

Handouts

Notes & Questions,
plus a PDF of
**5 Assurances for the
Disciple of Jesus**



Are there people who are hopeless?

- Are there people so cruel, so mean there isn't anything that can be done for them?
- Are there some people we shouldn't pray for?
- Can we sin so much God gives up on us?
- We find answers to those questions and more in a one of the oldest books of prophecy in our Bible in our lesson today.....

Your Notes

Jonah, about so much more than a fish

Yvon Prehn, Bible 805

Questions answered in the book

- We all know about the fish swallowing Jonah, but there is more in the book including the answers to these questions:
- ***What about people who haven't heard the gospel if Jesus is the only way to God?***
- ***What do we do about bad people, or when people treat us badly? What does God expect from us as His followers?***
- ***How should we respond to continuing trials?***
- ***For answers to these questions and other related applications, let's look at Jonah.***

What about people who have never heard about God?

(if Jesus is the only way to the one true God, and He is)

- Though the Old Testament focuses on the story of the children of Israel,
- There are also pictures here and there about how God was active in the lives of others who were not the "chosen people." Chosen in that they were to proclaim His message, not the only ones to be saved.
- We saw that in Job (see those lessons), as he was not a Jew and yet the one out of all humanity at the time God chose to point out to Satan as a godly man.
- And we see another story here in the book of Jonah, about a very unlikely group of people God sent him to, the people of Nineveh, which was the capital of Assyria.
- ***Remember—we know there is only ONE source of salvation, by grace through faith, but we have no idea all the ways God is sharing that message with the world—the book of Jonah gives us one more view of this.***

Political & Physical Setting, on real maps, chaos and struggles little different than today

- Geography plays a BIG part in the coming books, concerning both God's people and their enemies.
- To review—Israel and Judah, had been **one kingdom** from the time of leaving Egypt, through the leadership of Joshua, the Judges, Saul, David, down to Solomon.
- From 1456-980 BC, 488 Years.
- Divided after Solomon into...
- **The Southern Kingdom of Judah** with its capital—Jerusalem. Kings varied good and evil, but God's promise to keep intact David's dynastic line was kept until Jesus was born.
- **The Northern Kingdom of Israel**, eventual capital—Samaria. Kings, always evil, not one dynastic line, constant fighting, does not last an independent nation after Assyrian defeat.

Surrounding nations—mentioned in many of the prophets, constant interaction

- Going clockwise, starting in the North
- **Aram-Damascus**, people to the north of Israel, (Assyria was to the North and east of them). Their language Aramaic, would soon become the universal language of the area through New Testament times. Sometimes an ally, most often an enemy, Ahab died in a battle against them.
- **Ammon, Moab**, descendants of Lot, “cousins of Israel;” not ordered destroyed after Exodus, but often a problem. Rehoboam’s mother was Ammonite (one of several foreign women in the line of David; Ruth was Moabite also). Moab was the site of the Mesha Stele, a stone confirming Biblical history.
- **Edom**, south of Judah, descendants of Esau, constant fighting, lack of civil relationships, destruction recorded in Obadiah. Petra on the site.
- **Philistines**, people of the coast, home of giants, a problem from the time of Judges, and a major city there, Gaza continues to be a problem today.
- Many OT books refer to these nations, have prophecies directed to them—a reminder that ***all are accountable to God***.
- Map attribution: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kingdoms_around_Israel_830_map.svg

Larger World Powers of the time

- **Egypt**—a foe, but sometimes an ally and ***often a temptation***, throughout all the histories and both Testaments (many spiritual analogies as the thing we turn to when we don’t trust God).
- **Assyria**—a brutal nation; conquered Israel and surrounding areas, eventually conquered by....
- **Babylon**—who then conquered Judah and held people captive for 70 years.
- **Media/Persia** conquers Babylon and allows the Jews to return to the land.
- The entire area was later conquered by **Alexander the Great** during the time between the Old and New Testaments.
- After he dies, the land is split between his generals and local rulers, lots of war, and shifting powers until the **rise of ROME**, and that takes us into the New Testament.

The setting of Jonah

- **It was a prosperous time in Israel, listen carefully to the overview of it—**
- *2 Kings 4: 23 In the fifteenth year of Amaziah son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel became king in Samaria, and he reigned forty-one years. . . .*
- ²⁵ *He was the one who restored the boundaries of Israel from Lebo Hamath to the Dead Sea 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.*
- ²⁶ *The LORD had seen how bitterly everyone in Israel, whether slave or free, was suffering and here was no one to help them.* ²⁷ *And since the LORD had not said he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam son of Jehoash.*

Did you catch that? Many people miss that.....

- Jonah was a highly successful prophet of military victory in Israel under Jeroboam II.

