



The Evangelical Covenant Church

# RELENTLESS LOVE

A Study of the Book of Jonah for Groups

Facilitator's Guide

Heidi 1998



### DEAR MISSION FRIENDS,

On behalf of Serve Globally, I am excited to share this resource with you. The story of Jonah is an important one, and we invite you to delve deeply into it.

It is not uncommon for Jonah to be referenced when we think of missions. This should come as no surprise. It is a missional story. But the book of Jonah is also a discipleship story. Jonah hears God's call, wrestles with the personal implications of obedience, witnesses God's interventions, and contemplates long-held convictions that clash with God's character and objectives. God is discipling Jonah intensely, and God is doing so through missions. Mission is discipleship on steroids!

This study guide is an invitation to fully immerse in discipleship and mission, for Jonah's story is our story too. As you study Jonah's experience, we invite you to reflect on the reality that mission is a powerful context for discipleship. These six studies should help you discover, as Jonah did, more about God's character and your calling. Responding to God's call was meant to transform not just the Ninevites, but Jonah himself. As you study this book, either individually or with others, our prayer is that you will hear God's voice, respond to the call, and be transformed as a result.

May this resource contribute to deepening our relationship with God, each other, and our neighbors, near and far.

Many thanks to Christina Burrows, Mark Severson, Prajakta David, Abby Kurz, and the Marketing and Communications team of the Evangelical Covenant Church.

DEEPER IN CHRIST—FURTHER IN MISSION!



Al Tizon  
*Executive Director of Serve Globally*



# RELENTLESS LOVE

*by Christina Burrows*

## FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

Introduction . . . . .	4
Facilitator Guidelines . . . . .	5
Week 1: Introduction to Jonah . . . . .	7
Week 2: Jonah 1, Running from God's Call . . . . .	11
Week 3: Jonah 1:17-3:3, Salvation Comes from the Lord . . . . .	16
Week 4: Jonah 3, Responding to God's Call . . . . .	21
Week 5: Jonah 4, Coming to Terms with God's Radical Grace . . . . .	27
Week 6: Jonah, Jesus, and Me . . . . .	32
About the author; Endnotes . . . . .	34
More Serve Globally Resources . . . . .	36

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## Introduction

The Old Testament book of Jonah is one of the best-loved stories in the Bible—one of the first Bible stories we read to our children. The extraordinary image of Jonah and the big fish has captured the imaginations of artists and writers throughout the ages.

This is a study about a God of relentless love who goes to extraordinary lengths to turn the Ninevites away from wickedness and to bring them into reconciliation with God, with themselves, with each other, and with the rest of creation. It is about Jesus, who calls Jonah a sign that points to his death and resurrection. It is about us, the readers of the 21st century, who are still faced with questions of death and life, of God and humanity, of repentance and reconciliation.

The study takes place over six weeks. In Week 1, we look at the book of Jonah as a whole. In Weeks 2–5, we look at each chapter in more depth. In Week 6 we process and discern how God wants each of us to respond to God's Word in the book of Jonah. In between each session there is a Response Activity to complete, as a practical way to respond to the section we are focused on for that week.

In going through this study on Jonah, your group will walk away with a deeper appreciation of the relentless love of God for all people, no matter who they are or what they have done. Together, you will be inspired afresh to move out of your comfort zone to join God in loving your neighbor as yourself.



## Facilitator's Guidelines

Thank you for your commitment to serve a group of co-journeymen as a facilitator! Here are a few guidelines to keep in mind.

### JOURNEY TOGETHER

This Bible study is designed as a learning journey for people in various stages of Christian maturity and leadership. Seek to create a space where people feel safe to respond and ask honest questions. Sometimes it's better to refrain from sharing information or expertise to allow others to explore and discover God's Word. If participants have some unorthodox ideas, seek to gently redirect the discussion back to the text and trust that the Holy Spirit is the true Counselor who leads us into all truth.

### MAKE YOUR GROUP A SAFE PLACE

You can help to create a safe environment for your group. Demonstrate unconditional positive regard for each member by expressing verbally and non-verbally that each person is of great value and deserves to be treated as such. By the end of your six weeks, the group should have developed a strong level of trust and care.

If you have concerns about a group member's behavior or comments, talk to them privately. If necessary, bring your concerns to a relevant leader.

### MEETING ONLINE

If you are meeting online, we recommend that you arrange for someone else to act as administrative facilitator. They can schedule the meetings, send out calendar invites, and manage the technical side of hosting. Ensure that you and all your participants are familiar with the technology you are using. Remind people to use earphones to optimize sound quality, to mute themselves if they are not speaking, and to turn on their video. Be patient in the meeting if internet connections drop in and out. Try and keep the discussion moving forward.

### LISTEN TO EACH OTHER

During each session, listen to the Holy Spirit and listen to what people are saying as you walk through each activity. It is more important to listen than to give advice. Pray as you listen. Never feel you need to give a long commentary on what someone has said during a discussion. Often, a simple "thank you for your perspective" is enough.

### REFRESHMENTS

The book of Jonah affirms that God is the God of the seas and the dry land, the God of plants and animals. If you are meeting in person, one small way that we can reflect this care for creation, including ourselves as people created by God, is by using utensils with sustainable materials, and by providing healthy food and drink for each other.



## PRAY TOGETHER

Listen and take note of what people have said, and then leave enough time to bring it to God in prayer at the end of the meeting. It is God's transformation we are seeking in our lives and ministries. Pray for your group members, as God leads, in between meetings.

## GROUP SIZE

Feel free to gather for the opening prayer and worship in a larger group, but the review and discussion portion of the study will work better in smaller groups of 4-6 people.

## RESPONSE ACTIVITY

A Response Activity is provided each week for participants to complete between sessions. Facilitators can lead by example by reminding people about the activities and completing them thoughtfully. Each week participants will share their Response Activity experiences from the previous week to learn from each other.

## SUGGESTED TIMELINE FOR A 90-MINUTE MEETING

This study will be broadly following the inductive Bible study framework of Observation, Interpretation, and Application. Taking the time to eat and connect, to worship, share, and pray together, are all essential. We want to be holistic missional communities. We want to speak of Jesus<sup>1</sup> without using "Christianese." We want to study God's Word together.

**00:00** Welcome and refreshments (unless you choose to fast together one week)

**00:10** Opening Prayer/Worship<sup>2</sup>

**00:15** Response Activity Review. If the group is large, split into smaller groups of 4-6 people to let everyone share their Response Activity experience from that week for two minutes without interruption. After each one, ask clarifying questions if necessary. Pray silently for one minute for each other at the end of your sharing.

**00:25** Read the Bible text for that week aloud or listen to it on a Bible app.

**00:30** Discuss. Use the questions provided as a springboard for your discussion. Use your discretion as to which questions best serve your group.

**01:10** Share prayer requests and quickly decide whether any group action is necessary. (For example, does this person's family need a meal or babysitters provided this week?) Pray together and for each other. Consider adding an intercultural Christian worker to your prayer list.

