

## INTERVARSITY BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

### *Jonah 3:1-10 NIV, Nineveh Turns to God (60 minutes)*

#### WELCOME (7 minutes)

Icebreaker: Tell a quick story about a time when you were given a second chance.

We are studying the Bible together because we want to grow in our love for Jesus through Scripture and because we want to grow in our witness to Jesus through Scripture.

As we get started, I want to give you a heads up that toward the end of our study, I will invite you to take a next step of faith.

Let's pray and ask God to help us as we study today's passage together...

#### GROUP NORMS (3 minutes)

Let's remember our group norms as we study together today:

1. Use "I" statements (speak for yourself, not for everyone)
2. Avoid judgmental statements (no shame or blame)
3. Allow space for everyone to share if they choose
4. Practice active listening and give advice only if invited to do so
5. What we share here stays here (confidentiality)

#### INTRODUCE the Scripture Text (3 minutes)

Last session we saw Jonah praying to God from the belly of a fish, thanking God for his deliverance. Jonah had been trying to flee from God's presence and God's command to go to Nineveh, but God wouldn't let him off the hook. God did not give up on Jonah (or the people of Nineveh). First God brought a storm, which caused Jonah to be thrown off a ship, and then he sent a fish to save Jonah from drowning and spit him out on dry land. What's going to happen next between God and Jonah? Is Jonah's heart change going to stick?

#### SEE the Scripture Text (10 minutes)

Let's read the passage and talk about what we see.

- Who are the characters? How are they connected?
- What is happening? When? Where?
- Which words are being repeated?
- Is the author comparing or contrasting anything?
- Would you like to point out anything else you notice?

Jonah 3:1-10 NIV –

Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: 2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you."

3 Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. 4 Jonah began by going a day's journey into the city, proclaiming, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown." 5 The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

6 When Jonah's warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. 7 This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh:

"By the decree of the king and his nobles:

Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. 8 But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. 9 Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish."

10 When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.

### **DISCOVER the Scripture Text (25 minutes)**

Let's discuss a few questions that will help us discover and understand the text.

1. What might it have been like to be a regular towns person in the city of Nineveh, as you hear Jonah going around and saying that the city will be overthrown in 40 days?
2. When Jonah first heard God's voice, he ran away. In contrast, the people of Nineveh and their king respond by believing God, fasting, and turning away from their evil ways. Why do you think the Ninevites are so open to God?
3. If we could communicate the core message of this text in just one sentence, what would it be? What do we sense God is communicating through this passage?

### **RESPOND to the Scripture Text: Invitation to Faith (10 minutes)**

How do the people of Nineveh turn to God so quickly? I honestly don't know. But I do know that God is ready to forgive and rescue anyone who turns to him. That is what we saw happen for Jonah when he prayed from the belly of the fish, and then God brought that same rescue to the whole city of Nineveh.

Like I mentioned at the start, I will now invite us all to take a next step of faith. We don't want to just talk about the Bible, we want to live it out. If you have been following Jesus for a while, I would like you to consider responding by making a plan to have a spiritual conversation with a friend with whom you have not yet talked about faith in God ([resources here](#)).

If you are new to exploring faith, I would like to give you an opportunity to take a next step. First, I will share what it means to follow Jesus, and then we can see how each of us might want to respond. Let's open the [Invitation to Faith – Small Group](#) document and read it together...

**CLOSE (2 minutes)**

Let's pray and thank God for our time in Scripture together...

*Tips for leading the group discussion (and more tips are available at [howto.bible](https://www.howto.bible)):*

- *Participate but keep your comments short to make space for others.*
- *Silence is okay. Encourage further discussion by saying "What else?" instead of commenting on every response.*



this material and more can be found at [tiny.cc/biblestudyguides](https://tiny.cc/biblestudyguides)

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