



# God in Pursuit

Jonah 1:7-17  
January 14, 2024

God's threat of death and judgment in the increasing storm prompts the crew to determine that it's Jonah who's the reason. Jonah admits he's running from God, so the sailors throw him overboard to calm the storm. The sea immediately calms, and the sailors, in awe, offer sacrifices and make vows to God. Meanwhile, Jonah gets a surprise of God's grace—a giant fish swallows him up.

## Jonah 1:7-17<sup>1</sup>

<sup>7</sup> And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. <sup>8</sup> Then they said to him, "Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?" <sup>9</sup> And he said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." <sup>10</sup> Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, "What is this that you have done!" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. <sup>11</sup> Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?" For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. <sup>12</sup> He said to them, "Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you." <sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. <sup>14</sup> Therefore they called out to the LORD, "O LORD, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O LORD, have done as it pleased you." <sup>15</sup> So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. <sup>16</sup> Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows. <sup>17</sup> And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

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## Opening Questions

- Pray for insight and understanding into the text (Psalm 119:18)
- Take the time to highlight key phrases from the text. Look for repeated wording, contrasts, similarities and things that are emphasized.
- Highlight key words or actions in which you see the characters engaged.
- In one clear sentence summarize the passage and write your sentence below.

## Bible Study

1. Jonah attempts to get “away from the presence of the LORD” in Jonah 1:3. But as we’ve seen, this is completely impossible (1:4).
  - a. Read Psalm 139:1–12. How does this psalm describe God’s knowledge of our actions and attitudes?
  - b. Do you find that comforting or intimidating, and why?
2. Jonah speaks for the first time in the book as he answers the sailors’ questions. He describes himself and his God: “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord” (Jonah 1:9).
  - a. In the Old Testament, fearing the Lord was often an expression of loyalty, reverence and obedience. Compare Deuteronomy 5:29; Joshua 24:14–15; Psalm 25:12–13.
  - b. Has Jonah shown any evidence of “fearing” God with his actions?
  - c. How do our actions back up your beliefs?
3. Jonah’s description of God—“the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land” (Jonah 1:9)— makes his attempt to flee seem foolish.
  - a. How could Jonah expect to escape God when He is everywhere?
  - b. Think back to a situation where you acted in a way that now seems foolish— why did you act the way you did? How can you respond differently to similar situations you face today?
4. In verse 12, Jonah tells the sailors, “Pick me up and hurl me into the sea.” Do you see this as a sacrifice by Jonah to preserve the sailors, or do you think that Jonah is still stubbornly refusing to obey God’s call to Nineveh?
5. Do you see authentic repentance by Jonah in verse 12? If so, what are the elements that make it authentic? If not, what would you have liked to have seen instead?

6. In verse 13, the sailors refuse to throw Jonah overboard, and instead try to row out the storm. When this fails, verse 14 tells us their next step. What was it they feared most at this point in the ordeal?
7. Verses 15 and 16 give us the next actions by the sailors. How were their actions different from Jonah's? Do you think that they were genuinely saved?
8. Consider the story if it happened differently and Jonah had obeyed and gone to Nineveh right away.
  - a. Where would that have left the sailors?
  - b. Can you think of a time in your life when God used your disobedience to advance his plans in your life or the lives of others around you?
9. Read 1 Corinthians 1:26–31. Why does God use the foolish and weak of the world? Why do you think we are so often tempted to see the limitations of ourselves in the face of obeying the command to “make disciples” (Matthew 28:19)?
10. What do you think Jonah thinks will happen to him once he's thrown overboard? What purpose does the fish serve in the story?

### **Diving Deeper**

1. Read Matthew's account of Jesus' calming of the storm in Matthew 8:24-27. How is this story similar to Jonah 1? In what ways are they different?
2. In Matthew 12:39-41, Jesus foretells of his coming death and burial with the language of Jonah. Examining these verses, what do you think he means by, “the sign of Jonah”?