**01:25** Read the Response Activity for the coming week.

**01:29** Closing Prayer

**01:30** End

May the Lord bless you and keep you on this journey through the book of Jonah together. We are praying that it will be a transformative experience for all!



## Introduction to Jonah

WEEK ONE: JONAH 1-4

### FACILITATOR NOTES

Materials: Bibles, Week 1 study guide, pens, one small tub of colored playdough per person

Encourage group members to print out the text each week from [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com), (the NRSV or NIV versions are recommended) or to copy and paste the text into an editable document, so they can underline, mark up and make notes around the text. Distribute small pots of colored playdough at the beginning of this session. Yes, we're going to access our inner child! If meeting online, encourage people in advance to find playdough.

If you're meeting in person, have people stand in groups of two or three to share. If you're meeting online, have people share in breakout rooms for two minutes each.

### 00:00 WELCOME AND REFRESHMENTS

#### 00:10 OPENING PRAYER

Let's begin by reflecting on the commandment that Jesus tells us is foundational to our life with God.

The Great Commandment: **Matthew 22:36-40**

"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

— *Lord Jesus, may your words soak into our hearts. May we love you with everything we have. May we love our neighbor, no matter who they are, and may we love ourselves.*

*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.*

#### 00:15 OPENING QUESTION

Briefly, what is your previous experience of reading or encountering the story of Jonah, including as a child?

**00:20 Read aloud or listen** to the entire book of Jonah (approximately 10 minutes). If possible, listen to it twice, in two different translations or languages. As you are listening, fashion your playdough into a shape in response to the reading. Adult Bible studies can often become very linear, left-brain activities. This activity is to encourage more holistic, right-brain thinking. It is harder to just respond with the answer we think must be the right one when we are giving an artistic response. This particular activity is only outlined in Week 1, but feel free to repeat it any week, as you are listening to the text.

#### 00:30 OBSERVE

1. Collectively summarize the events from this story.
2. Share your playdough shape with two or three others and explain why you made it that way.



**00:40 INTERPRET**

Use these questions about the background to the book of Jonah as a springboard for your discussion. Use your discretion as to which questions best serve your group. Discuss what you collectively already know first. Use the background information as needed, to supplement your discussion.

1. Why is it important to our understanding of the Bible to know background information?
2. What do you already know about the background of the book of Jonah?
3. What stood out to you as you read the book of Jonah this time?
4. What is the purpose of the book of Jonah?
5. What are some major themes that emerge?

## Background Information

- It is uncertain who wrote the book of Jonah but tradition has it that Jonah wrote it himself anywhere between 750 BC and 250 BC.<sup>3</sup> According to 1 Kings 14:25, Jonah was a prophet in the time of King Jeroboam II who reigned in the first half of the eighth century BC.<sup>4</sup> He was a contemporary of the prophets Amos and Hosea, who were also active during the reign of Jeroboam II. He came from the Galilean village of Gath-Hepher, which belonged to the tribe of Zebulun. His name means “dove.”<sup>5</sup>

- Three main cities are mentioned in the book of Jonah:

**Nineveh** was a major city in Assyria, Israel’s worst enemy, and the bane of the ancient world. They were a powerful and well-developed civilization, known for their brutal and grisly treatment of their enemies.<sup>6</sup>

Nineveh is modern Tell Kuyunjik located on the east bank of the Tigris River some six hundred miles upriver from the Persian Gulf in north

Iraq. In the eighth century Nineveh had not yet entered its period of glory. At the beginning of the seventh century Sennacherib made this ancient cult center for the goddess Ishtar the capital city and beautified and enlarged it to nearly two thousand acres. At the time of Jonah it was one of the major metropolitan areas in Assyria with a circumference of a just under three miles.<sup>7</sup> This size is consistent with a population of 120,000 that is mentioned in Jonah 4.<sup>8</sup>

Those who argue for the story’s historicity suggest that the people of Nineveh would have responded to Jonah because of the weakened state of the empire. Assyria had been beset with internal rebellions, suffered an earthquake, and been frightened by an eclipse. The shock of these problems could explain why Nineveh was receptive to the prophet’s message.<sup>9</sup>

**Joppa** is located just south of modern Tel Aviv on the Mediterranean Sea. There was no significant Jewish population there, so Jonah would have



been able to be anonymous.

**Tarshish** was the farthest known geographical point. While its exact location is unknown, most believe it was in southern Spain. We can be certain that it was a port in the western Mediterranean known for its trade in exports.<sup>10</sup>

- Jonah is considered one of the Minor Prophets. He is mentioned as a faithful prophet in 2 Kings. However, Jonah is an unusual prophetic book, as there is only one oracle mentioned in the entire book. It is more like the narratives of the lives of Elijah and Elisha in 1 and 2 Kings. It could be described as a didactic historical narrative.<sup>11</sup>

### INTERPRET: FACILITATOR'S KEY

The following answers are provided to help the facilitator guide the conversation.

1. Knowing the background information to a book of the Bible helps us to discover the author's intended meaning to the original readers. This in turn helps us to better interpret it as God's Word for our own time and culture.
4. We need to remember that the Old Testament is not just Jewish Scripture, it is also Christian Scripture, because the Old Testament reveals Christ. Luke 24:27 says this about Jesus on the road to Emmaus, after the resurrection: "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself." Jesus talks about the sign of Jonah in reference to himself. Through the story of Jonah, we understand more of God, and God's purposes in the world.
5. a) The nature and character of God, including:
  - God's relentless, pursuing love, grace, and mercy for all humanity
  - God's judgment against violence and evil
  - God's power over nature
  - God's care for God's creation, plants, and animals
  - The power of the Spirit to lead people to repentance
- b) The mission of God to reconcile all people to himself
- c) God's choice of unlikely messengers to be God's ambassadors of reconciliation
- d) Pride and prejudice
- e) God's call to love our enemies
- f) Doubt, faith, and honest humanity

### 01:00 APPLY

Like all humans, Jonah is a person with many flaws. The book of Jonah reveals God's imperative to bring all people (no matter how undeserving we might think they are) back into a right relationship with God, with themselves, with other people, and with their broader environment. God calls followers of Jesus in the 21st century to join in this mission of reconciliation. The story of Jonah points to Jesus, and we know that this reconciliation is made possible through Christ.

### FACILITATOR NOTES

Briefly summarize the discussion before you move on to the application section.



What is one thing God is asking you to do this week in response to today's reading? Take a minute in silence to listen to God. Make note of this in your Bible study guide or share with one other person.

### 01:10 GROUP PRAYER

Share prayer requests and quickly decide whether any group action is necessary. (For example, does this person's family need a meal or babysitters provided this week?) Pray together and for each other as you close. Consider adding an intercultural Christian worker to your prayer list.