- But this military victory didn't destroy the truly threatening military power of that time.
- That power was Assyria, an incredibly rich, opulent nation to the north of Israel.
- Not only were they rich and self-indulgent....

They were

- Bent on conquest, carried out with
- Extreme power & cruelty.
- They record images of torture, cutting off hands and feet, impaling, stacks of heads of victims.

From the position of a popular prophet of deliverance

- Jonah was called to preach God's salvation to a hated enemy.
- To people who were known for impaling alive people.
- Instead of rejoicing that God could show mercy to even the Assyrians, he ran in the other direction.
- His intended destination was 3,000 miles away.

He wanted to decide how he was to serve God

- He did not want to follow God to do a difficult job.
- Maybe he thought he'd been seen as a traitor.
- Most definitely he didn't want to preach salvation and mercy to Israel's threatening enemies.
- Choosing to go his own way did not go well.
- ***It never will for us either—we might think it is easier not to obey God, it never is—might as well just do what He says.***

A huge storm hits

- And his shipmates know it's from God.
- After questioning, Jonah admits his sin.
- The crew throws him overboard & the sea calms.
- A great fish swallows Jonah.
- Not the end of him.
- Sometimes drastic measures are needed to calm us down; to get us to listen to God. (getting sick, etc.)
- Apparently, that is what Jonah needed.

Jonah repents from inside the fish

- His prayer:
- ***Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs. But I, with a song of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. Salvation comes from the LORD."***
- *And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land. Jonah 2:9,10*

Lesson application: sin robs us of the love, kindness, blessings

- ***Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs. Jonah 2:8, NIV***
- ***Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love., ESV***
- ***Those who worship false gods turn their backs on all God's mercies, NLR***
- ***Those who worship hollow gods, god-frauds, walk away from their only true love, MSG***
- ***Grace***, Hebrew: ***cheded***, also translated "kindness, love, mercy, "
- Other OT stories in which the same word is used:
- Of God's help to Abraham's servant when he was sent to find a wife for Isaac.

- Of how God blessed Jacob who left his family poor and alone and returned a rich man with a large family of his own.
- Of the favor shown to Joseph when he was in prison.

A related passage is

Deut. 7:12, where checed is part of the covenant

- Moses tells God's people
- *If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the Lord your God will keep his covenant of love with you, (**checed**) as he swore to your ancestors.*
- The point is that God wants the best for us and **obeying Him is the best for us**—not only would the people of Nineveh be better off, but so would Jonah.
- When we disobey God, it is often because we think something else is better.
- ***But it never is—at least not long-term. Short term relief from pain is never worth it.***

Application suggestions

- When you find yourself in a challenging time, how should we respond?
- Bible tells us “in everything give thanks” —and Jonah did that in the belly of the fish (and you think you are in a hard place?)
- God promises us that all works out for good, (Romans 8:28) though it may not be good at the time.
- ***Our response should be to obey as best we can, quietly trust and do what it seems God wants us to do even if at the time we want nothing more than to get out of it, to run the other way.***
- And to be kind to others while we are going through trials.

The alternative

- Or we might choose to cling to the worthless idols of bitterness, questioning, comparing ourselves with others.
- This can lead to a spiral of self-pity and sadness and perhaps destruction.
- And God's work doesn't get done.
- As with Joshua when the people sinned, and he was crying out to God, we need to—
- ***Get up off our face and move forward.***
- You don't have to be thrilled about obedience to do it.
- Doing the right thing seldom feels good initially from dieting to how we treat unkind people.
- ***REMEMBER – your feelings are not a good guide to doing what is right—only God's Word is.***

If we OBEY and do what we know God wants us to do...

- We need ***to keep doing it, practice “a long obedience in the same direction.”***
- Circumstances may or may not change, but joy and peace can flood our lives in the midst of challenges.
- Hopefully, none of us will have to be swallowed by a fish to learn that love, mercy, grace, and an obedient walk with God are what we were made for.
- Quote to consider, *“Maybe if we spent less time fighting God's plan, we'd have more energy for the battles that really matter.”*
(from www.particularlycalled.com).

Jonah, about so much more than a fish

For those who doubt the story of Jonah happened

- As promised, definitive proof that Jonah was swallowed by a great fish and lived to tell about it, **comes from Jesus** when he told the crowds:
- *He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a 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. (Matt. 12:39-40)*
- **Not only did Jesus verify the story as a true one, but he used it to illustrate his death and resurrection.**

Jonah obeys, he preaches, and the people repent

- *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. Jonah 3:10*
- **How did Jonah respond? Did he praise God for the miracle of changed hearts in this great & evil city?**
- *Jonah 4: **But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry.** ² He prayed to the Lord, "Isn't this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing 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. ³ Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."*

And Jonah goes outside the city to pout

- A plant spouts up to shade him, then it dies, and he is even more upset about the plant dying than the fate of the people.
- God's response to Jonah:
- *¹⁰ But the Lord said, "You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. ¹¹ And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?" Jonah 4*
- **Consider how we all desire mercy from God, but often are unhappy when God grants it to others.**
- **That does not please our Lord—didn't then, doesn't now.**

Three lessons from Jonah –

#1 What to do about really bad people?

