and only Son” (John 3:16).

Purposeful

God’s call is purposeful. God instructed Jonah to go to Nineveh and “preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.” The Lord is never vague in his call. Jonah was to cry out against the wickedness of Nineveh. What a task God assigned him. He would be one lonely voice in the midst of that city, calling its people to revival and repentance. Think about that. What could one man do?

The verbs in verse 2 are imperatives. They are commands. Go. Preach.¹ God’s calling is not merely one of several options if we intend to be in his will. Some people hear the call of God to a particular place for a particular purpose and they think, “Well, I’ll decide about that later.” We all need to be reminded that God’s calling is always in the imperative. Jonah was not to be concerned with success. He was simply to obey the call. Jonah was not to go and preach philosophy. He was not to go and speak religious platitudes. He was not to go and address social issues. He was not to go and set up a blood bank and begin a clothing ministry. He was to “preach against their sin.” Surely God is calling more people to this task today than are evidently on the scene. The twentieth-century cruise business to Tarshish must be booming in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Where are the prophets who, as Joel said, “weep between the temple porch and the altar” (Joel 2:17) over the sins of the people?

Thank God for those in our own nation who are standing against the humanistic philosophy that has subtly infiltrated our culture. This cancer is especially preying on young minds in the public schools. It is no wonder the humanists are so determined in their effort to keep prayer out of public schools. They want no acknowledgment of God, so there will be no sense of sin, which is the breaking of his commandments.

Today four men are ruling America from their graves. Charles Darwin tells us that sin is just a hangover from our animalistic background. John Dewey, the leading promoter of pragmatism, tells us that human beings can be educated out of what drags them down. He says that sin is not our problem; a lack of education is. Sigmund Freud tells us that the concept of sin is what is wrong with people in the first place. Karl Marx tells us that man's problem is basically economic; put him in the right economic state and he will prosper. Those four philosophies are ruling America. But where are those standing between the porch and the altar, crying out against the wickedness of our day?

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around us.**
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Whatever became of sin? Man's problem is not fundamentally biological nor educational nor psychological nor economical. Man's problem is sin and rebellion.

To cry out against the wickedness of our day is not easy. Why? Mainly because we cannot cry out against the sins of others with sin in our own hearts and lives. Could this be the reason so few Christians are really standing against the tide of sin today? It is difficult to speak out against pornography if you yourself subscribe to certain magazines and read illicit literature in airports when no one is looking. It is difficult to cry out against prostitution if you personally think nothing of having extramarital affairs. It is difficult to speak out against marijuana if you smoke cigars and cigarettes. It is a difficult thing to speak out against dope if you are a social drinker. It is difficult to speak against X-rated movie enterprises if you are glued to television soap operas with all their adultery and fornication. In such an environment, is it any wonder that many of God's people are enroute to Tarshish today? God calls us to a purpose, and that purpose is to cry out against the wickedness around us.

Jonah's Fall

“But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD” (Jonah 1:3).

Calculated

Jonah's fall from the Lord was calculated. What an honor had come to him. God chose him to go to Nineveh with the message of revival. Jonah must have been the most humbled and challenged man in all the land.

Jonah 1:3 begins with two words that may be the saddest words in the whole book, "But Jonah." Instead of being thankful, Jonah fled from God's will. He was not different from us. So many of us have doubted God's word. Remember, Jonah was a prophet called of God. He knew the Lord, and knew that the Lord had called him. I dare say there are those reading this volume who know the Lord, who have been called by the Lord, and perhaps like Jonah have fled from the will of God. Perhaps you are a young man whom God is calling into the ministry, but you are enroute to Tarshish. Perhaps you are a young woman reading these words while living in sin, knowing that her Nineveh is repentance.

The Bible tells us that he went down to Joppa. He found a ship. He bought a ticket. This was no passing whim. This was a calculated decision.