### 01:25 RESPONSE ACTIVITY

*Read the following activity to complete during the week.*

Who has inspired you by their response to the call of God to enter a culture different from their own to share God's message of reconciliation? Contact that person to listen to their story of call and how they responded to that call. If you are having trouble thinking of someone, contact a pastor or Serve Globally personnel. You can search for Serve Globally personnel and contact details here: [covchurch.org/sg/global-personnel](https://covchurch.org/sg/global-personnel).

Journal or record your experience. You will have an opportunity to share your reflections on this conversation in the next session.

### 01:29 CLOSING PRAYER

— *Lord Jesus, as we begin to look at Jonah and the way you used him to bring the Ninevites to repentance, open our hearts and minds to become aware of our own life, and how you might be calling us to reach out to others with your message of love, justice, and reconciliation.*

*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.*

### 01:30 END



## Running from God's Call

WEEK TWO: JONAH 1

### FACILITATOR NOTES

Materials: Week 2 study guide, pens, print out of Jonah 1, flipchart and sticky notes. If you are meeting online consider using a Zoom whiteboard or Google Jamboard (for Apply section question 4).

If the group is large, split into smaller groups of 4-6 people to allow everyone to share their Response Activity experience from last week for two minutes without interruption. After each one, ask clarifying questions if necessary. Pray silently for one minute for each other at the end of your sharing.

### 00:00 WELCOME AND REFRESHMENTS

#### 00:10 OPENING PRAYER

Today let's begin by reflecting on the commission given to Abraham.

#### Genesis 12:1-3

The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

I will make you into a great nation,  
and I will bless you;  
I will make your name great,  
and you will be a blessing.  
I will bless those who bless you,  
and whoever curses you I will curse;  
and all peoples on earth  
will be blessed through you."

— Lord, thank you that you have blessed us. May we, as children of Abraham, be a blessing to others. May we follow your call to go and become a blessing to all peoples on earth.

*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.*

#### 00:15 RESPONSE ACTIVITY REVIEW

Share something from your conversation this past week with an inspirational follower of Jesus about their experience of call and their response to it.

**00:25 Read aloud or listen** to Jonah 1:1-1:16 together.<sup>12</sup> Feel free to underline, mark up, and make notes around the text as you listen.

Take a minute to read the passage again for yourself in silence.

#### 00:30 OBSERVE

1. As a group, briefly summarize the events of Jonah 1:1-1:16.
2. What words or phrases stood out to you?
3. What emotions did you feel? In response to which part?



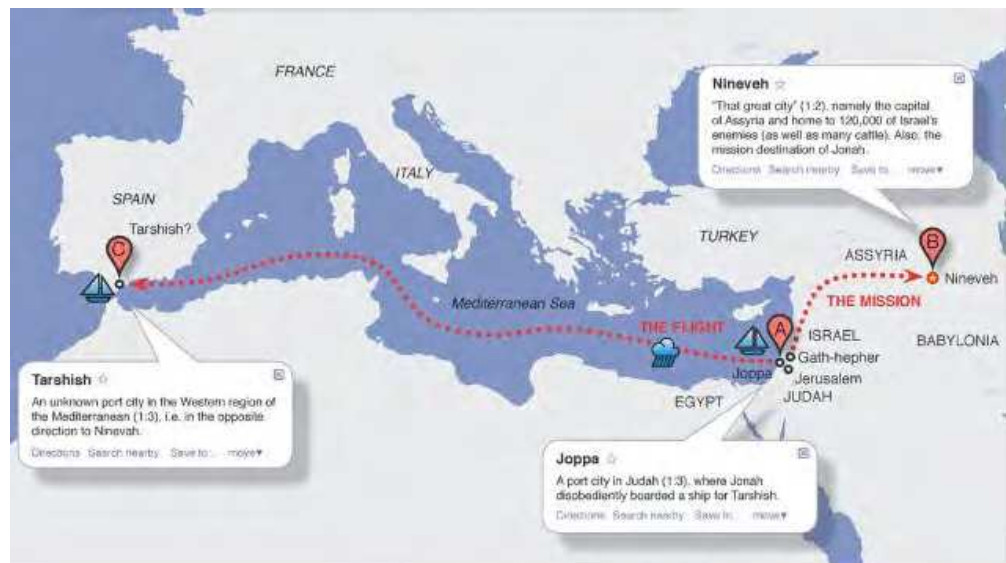
## 00:40 INTERPRET

In Jonah 1, we witness God calling Jonah on a mission, Jonah's actions in response to this call, and the consequences of those actions. Use the following questions as a springboard for your discussion about the passage. **Use your discretion as to which questions best serve your group. At certain points, we'll include some brief background information or comments that may be helpful to your discussion.**

1. Read verses 1-2. What did God command Jonah to do? Why do you think God commanded this? What does this tell us about how God views the Ninevites?
2. What was Jonah's response? Does the passage explain why he did this? How do you feel about his response?
3. What was the Lord's response to Jonah's flight? Who else did this impact, and in what way?
4. How do the sailors respond to the storm? And Jonah?<sup>13</sup>
5. Jonah gets a grilling from the sailors. What does Jonah's answer in verse 9 reveal about him and his commitment to serve God? Does this change your opinion of him from verse 3?
6. How do the sailors' words and actions compare with those of Jonah?
7. What is your response to the fact that the sailors end up offering a sacrifice to the LORD and making vows to him?

## FACILITATOR NOTES

Briefly summarize the discussion before you move on to the application section.



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## Background Information

- Nineveh, the great<sup>14</sup> city, was the capital of Assyria, Israel's worst enemy. The Assyrians were a powerful people, dominating large regions of the Ancient Near East, and were known for their barbaric and sadistic military practices.
  - Tarshish was the furthest point in the known world at that time. Joppa was a small harbor town on the Palestinian coast. It was never annexed by Israel during Old Testament times. Since the residents of Joppa were not Israelite, they would not have known who Jonah was. (vv. 4–5a).<sup>15</sup>
- Jonah's flight was not logical. Psalm 139: 7–10 says,

*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.*

- In the ancient world, the seas were considered to be synonymous with chaos and destruction. For Jonah to be running away from “the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land,” by way of the sea, would have seemed crazy to the sailors, who believed in many gods.

*Yahweh stirs up the  
wind and the waves  
to pursue Jonah  
with his love.*

### 00:55 APPLY

1. What does this chapter tell us about the nature and character of God?
2. Yahweh stirs up the wind and the waves to pursue Jonah with his love. The Psalmist says in Psalm 23 that God pursues<sup>16</sup> us with goodness and mercy. English poet Francis Thompson describes God as the hound of heaven. Author Anne Lamott describes God as the alley cat of heaven, who keeps showing up, mewling outside your door. Have you ever experienced God pursuing you?
3. Can you think of stories in the Gospels where Jesus reaches out to violent outcasts?