- **Remember God loves them and is more merciful than we can imagine, and we shouldn't give up on them either.**
- **Anyone** can repent and God gives second (and many more) chances.
- Our response should be to NEVER give up on anyone. NEVER stop praying.
- I imagine people who knew the thief crucified with Jesus were surprised to see him in heaven.
- I imagine few in Israel knew what Jonah did, and many were surprised when around 30 years later they met believers of Jehovah God when Assyria did conquer them, and they were exiled to Nineveh—what stories they had to tell! (30 years ago, his really weird prophet told us about Jehovah....)

#2 When God judges, it is HIS job; when He gives mercy, HIS choice

- **Our Response:** *Do not gloat when your enemy falls; when they stumble, do not let your heart rejoice, or the LORD will see*

- *and disapprove and turn his wrath away from them. Prov. 24:17, 18*
- *If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you. Prov. 25:21*
- Our attitude determines **our** joy & blessing or sad wallowing when God works in another's life.
- ***God is going to do what He wants, no matter what your attitude—it's better to be on His side than resenting or fighting Him.***

Lesson repeated in New Testament

- *Romans 12: 17-21* ***Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary:***
- ***"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.***
- ***"Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good."***
- If we attempt to take revenge, we are saying we know better than God, we are putting ourselves in HIS place.
- God takes care of both judgement and mercy in His timing and His ways.

#3 New believers need follow up for their salvation to make a lasting difference

- God's way of life is not automatic after salvation.
- *What if Jonah had stayed to teach, to follow up, to help them learn about God?*
- Some most likely continued with the Lord, the Holy Spirit was active—some believers to welcome exiles from Israel later brought to Assyria less than 30 years later.
- But most obviously returned to their wicked ways as the book of Nahum tells us happened when Babylon completely destroyed them around 100 years later.
- Again, we ask, what if he had stayed and taught?
- ***But we don't know because Jonah bailed out.***

We shouldn't make the same mistake!

- **When people turn to God, they need follow up**
- It isn't enough to condemn people or to get them to make an emotional response to become a believer in Jesus.
- ***They need to learn the basics of the Christian life after they make a decision to accept Jesus as Savior.***
- We must get serious about "Fully fulfilling the Great Commission" where Jesus said to "teach them everything I've commanded you."
- They need to read God's word and learn the basics of the Christian life.
- Here is one illustration—see Bible805.com for more on this.
- I was motivated to do a new one and a lengthy new series based on this.

New Chart of the 5 Assurances of the Christian life, as part of a series on Discipleship

- Based on the conviction that many today who are saved and call Jesus Savior have no to few ideas what it means to be or live as a disciple.
- This redone chart is a foundation and was inspired by the chart from

the Navigators. It is updated to fit on mobile phones, other social media, and as a graphic in teaching.

- This, other lessons, podcasts, and social media content available on www.Bible805.com
- And on the YouTube Channel with commentary on it at—
www.YouTube.com/Bible805

#3 Our challenges

- We all have a Nineveh—those we resent, fear, hate, or are angry with.
- We all are Jonah—we want to run away; we don't want to do the tasks he called us to.
- Hopefully, we've learned from Jonah and what happens when we try to fight God.
- We won't win.
- We might as well be obedient, no matter how difficult it might be.
- Step-by-step.

Thankfully, in our obedience we have a better example than Jonah

- Our Lord Jesus.
- Jesus didn't quit in his work, and we shouldn't either.
- He kept preaching, challenging, healing, and loving those he called for 3 years, no matter how many times they doubted Him and failed in his expectations for them.
- And finally, He died for the sins of his rebellious, unthankful creation.
- He finished the job God called him to do and our salvation is the extraordinary result of it.
- As Heb 12 tells us, ***"for the joy set before Him, He endured."***
- We have that same joy ahead of us and not only that—

The risen Jesus can help us finish our work

- Not only ***can*** He help us, but we desperately need his help.
- Hopefully, it won't take getting swallowed by a big fish to get us to finish our work or to obey Him, but regardless of our circumstances—
- **We need Jesus** to be kind to mean people, to trust God in difficult challenges, to be obedient in all situations and to do the work He calls us to do, in other words, ***to be His disciple, His apprentice, His representative to our world.***
- **And He will help**, as He reminds us in this final verse for us to remember in Phil. 1:6 ***the God who started this great work in you will keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears.***

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Jonah, about so much more than a fish

1. Why is it important to understand the geography of where this takes place and about the nations that surrounded Israel?
2. Who were the Assyrian people? (Nineveh, where Jonah was called to preach was their capital city). Why did Jonah run in the other direction?
3. How are we supposed to treat people who are evil? Who treat us badly?
4. Why is it important to follow up with a New Christian? GO OVER THE HAND illustration on the basics of the Christian life.
5. What do we need to do when we feel God has called us to do something and we don't want to do it? How are some ways He helps us?
6. APPLICATION—Who is your Nineveh? How are you like Jonah in your life? How can you respond to what God is calling you to do?