When we fall from the Lord, it is always calculated. We make plans to do wrong and we follow them through. Tarshish was the farthest known city of that day. It is believed to have been in Spain, over two thousand miles from Joppa. When people leave God, they always go as far away as they can. Remember the story Jesus told of the prodigal son who went to the "far country" when he left the will of his father. Tarshish was as far west as one could go. Nineveh was to the east.

A lot of us have a Tarshish out there somewhere. It's that place where we think we can minister as effectively as we could at Nineveh. But remember, when we go to Tarshish and God has called us to Nineveh, we go without his blessing.

When we really think about it, this is incredible. Here was God's man. Why would he run away from *life*? Perhaps it was because of fear of the unknown. Think about it. What if God called you to go to Tehran (Iran) today? The people are so different. The culture is so opposite from ours and so antagonistic toward us. A lot of us might be running to Tarshish because of the unknown.

Perhaps Jonah went to Tarshish because he was afraid he would become unpopular. I suppose a lot of people are running away from the will of God for fear of being unpopular.

It could have been that he left God's will because he was unconcerned. It might be that he was just not concerned that Nineveh come to repentance. After all, he held some animosity toward them. He knew all about the people of Nineveh and had witnessed their cruelty and brutality. They were known for their savagery. They burned children alive and tortured adults by skinning them and leaving them to die in the scorching sun.² Is it any wonder he went to Tarshish?

It is not unusual for modernday Jonahs to want to run from difficult things. A lot of people are on the run today simply because they don't want to face difficult tasks. It is easier to get a divorce than it is to go to Nineveh and be in the will of God. So many think the route to Tarshish is so much easier . . . until they are on board ship.

The real reason Jonah fled is found in the first verses of chapter 4 of this book: "But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. He prayed to the LORD, 'O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? This is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity'" (Jonah 4:1-2). Jonah could not believe that God would shower his grace on the Gentiles, especially those who had been so ruthless with the Jews. Jonah wanted no part of that. We see a lot of the same spirit in the prodigal's brother who "became angry and refused to go in" when his wayward brother returned (Luke 15:28).

So Jonah ran from the presence of the LORD. Jonah's fall was a calculated fall. He knew where he was going, and he was going his own way. "He was running away from the Lord" (1:10). When we are on the run, we forget the truths of Scripture. Probably Jonah had read a thousand times the words of the psalmist:

Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.

—Psalm 139:7-10

Jonah thought he could flee from the presence of the Lord. He knew better, but his sin had blinded him to the truth of Scripture. This happens to people when they are on the run from the will of God. They find themselves doing things they know better than to do. We forget what we know when we are on the run from God.

————— ❧ —————
**We forget what we
 know when we are
 on the run from God.**
 ————— ❧ —————

Jonah wasn't the first nor the last person in the Bible who tried to flee from the presence of the Lord. Adam and Eve tried to flee from God's presence. Like Jonah, they disobeyed, and God came to mend the broken relationship. But the first thing they did was try to hide. "The man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden" (Gen. 3:8). It was the same with Cain after he killed his brother Abel. He deliberately rebelled and the Bible says, "So Cain went out from the LORD's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden" (Gen. 4:16). On and on we could go throughout the Bible. And it is the same with so many people today. In our rebellion, we think we can hide from the Lord—but we can't.

Don't be so foolish as to think you can flee from God's presence. God said, "Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him? . . . Do not I fill heaven and earth?" (Jer. 23:24). We cannot run away from God. It is a tragic mistake to think we can.

It is interesting that the Bible says he "found a ship." He was looking for it. It is a dangerous thing to try to justify our rebellion simply because things seem to fall in place. Some people think that just because they "find a ship" it must be all right. Someone leaves God for a life of sin and says it must be right; look how everything is turning out. You too may find your ship, and it may sail right on time, but if you are enroute to Tarshish when God has called you to Nineveh, a storm is brewing and sooner or later you are going overboard.