Some examples might include:

- The demoniac in the graveyard<sup>17</sup>
- Zealots<sup>18</sup>
- Roman centurions
- The thief on the cross<sup>19</sup>

4. When you were growing up, who were the people you would never have considered hanging around? If meeting in person, write on a sticky note who these people were, and stick them on the flipchart. If meeting online, consider using the Zoom whiteboard or Google Jamboard.

How would you feel about sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with the people you've just named?



### 01:10 GROUP PRAYER

Share prayer requests and quickly decide whether any group action is necessary. (For example, does this person's family need a meal or babysitters provided this week?) Pray together and for each other as you close. Consider adding an intercultural Christian worker to your prayer list.

### 01:25 RESPONSE ACTIVITY: SELF-AWARENESS

*Read the following activity to complete during the week.*

During the week, go to a park, beach, retreat center, or a quiet place at home, and spend an hour or so in prayer. Consider fasting from something that day. It could be a meal or a day's worth of food. It could be a fast from screen time. Or, like Daniel, a fast from rich food and wine.

Ask God to reveal any areas of rebellion or resistance in your life. Ask him to show you if there are people that you have prejudice towards. It may be for good reason. Jonah's resistance to reaching out to the Ninevites was understandable. They were violent and cruel towards their enemies. But the story of Jonah shows us that absolutely no-one is beyond the reach of God's grace and embrace.

On the other hand, our negative view of others is sometimes quite unfounded. Ask yourself again, "When I was growing up, who were the people that I would never have considered hanging around?" Was it people of a different skin color? Or a different social class? Or a different religion? Or a different political leaning? Or from a different country? In his book *White Awake*, Daniel Hill points to Nicodemus as a model for moving from blindness to sight regarding our own prejudices. He talks especially about racial prejudice, but this is a good metaphor for any kind of prejudice toward other people. He says:

*"Let's embrace the reality that, like him, we are stumbling toward Jesus in the dark.*

*Let's embrace the reality that we don't know the right questions, much less the right answers.*

*Let's embrace the fact that God's kingdom is at stake and that we need revelation from Jesus Christ in order to see what the kingdom of God is.*

*Let's enter this journey with new eyes—eyes like a child.*

*Let's pray like the blind man: 'Lord, help me to see.'"<sup>20</sup>*

Take some time to confess, repent, and then to receive God's forgiveness.

Lift any people you may have prejudice toward before the Lord in prayer. Like



*“God loves you. He’s  
on your side. He’s  
coming after you.  
He’s relentless.”*

King Hezekiah in 2 Kings 19:14, you may want to place a physical object like a map before the Lord. Or it could be a symbol, like a chain, if you are praying for people who traffic other human beings. Ask God to reveal his heart for that group of people and pray over them.

Journal or record your experience. You will have an opportunity to share a summary of this prayer time in the next session.

### 01:29 CLOSING PRAYER

At pastor and author Eugene Peterson’s funeral on November 3, 2018, his son, Leif Peterson said that his father only had one sermon. It was this:

“God loves you. He’s on your side. He’s coming after you. He’s relentless.”

— *O Lord God of Jonah, thank you that you love us so much that you pursue us. Your goodness and mercy pursue us all the days of our life. May we know this for ourselves. And may we embrace your call to join you in pursuing others, even the most undeserving, with your great love.*

*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.*

### 01:30 END



## Salvation Comes from the Lord!

WEEK THREE: JONAH 1:17-3:3

### FACILITATOR NOTES

Materials: Week 3 study guide, pens, print out of Jonah 1:17-3:3

If the group is large, split into smaller groups of 4-6 people to allow everyone to share their Response Activity experience from last week for two minutes without interruption. After each one, ask clarifying questions if necessary. Pray silently for one minute for each other at the end of your sharing.

### 00:00 WELCOME AND REFRESHMENTS

#### 00:10 OPENING PRAYER

Behold, Lord, an empty vessel that needs to be filled. My Lord, fill it. I am weak in the faith; strengthen me. I am cold in love; warm me and make me fervent that my love may go out to my neighbor. I do not have a strong and firm faith; at times I doubt and am unable to trust you altogether. O Lord, help me. Strengthen my faith and trust in you. In you I have sealed the treasures of all I have. I am poor; you are rich and came to be merciful to the poor. I am a sinner, you are upright. With me there is an abundance of sin; in you is the fullness of righteousness. Therefore, I will remain with you, of whom I can receive, but to whom I may not give. Amen.

– Martin Luther

#### 00:15 RESPONSE ACTIVITY REVIEW

Share whatever you feel comfortable sharing about your time of self-awareness, reflection, and prayer.

**00:25 Read aloud or listen** to Jonah 1:17-3:3 together. Feel free to underline, mark up, and make notes around the text as you listen.

Take a minute to read it again for yourself in silence.

#### 00:30 OBSERVE

1. Summarize together the events of Jonah 1:17-3:3.
2. The language in this section is rich and vivid. What words or phrases stood out to you?
3. What emotions did you feel? In response to which part?

#### 00:40 INTERPRET

This section is the most well-known portion of the book of Jonah. The big fish or whale has become synonymous with Jonah in many people's minds. Some people enjoy debating the scientific possibilities surrounding whether Jonah could actually have survived inside a "great fish" for three days and three nights. Try not to focus so much on that, but rather focus on the miracle of Jonah's rescue, on



## FACILITATOR NOTES

Briefly summarize the discussion before you move on to the application section.

Jonah's tumultuous journey with God, and on the restored sense of call that he experiences in this section.

Use the following questions as a springboard for your discussion about the passage. Use your discretion as to which questions best serve your group. At certain points, we'll include some brief background information or comments that may be helpful to your discussion.

1. What happened to Jonah after he was thrown into the sea? What is your reaction to this?
2. What stands out to you from Jonah's Psalm of Thanksgiving in verses 2-9?
3. How does Jonah's expression of faith differ in this chapter from chapter 1? How is it similar?
4. Count the number of times Jonah uses the words I, my, and me in this chapter. Does this tell you anything about Jonah's response?
5. Read verses 1:17 and 2:10. What do they tell you about God's activity in this chapter?
6. What do you think about the fact that God doesn't use words to speak to Jonah while he is in the belly of the fish?

## Background Information

- It is worth noting that in the ancient world, the term used for "great/huge fish" could have referred to any sea creature, fish, or mammal. In the beliefs of the ancient world, large sea creatures represented the forces of chaos that were overcome by the creator deity in the act of creation. Here, as always, Yahweh is portrayed as in complete control of the sea creatures—this one is simply doing his bidding.<sup>21</sup>
- Jonah's prayer life is steeped in the Psalms, the prayer book of Israel.<sup>22</sup>
- Although Jonah has begun to pray fervently, he never expresses repentance, and in verse 2:8, he seems closed to the fact that pagan sailors just turned to Yahweh. "He does not appreciate the breadth of divine mercy."<sup>23</sup>
- Verse 9 is the "climax of Jonah's prayer of confession, hope, and faith." He declares, "Salvation comes from the Lord!" Where the storm revealed divine mercy or amazing grace to the sailors, the great fish did the same for Jonah.<sup>24</sup> Although he is somewhat self-absorbed, this prophet acknowledges that it is indeed God who has saved him, and he commits to obeying God.