5 FIVE ASSURANCES For the Disciple of Jesus

Inspired by the Navigators.org



1. ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life.

1 John 5:11-12, NLT



2. ASSURANCE OF ANSWERED PRAYER

You haven't done this before. Ask, using my name, and you will receive, and you will have abundant joy.

John 16:24, NLT



3. ASSURANCE OF VICTORY OVER SIN

The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.

1 Cor. 10:13, NLT



4. ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just forgives our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

1 John 1:9



5. ASSURANCE OF GUIDANCE

Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.

Prov. 3:5-6, NLT

To continue to grow as a disciple, get to know, trust, and apply the Bible at
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Five Assurances for the Disciple of Jesus

This lesson is based on resources from the Navigators, (www.navigators.org). These 5 Assurances and the verses that go with them were what they felt were essential for a new Christian to know and have stood the test of time as a helpful foundation for a relationship with Jesus.

They had a chart that went with it with each verse on the fingers of a hand. This handout is a new one, redone in Canva to fit on social media format and to use in teaching.

The following is a list of the Five Assurances, the verse that supports it, and clarifying comments from Yvon Prehn.

For free downloadable social media images and ready-to-print PDFs, go to www.Bible805.com.

1. Assurance of Salvation

Before any relationship can grow, you need to be secure in it. God wants you to be secure, eternally assured that nothing you can do will ever destroy His love for you or cause Him to leave you. Our verse for Assurance of Salvation is:

And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life. 1 John 5:11-12, NLT

Once you have trusted Jesus as your Savior—you have Him and he will not ever let you go—and because His life is eternal, you won't ever really die. One day you'll simply close your eyes and open them to a world of endless joy.

2. Assurance of Answered Prayer

The foundation of any relationship is communication and our relationship with Jesus is the same. Jesus wants us to talk to Him, anytime, about anything—that is what prayer is. Our verse for the Assurance of Answered Prayer is:

You haven't done this before. Ask, using my name, and you will receive, and you will have abundant joy. John 16:24, NLT

You can now freely talk to God about anything, any request for yourself and those you care for. God doesn't always give us everything we want, because He knows what and when is best, but He always hears us and answers.

3. Assurance of Victory over sin

Becoming a Christian doesn't mean you immediately become perfect. Life can be even more of a challenge that it was when you didn't care how you lived. Our verse for the Assurance of Victory is:

The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure. 1 Cor. 10:13, NLT

You will be tempted just like everyone else, but as a Christian, you don't have to sin. God will provide a way out and you can say no. God has not turned you into a robot—He hasn't erased your will and you must still make that decision to say no to sin, but you'll find you have a new desire and power to do it that you didn't have before.

4. Assurance of Forgiveness

There are times when you don't take the way out. You mess up. You sin—but our gracious Savior provided for us when that happens. Here is our verse for Assurance of Forgiveness:

But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just forgives our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. 1 John 1:9

To confess means to name it, call it what it is, to agree with God that you should not have done it and are truly repentant. When you do that God will forgive you. To me it is like stepping into a shower, which washes us clean, ready to go back out into the world to serve Him.

5. Assurance of Guidance

Just because you have become a Christian, doesn't mean you know how to live as a Christian—it simply isn't in us, and we need an outside source for guidance. Fortunately God provides what we need. Here is our verse for the Assurance of Guidance:

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart;
do not depend on your own understanding.
Seek his will in all you do,
and he will show you which path to take.
Prov. 3:5,6 NLT*

The only way for this verse to become reality is if you get to know God's Word—the Bible—that is where He will show you what to do, that is where you will get understanding in life; that is where you will find the path to take.

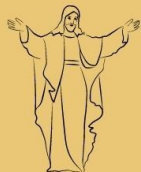
There is NO other way in our current, mixed up, and confused world that you will know God's will for your life, which is the absolute best way to live the human life, if you don't get it from God's Word.

Bible805 exists to help you know, trust, and apply the Bible. Each week there are new social media shorts, podcasts, blogs, and in-depth lessons to help you grow in your Christian life. Please take advantage of them to help you continue to grow as a disciple of Jesus. Join our email list, subscribe to the Bible805 video and blog channels, and grow in your relationship with Jesus.

Go to www.Bible805.com for links to all of these resources.

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