It is amazing how skilled the devil is in his manipulative powers. For example, a woman leaves her husband because she found a ship to Tarshish. Oh, there was someone else who was always there and was so kind and understanding. A man gets himself into legal trouble because he found a ship for Tarshish. He was in a financial bind and thought "just this once." A young Christian woman marries an unsaved man because she found a

ship for Tarshish. “Oh, he’ll get saved after the wedding,” is her wishful thought. The truth is, any time we want to run away from the will of God, one thing is certain. We will find a ship to Tarshish, and the devil will make sure that it is sailing right on time. Satan always sees that transportation is provided for those who are running from the will of God.

Continuous

Jonah’s fall from the Lord was continuous. Note his ongoing downward digression. He went down to Joppa. He went down into the ship. He went down into the sea. He went down into the fish’s belly. He went down into the deep. Here is a vivid picture of a life fleeing from God. It is characterized in the King James Version by these words: down, down, down. There is something eerie about the sound of these words in verses 3 and 5. It is as though an ominous dark storm cloud were gathering and you can see it coming. Then it unloads thunder, lightning, and pelting rain.

Once we step on the pathway of disobedience, the road keeps spiraling downward. David started going down when he watched Bathsheba bathing. He went down farther when he called for her. He went down farther into adultery. He went down farther when he had her husband Uriah killed. He went down farther when he tried to cover over his sin. He kept going down, down, down, until he repented.

Falling from God’s will brings on the feeling that we cannot stop. I remember learning to snow ski in the Santa Fe ski basin in New Mexico. On the first day of my first attempt, a friend and I got on the wrong ski lift and went to the top of the mountain instead of to the beginners’ slope. The farther down we went, the steeper it got and the faster we went and we couldn’t stop until we crashed. This is the way it is in leaving the will of God. When we fall from his will it is not only a calculated fall, but a continuous fall until we crash.

If we could only learn this simple lesson: No one ever goes up while living in rebellion against God. A lot of people today are fooling themselves. A fall is just what it says it is. People never fall up; they fall down. There is no standing still on the way to Tarshish.

Costly

Jonah's fall from the Lord was costly. The Bible says that Jonah paid the fare. We pay our own way when we flee from the Lord. Galatians 6:7 says, "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."

The rest of Jonah's story shows us that the trip was more expensive than he ever dreamed. That is the way it is with sin. The Bible says, "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Have you considered the cost of fleeing from the will of the Lord?

As a pastor, I have seen so many who are paying the fare of a life of rebellion against the will of God. I know men who left their family and the will of the Lord and are paying the fare. I know some who are hooked on narcotics and are paying the fare. I visited with a man in prison not long ago who left the will of the Lord and is paying the fare. I see it in the faces of men on the streets of our city who are paying the fare. Yes, the way of the transgressor is hard. The prodigal son out in the far country feeding the swine was paying the fare.

When we fall from God's will it is costly. Ask the woman who married the unsaved man; he was lying when he said he would never leave nor forsake her. Ask the man whom God called into the ministry who instead went to Tarshish. Ask the prostitute at the corner who is forty years old and looks sixty. Ask some of the street people who line up at the clothing ministry of our church. Each one is some mother's son; some of them are somebody's daddy. They are the shadows of the men they might have been. Ask the teenage runaway girls on the Fort Lauderdale strip. I see people paying the price of running from God every day of every week. I see it in the faces of men, women, and young people. I see it in the guilt-ridden faces of singles who think that everybody else is doing it.

The most expensive thing a person does is run from God. It costs some people their jobs, others their families, some their reputations, others joy and peace.

The fall from God's will is a calculated fall, a continuous fall, and a costly fall, until we repent and return to him. When we return to him we hear his clear voice still calling us personally, pointedly, and purposefully.

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**Have you considered
 the cost of fleeing
 from the will
 of the Lord?**
 ————— ❖ —————

How wonderful it is to know that Jesus paid our fare for us on Calvary. There he took our sin that we might take his righteousness. He died our death that we might live his life. Yes, “Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe; sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow.”