*The most unforgettable, fascinating, enduring lesson that we take away from Jonah and the whale is not how Jonah got swallowed by a whale and lived to tell about it . . .*

### 00:55 APPLY

1. How do you feel about God's actions in Jonah 1:17-3:3? How does this reinforce or change your perception of God?
2. Have you ever had an experience of rescue?
3. Read Matthew 12:39. To what does Jesus say the story of Jonah points?  
Al Tizon, executive minister of Serve Globally, writes,  
"My hope is that the most unforgettable, fascinating, enduring lesson that we take away from Jonah and the whale is not how Jonah got swallowed by a whale and lived to tell about it; but rather, how the story points to the incredible, wonderful, amazing grace of God found in Jesus Christ, who died and rose again for our salvation and for our participation in God's mission."<sup>25</sup>
4. In verse 8, Jonah talks about clinging to worthless idols. Is Jonah done clinging to worthless idols? What do we cling to today that might be considered worthless idols?
5. How do you respond to the fact that Jonah is still a work in progress and yet called by God for God's most important purposes?
6. In this section, Jonah finally accepts God's call to go to the enemies of the Jews and reach out to them with a warning of impending judgment from God, if they do not turn to God.

In the first week, we prayed through Jesus's Great Commandment to love God and to love our neighbor. In Matthew 28:16-20, Jesus spoke his final Great Commission to his disciples before returning to heaven. He said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

How do Jesus's Great Commandment and Great Commission relate to God's commission to Jonah? And what do they mean for you?

### 01:10 GROUP PRAYER

Share prayer requests and quickly decide whether any group action is necessary. (For example, does this person's family need a meal or babysitters provided this week?) Pray together and for each other as you close. Consider adding an intercultural Christian worker to your prayer list.



**01:25 RESPONSE ACTIVITY: REFLECT**

*Read the following activity to complete during the week.*

Jesus's Great Commandment and Great Commission to his disciples are as relevant for us today as for those who watched him ascend into heaven.

What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself? And what is your role in Jesus's Great Commission to "go and make disciples of all nations"?

You may already be actively involved in the mission of God. If so, describe when you were first convicted of this call on your life, and what it means for you now?

Our love for our neighbors needs to be integral,<sup>26</sup> or holistic. It needs to include both a proclamation and a demonstration of the good news of Jesus Christ.

If "going and making disciples of all nations" is a new idea to you, what might it mean in your life?

Here are some ideas to consider:

- Start to reach out to the people in the 20 homes closest to yours.<sup>27</sup>
- Reach out to your co-workers in word and deed.
- Start to pray or demonstrate love for people you find it difficult to be around.
- Consider whether you are called to serve in a different part of town, a different community, or even a different country.
- Go through the B.L.E.S.S. series in your church.  
**covchurch.org/evangelism/bless/**
- Learn about how to participate in the ministries of Love Mercy Do Justice at **covchurch.org/what-we-do/mercy-justice**.
- Join the work God is doing around the world through the ministry of Serve Globally. See **covchurch.org/sg/get-involved** for ways to get involved.

You don't need to make a definitive plan right now. Just listen to the Lord and write down what God is saying to you about his call on your life to make disciples of all nations—here, near, and far. Do any of these ideas strike a chord with you? Dream big! If God can use someone as pharisaical and prejudiced as Jonah to deliver an entire city, why could he not use you or me?

Journal or record your thoughts on these reflection questions. You will have an opportunity to share a summary of your reflections in the next session.



*“I will say,  
‘Salvation comes  
from the LORD.’”*

### 01:29 CLOSING PRAYER

“I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you.

What I have vowed I will make good.

I will say, ‘Salvation comes from the LORD.’” Jonah 2:9

— *Thank you, Lord, that you rescue us from our rebellion, and you always give us new chances—fresh opportunities to work in and through us for your glory. May we not cling to worthless idols, but rather to your love for us and for the world.*

*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.*

### 01:30 END



## Responding to God's Call

### WEEK FOUR: JONAH 3

#### FACILITATOR NOTES

Materials: Week 4 study guide, pens, print out of Jonah 3

If the group is large, split into smaller groups of 4-6 people to allow everyone to share their response activity experience from last week for two minutes without interruption. After each one, ask clarifying questions if necessary. Pray silently for one minute for each other at the end of your sharing.

#### 00:00 WELCOME AND REFRESHMENTS

#### 00:10 OPENING PRAYER

Let's begin today by reflecting on Isaiah 61:1-2, the passage that Jesus used to apply to himself in Luke 4.

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to set the oppressed free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

— *Lord Jesus, thank you for your ministry of very good news that we get to proclaim in your name. May we do this every day in word and in deed.*

*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.*

#### 00:15 RESPONSE ACTIVITY REVIEW

Share something from last week's Response Activity. Based on these, is there any action you want to take as a group? For example, you might need to contact your pastor to talk about going through the B.L.E.S.S. series, partner with your local refugee agency to prepare new homes for refugees, or start giving to a particular Serve Globally global personnel on a regular basis as a church.

**00:25 Read aloud or listen** to Jonah 3 together. Feel free to underline, mark up, and make notes around the text as you listen.

Take a minute to read the passage again for yourself in silence.

#### 00:30 OBSERVE

1. Summarize the events of Jonah 3 as a group.
2. What words or phrases stood out to you?
3. What emotions did you feel? In response to which part?



**00:40 INTERPRET**

In chapter 3, we see Jonah finally responding to God's call, and witness the dramatic response of the Ninevites. Use the following questions as a springboard for your discussion about the passage. At certain points, we'll include some brief background information or comments that may be helpful to your discussion.

1. In verses 1-3, God speaks to Jonah again, and Jonah responds. How does God's word to Jonah, and his response, compare with the beginning of chapter 1?
2. In verse 4, Jonah proclaims to the Ninevites, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown." Knowing what we know about the actions of the Ninevites, what does this message tell us about God's response to evil and about his desire for justice?
3. Jonah only goes preaching one day into the city, and the text simply says, "The Ninevites believed God." How did the Ninevites express their response? What is your response to the speed of their repentance?
4. How do you feel about the simplicity of Jonah's message? How do you feel about the extent of the Ninevites repentance? Have you ever heard of a group of people responding to God in such a swift and dramatic way?
5. In verses 6-9 the king responds also. What stands out to you about this pagan king's proclamation and actions, including his observations about God, the king's subjects, and God's creation?
6. What do God's actions in verse 10 say to us about God's justice, compassion, and concern for the Ninevites' flourishing?

**FACILITATOR NOTES**

Briefly summarize the discussion before you move on to the application section.

## Background Information

- Nineveh was a "very large city" (v. 3). This is the same word that is translated "great" many times throughout the book. Even though it was an important city of a brutal empire, Nineveh mattered to God. It mattered because it merited judgment (1:2) but also because its people—created by him—were ignorant of his ways (4:11).<sup>28</sup>
- Jonah's message was not just one of judgment, but also that "a forty-day period of grace would give them time to repent."<sup>29</sup>
- If you study the history of revivals throughout the world, it seems that most of the time people come to repentance and faith in God in a slower fashion, but there are particular



seasons and times where the Holy Spirit moves in dramatic fashion to turn people's hearts to God, usually in response to the proclaimed Word of God. One Old Testament example is in 2 Kings 22 and 23 when the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem repent and pledge themselves again to the covenant of the Lord as a result of Huldah the prophet's preaching and King Josiah's desire to be faithful to the Book of the Law. A New Testament example is found in Acts 2, when 3,000 people come to faith in Jesus, and are baptized as a result of Peter's preaching, and the prayers of the followers of Jesus in the Upper Room. Some examples in history include the Great Awakening in Britain and its colonies in the 1770's, the current explosion of the underground church in East Asia despite intense persecution or today's Disciple Making-Movements among Muslims in West Africa, again amidst persecution.<sup>30</sup>

- The king is concerned about repentance and reconciliation with God (vv. 8, 9). "Let everyone call urgently on God... Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish." The king is concerned about repentance and reconciliation within themselves and in their relationships with others (v. 8). "Let everyone ... give up their evil ways and their violence." The king is concerned about repentance and reconciliation with God's creation (v. 8). "Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything... let people and animals be covered with sackcloth" (vv. 7, 8). Animals were sometimes part of the mourning process in Persian times, and in ancient times, there was a close interrelationship of humans and animals.<sup>31</sup>
- Jonah's mission to Nineveh serves as one example of the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3 from Week 2) that he would be blessed to be a blessing to the nations.<sup>32</sup>

### 00:55 APPLY

1. This chapter challenges our notions of who's "in" and who's "out." A pagan king and a violent people wholeheartedly repent and turn to God. Jesus says in Matthew 12:41, "The people of Nineveh will stand up at the judgement with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here."

Have you ever experienced an unexpected person or group of people showing more faith in God than people connected to the church? What is your response to that?

2. Al Tizon says,

"Repentance is not a four-letter word; it's not an outmoded, inappropriate practice unfit for modern times. On the contrary, repentance is as beautiful as it ever was; it's as powerful and life-changing as the Bible says it is."<sup>33</sup>

Is God asking you to repent of anything today? Take a moment in silence to bring your words of repentance to God. And then receive these words of assurance:

"Jesus Christ died for our sins, not to satisfy an angry God but to reach out with unending love to stubborn and selfish people. We are those people.



Let the power of those words sink into you, and be comforted. Your sins are forgiven!”<sup>34</sup>

3. The city of Nineveh is important to God. So too is your city or community. Each city has its own characteristics. How would you describe your city or community?
4. Have you ever witnessed the Holy Spirit moving in a dramatic fashion to lead people to repentance and faith in Jesus? What would it look like if this happened in your community?

### 01:10 GROUP PRAYER

Share prayer requests and quickly decide whether any group action is necessary. (For example, does this person’s family need a meal or babysitters provided this week?) Pray together and for each other as you close. Consider adding an intercultural Christian worker to your prayer list.

### 01:25 RESPONSE ACTIVITY: “EXEGETING YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD”<sup>35</sup>

*Read the following activity for participants to complete during the week.*

#### **Exegeting Your Neighborhood** by Nancy Donat

##### **Introduction**

Exegesis is something we normally think about doing with a passage of the Bible. The dictionary defines exegesis as critical explanation or interpretation of a text, especially of Scripture. We examine Scripture to properly interpret it. We take the passage and we look at it in the context of the whole Bible. We look at the language used, explore the cultural context and content, examine the historical perspective, we look for meaning, and then try to put it all together to discern what the Holy Spirit might be saying to us.

In a like manner, we can exegete a city or a neighborhood. Primarily through the process of observation, we can take a critical look at our neighborhood or city, explore the cultural context and content, learn of its history, discover its meaning or purpose, and then seek to discern what the Spirit of God might be saying to us about the very place He has called us to. Australian minister and author Simon Carey Holt says that the “task is to discern the truth of God’s presence where you live. Quite simply, it’s about reading your neighborhood as one of the primary texts of daily life—one through which God speaks.”<sup>36</sup> In and through this exercise we want to use all of our senses to exegete our ministry areas, for we believe God is present.



### Exercise

Set aside at least one hour to complete this community listening exercise. Take the following questions and blank paper with you in order to record your findings.

Exegesis of a neighborhood can only be done on foot—slowly and carefully. Don't rush this exercise. You will want to designate the boundaries of your community or neighborhood. As you walk, listen to the sounds you hear. What smells do you smell? The following questions will possibly help you look deeper than you have before. As you begin, pause to pray and ask God to be present to you as you exegete your neighborhood.

1. As you begin your walk around your home, church, or office, what do you see? What do you hear or sense? What activity do you notice?
2. What does the architecture of the area tell you? Its history? Is the area cared for? Busy or quiet? Crowded or deserted? Is there graffiti? Are there sidewalks? Is the area sensitive to various people with disabilities? How easily could they get around?
3. Are the buildings/homes/apartments occupied or empty? How many empty or boarded buildings do you see? Is there much renovation or rebuilding going on?
4. Are there places where people gather? Common areas people share? A park? Do these places feel safe and inviting? Who is there? If you feel safe to do so, sit in one of these public places and observe all that is going on. Allow your attention to drift towards one person and without approaching them, pray for whatever needs you sense they may have or hopes you may have for them. Allow God to guide your prayers for them.
5. What kind of commercial buildings are there? Are there billboards? What do they advertise? Who is their main target? What languages are present? What types of restaurants?
6. Are there churches or religious buildings present? What does their design or appearance communicate?
7. How many people are out? What are their ethnicities? Ages? Genders? Socio-economic standing? What do you notice in the people around you?
8. Where are the places of life and hope? Where do you see beauty? Joy?
9. Where do you see signs that the Kingdom of God is present?
10. When you have finished your walk, reflect on what you have observed. What surprised you from exegeting your neighborhood? What excited you? What made you thankful? What inspired you to change the way you engage with those around you?

You will have an opportunity to share a summary of your observations in the next session.