God still calls people today. However, when God called Jonah he answered, “Here I am . . . send someone else!” Let’s be honest. There is a bit of Jonah in all of us. Many of us have heard God’s call and have gone the other way, only to find that the fall has been continuous and costly. God still speaks to us today. Despite our rebellion, he stays after us as he did Jonah.

Let none hear you idly saying
There is nothing I can do.

While the souls of men are dying
And the Master calls for YOU.

Take the task He gives you gladly
Let his work your pleasure be;

Answer quickly while He calleth
“Here am I, send me, send me.”

¹ James T. Draper, Jr., *Jonah: Living in Rebellion* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971), 18.

² Allen J. Blair, *Jonah* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., 1963), 20.

JONAH

MEETING THE GOD OF THE SECOND CHANCE

EXAM BOOKLET **AK '10 (2 UNITS) JONAH**

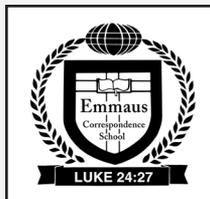
STUDENT NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

ADDRESS

CITY, STATE, ZIP

COURSE GRADE: _____

INSTRUCTOR



Exam developed by Emmaus Correspondence School, founded in 1942.

A NOTE ON THE EXAMS

The exams are designed to check your knowledge of the course material and the Scriptures. After you have studied a chapter, review the exam questions for that lesson. If you have difficulty in answering the questions, re-read the material. If questions contain a Scripture reference, you may use your Bible to help you answer them. If your instructor has provided a single page Answer Sheet, record your answer on that sheet. This exam contains the following types of questions:

MULTIPLE CHOICE

You will be asked to write in the letter of the correct answer at the space on the right. Here is an example:

The color of grass is

- A. blue C. yellow
B. green D. orange

 B

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Questions headed this way are designed to help you express your ideas and feelings. You may freely state your own opinions in answer to such questions.

RETURNING THE EXAM

See the back of this exam booklet for instructions on returning your exam for grading.

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CHAPTER 1 EXAM

HERE AM I . . . SEND SOMEONE ELSE

EXAM GRADE

Before starting this exam, write your name and address on the front of this Exam Booklet.

Directions: Read each question carefully and write the letter of the correct answer in the blank space on the right. Use the separate answer sheet if provided.

1. God commanded Jonah to go to preach against the city of
 A. Jerusalem C. Nineveh
 B. Joppa D. Tarshish _____

2. God's call to Jonah reminds us of our commission
 A. to take the gospel to the entire world
 B. to love our neighbors as ourselves
 C. to pray for those who persecute us
 D. to live for Jesus _____

3. God's calling, as it was to Jonah in Jonah 1:2, is always in the imperative, which means
 A. it's a suggestion C. it's a question
 B. it's a command D. it's a warning _____

4. Man's fundamental problem is
 A. biological C. sin
 B. psychological D. economic _____

5. Jonah's decision to disobey God was
 A. unintentional C. excusable
 B. understandable D. deliberate _____

6. According to Jonah 4:1-2, Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh because he knew that
 A. God would show His grace and compassion toward these Gentiles
 B. God would destroy them on the spot
 C. the Ninevites would kill him
 D. he would anger his fellow Jews _____

- 7. Psalm 139:7-10 teaches us that
 - A. we cannot flee from God’s Word
 - B. we cannot flee from God’s presence
 - C. we cannot flee from God’s grace
 - D. we cannot flee from God’s wrath_____

- 8. From Jonah’s perspective, he reasoned his action was justified because
 - A. he easily found a ship going in the opposite direction
 - B. the Ninevites deserved to be judged
 - C. Nineveh was a potential enemy of Israel
 - D. Nineveh was a Gentile city_____

- 9. The pathway of disobedience
 - A. becomes a way to know God better
 - B. is fun and worthwhile
 - C. spirals ever downward
 - D. never leads to repentance_____

- 10. Sin and disobedience for the believer will always
 - A. be very costly
 - B. end in our forfeiting our eternal life
 - C. be unimportant to God
 - D. be the best way to grow spiritually_____

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

What have you learned about running from God that you can apply to your life?