**01:29 CLOSING PRAYER**

— *Lord God, thank you for the movement of the Holy Spirit in leading people to repentance following the proclamation of your Word. Give us eyes to see people as you do, every human being created and loved by you. We repent of our own sin towards you. And we receive your forgiveness through the blood of your Son, Jesus Christ. Fill us with your Spirit and give us boldness to proclaim your good news of reconciliation to everyone to whom you call us—reconciliation between God and humans, with ourselves, with each other, and with the rest of creation. Help us to be open and to discern that call.*

*In Jesus's name, Amen*

**01:30 END**



## Coming to Terms with God's Radical Grace

WEEK 5: JONAH 4

### FACILITATOR NOTES

Materials: Week 5 study guide, pens, print out of Jonah 4

If the group is large, split into smaller groups of 4–6 people to allow everyone to share their Response Activity experiences from last week for two minutes without interruption. After each one, ask clarifying questions if necessary. Pray silently for one minute for each other at the end of your sharing.

### 00:00 WELCOME AND REFRESHMENTS

### 00:10 OPENING PRAYER

#### Exodus 34:5–7

Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.”

— *O Lord, Jesus Christ, save us from the error of wishing to admire you instead of being willing to follow you and to resemble you.*

– Søren Kierkegaard

### 00:15 RESPONSE ACTIVITY REVIEW

Share something from last week's Response Activity. What surprised you from exegeting your neighborhood? What excited you? What made you thankful? What inspired you to change the way you engage with those around you?

**00:25 Read aloud or listen** to Jonah 4 together. Feel free to underline, mark up, and make notes around the text as you listen.

Take a minute to read it again for yourself in silence.

### 00:30 OBSERVE

1. Summarize the events of Jonah 4 as a group.
2. What words or phrases stood out to you?
3. What emotions did you feel? In response to which part?



## FACILITATOR NOTES

Briefly summarize the discussion before you move on to the application section.

## 00:40 INTERPRET

The final chapter of the book of Jonah returns to God's patient care and investment in Jonah as an individual. Use the following questions as a springboard for your discussion about the passage. At certain points, we'll include some brief background information or comments that may be helpful to your discussion.

1. In verses 1-3 Jonah reveals the reason he rejected God's call in the first place. What is this reason, and what is your reaction to Jonah's angry outburst at God?
2. In verses 4-8, how does God respond to Jonah's anger through emotion, word, and action? What is Jonah's emotional journey in this section?
3. What do you think of the way God used or spoke through natural created elements in his object lesson for Jonah?
4. Look at the repetition of the question God asks in verse 9. God focuses Jonah's attention on the plant saying, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" How does Jonah react?
5. What is God's final word to Jonah? What do you think God is hoping to achieve?

## Background Information

- Nineveh deserved punishment and Jonah desperately wants the city to be destroyed. He values God's judgment more highly than God's love, compassion, and mercy.
- For the third time Jonah declares that he wishes he were dead. He is very zealous for the righteousness of the Lord, so zealous that it excludes the possibility of people repenting from their sin and receiving God's forgiveness and mercy.
- God demonstrates to Jonah that the people of Nineveh are of enormous worth. They are human beings, and they are the citizens of the most important city of their day.<sup>37</sup> God's desire is for the people of Nineveh and their

entire community to flourish. The animals represent both the economy, as a measure of personal worth and also the broader environment. God is concerned for all living things.<sup>38</sup>

While this is true, in comparison to the Ninevites, the gourd is of minor worth. God exposes the ridiculous fact that Jonah has furiously argued for the worth of a one-day-old plant (v. 9b).

Jonah ends with an invitation to the prophet to forgive as God has done, but Jonah does not respond (4:11). We are left to guess: Does he hold on to his anger at Assyrian heartlessness and God's mercy?<sup>39</sup>



**00:55 APPLY**

1. Does this chapter affect how you think about God? Does it affect the way you think about yourself or others?
2. How can we protect ourselves from reading into God's word what we want it to say and mean? How can we, rather, embrace God's desire to demonstrate God's love to all people?
3. In both chapters 2 and 4, God works through nature to speak to Jonah. Does this change how you view the way God speaks? Does this change how you view God's creation?
4. What is the proper response to evildoers and to evil governments for followers of Jesus? How might the extent of God's compassion in Jonah change your response to violence and injustice?<sup>40</sup>
5. How does the message of justice tempered by mercy apply to the mission of the people of God in the world? Where does peacemaking fit into this mission?<sup>41</sup>
6. In verse 11, God asks Jonah a question: "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?" If you were to replace Nineveh with your own city, what would this question mean for you? How would it change what you do tomorrow?

**01:10 GROUP PRAYER**

Share prayer requests and quickly decide whether any group action is necessary. (For example, does this person's family need a meal or babysitters provided this week?) Pray together and for each other as you close. Consider adding an intercultural Christian worker to your prayer list.

**01:25 RESPONSE ACTIVITY**

*Read the following activity to complete during the week.*

**PART 1: READ**

In his book, *Whole and Reconciled*, Al Tizon places peacemaking at the heart of what it means to join the mission of God. He emphasizes that peacemaking is an intrinsically missional activity and outlines six elements of peacemaking as mission.

**1. A cultivation of a heart of peace** or a spirituality of reconciliation

"Before people-to-people reconciliation is a theology, a missiology, or a strategy, it is first and foremost a spirituality." Peacemaking is an integral expression of our relationship with Jesus, the Prince of Peace. "Therefore, the church's mission of peace should begin, operate, and end in prayer."



**2. Submission to the power** of relationship across differences

Our mutual humanity runs deeper than our cultural differences. If we are genuinely willing to get to know the other, there is great hope for reconciliation.

**3. Engagement in real dialogue**, characterized by vulnerability, truth, and love

We need to be willing to speak our convictions with love, even at the risk of offending someone. And we need to be willing to really listen to the convictions of others without becoming defensive.

**4. Healing pain**, which requires repentance on the part of the oppressor, forgiveness on the part of the oppressed, and lament on the part of both

“To the extent that peacemakers discern, identify, and acknowledge the power differential, they can help guide the two sides in the healing process.” This requires honest self-reflection, and a willingness to allow God to help us truly lament what is broken, to repent, or to forgive.

**5. Just peacemaking**, which affirms practical justice as the road to true peace

Peacemaking has to include actions as well as words. We need to address the roots of injustice, and seek societal transformation, rather than just settling for verbal harmony.

**6. Nonviolent action**, which affirms peace as both the means and the end of the peacemaking process

As we confront evil and injustice, we need to do so with love and grace for every person we encounter, even when we believe they are the ones causing oppression and pain. They too are created and loved by God, just as much as the oppressed.

Al Tizon says, “to the extent that these elements interact with one another in any effort at peacemaking, the church bears witness to the peace of Christ in a fragmented world.”

**Reflect**

This reflection is for your own enrichment. It is up to you whether or not you include these reflections in your presentation.

1. What stands out to you from this list?
2. In the community you are currently part of, which of these elements can you observe? Which are not present?
3. How is God asking you to respond?



*How can I impact  
others, here, near,  
and far, for your  
kingdom?*

## PART 2: PRESENTATION

Prepare a 3-5 minute response to Jonah that you will present in the next session.

### A: Personal Response

In what way has God spoken to you through the book of Jonah, and about your own missional engagement in your community and in the world? This can be in prose, in a letter to a child, to God, to a friend, or to yourself. It could be expressed through photos, poetry, spreadsheets and slides, voice memo, video, visual art, or another creative response. We challenge you to choose a form that stretches you in some way!

### B: Impact Response

Too often we study Scripture, appreciate what we have learned, but are not intentional about allowing God's Word to change our actions. What has the Lord been teaching me? And how can I impact others, here, near, and far, for your kingdom?

Outline an action step to take within one month, in three months, and in six months.

Consider sharing a meal together (in-person or online) after your presentations next week, to conclude this season of study.

## 01:29 CLOSING PRAYER

— Lord God, thank you for your concern for all people, and for your creation. Thank you for pursuing us relentlessly with your love. Enable us to receive your love and forgiveness for ourselves, even in our rebellion. Give us hearts of compassion for those whom we consider enemies or undeserving of your mercy. Help us to be obedient to your call to love you and to love our neighbor. Empower us by your Holy Spirit to obey your call to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations.

*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.*

## 01:30 END



## Jonah, Jesus, and Me

### WEEK SIX: OVERVIEW

#### FACILITATOR NOTES

Materials: Bibles, Week 6 study guide, screen, and speakers for opening song and presentations if necessary

Check with your participants in advance to see if they'll need tech support for their presentations.

#### 00:00 WELCOME AND REFRESHMENTS

#### 00:10 OPENING PRAYER

We begin today by listening to or singing the song “Reckless Love”<sup>42</sup> by Cory Asbury, which reflects the vast and pursuing love of God for each of us, even when we don’t deserve it.

#### 00:15 PRESENTATIONS

If the group is large, split into groups of 4-6 people.

- In turn, share personal responses—impact responses to the book of Jonah and the one, three, and six-month action steps. *(3-5 minutes without interruption)*
- Ask clarifying questions. *(1 minute)*
- Share a brief response to the presentation. It could be an affirmation or a word or image that came to mind. *(2 minutes)*
- Are there any actions the group needs to take in response to the presentation? *(1 minute)*
- Pray for the presenter. *(1-2 minutes)*

#### 01:15 PRAYER OF EXAMEN

Walk through a Prayer of Examen as a way to conclude your time together.

The Prayer of Examen or “Examen of Consciousness” is a way of praying based on the work of Ignatius of Loyola in his Spiritual Exercises. The Examen is a means of looking through the events of the past day or season in order to become aware of God’s presence and direction for our lives. You can do this exercise with the season of this study of the book of Jonah in mind.

Once you have read through the following outline for praying through the Examen, pause for a moment at each step. Feel free to stand, sit, or kneel as you pray. The motions provided are optional.

#### 1. Become Aware of God’s Presence

God, we believe that at this moment we are in your presence and you are loving us. *(Move your hand like a halo around your head, to symbolize God’s all-surrounding presence.)*

#### 2. Give Thanks

Thank you, God, for the many graces of the past season. *(Put your hands together and bow your head as an action of thanksgiving. Feel free to speak them out.)*



*As it was in the beginning,  
is now,  
and ever shall be,  
world without end.*

### 3. Ask for Light

God, you know my needs better than I know them. Give us your light and help as we review this season. *(Touch your fingers to your temple, then open your hand, like a lightbulb going off in your mind.)*

### 4. Review the Season

God, help me review the events of the season of this study in order to recognize your blessings and my shortcomings. *(Move your hands in a curve from left to right, in the shape of a rainbow.)*

Mentally walk through the events of the past season. Where did you respond to God and where did you not respond to God? Where did God feel present and where did he feel absent? What events were life-giving? What events were life-draining? *(Pause for a moment of quiet reflection.)*

### 5. Resolve and Receive

God, I ask your forgiveness for my failings and I thank you for all your blessings. *(Bow your head and open your hands in a posture of receiving.)*

### 6. Look Ahead

As I look to the next season, make me aware that you are with me, show me how to be the person you want me to be. *(Place your thumb to your forehead, with your hand flat, like you are looking into the distance.)*

As you look to the next season, consciously choose something to focus on doing.

### 7. Conclude with the Lord's Prayer or with the Gloria Patri found in the Covenant Hymnal (109)

*Glory be to the Father,  
and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
As it was in the beginning,  
is now,  
and ever shall be,  
world without end.  
Amen.*

May the Lord bless you and keep you as you conclude this journey through the book of Jonah. Go in peace, to love the Lord and to love your neighbor as yourself.

**01:30 END OR ENJOY YOUR MEAL TOGETHER!**



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christina Burrows was born in the United Kingdom to a Korean mother and an English and Welsh father. She was raised in England, went to Bible college in Germany, and felt called to global ministry when she was working as an au pair with a German missionary family in France. After teaching high school French and German in the UK, she studied for an MDiv at Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia, where she met her Californian husband, Ted. They served with One Collective in France for several years, before moving to California. She is a licensed pastor with the Evangelical Covenant Church and serves as a spiritual director and global missions trainer. She loves French food, being by the ocean, and all things intercultural. She lives in Sacramento, California, with her husband who is also a Covenant pastor, and their two daughters. She loves to help people discover that they are beloved children of God.

## ENDNOTES

Please be aware that the first two endnotes are not in the participant version.

1. Recommended reading: Carl Medearis, *Speaking of Jesus*, (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2011).
2. There are suggested prayer/worship activities in each session, but feel free to find a different one that fits your group. Diana Shiflett's book, *Spiritual Practices in Community: Drawing Groups into the Heart of God*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2018) is a good resource for alternative activities.
3. Kevin Youngblood, *Jonah: God's Scandalous Mercy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 34.
4. John H. Walton and Victor H. Matthews, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament, Genesis – Deuteronomy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 777.
5. Cossi Augustin Ahoga, "Commentary on Jonah", in Tokunboh Adeyemo, general editor, *Africa Bible Commentary: A One-Volume Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 1071.
6. James Bruckner, *The NIV Application Commentary: Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 42. (For graphic descriptions of the "gory and bloodcurdling" actions of the Ninevites, see Bruckner, 28ff. "The Terror-Mongers of Nineveh, Assyria".)
7. Walton and Matthews, *IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 777.
8. Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 222.
9. M. Daniel Carroll Rodas, "Introducing Jonah" in *God's Justice: The Holy Bible*, by Biblica (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 1292.
10. Walton and Matthews, *IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 777.
11. Douglas Stuart, *Word Biblical Commentary, Hosea-Jonah* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc. 1987), 445.
12. This is where the chapter break is in the Hebrew text.
13. Compare with the story of Jesus asleep in a storm, in Mark 4:35-41. Was Jonah asleep because he was depressed? According to Douglas Stuart in *Hosea-Jonah*, "Depression is the most likely cause. That depression should have followed upon a prophet's decision to end his career and exile himself from his home and country is hardly surprising."



14. See if you can count how many times the author uses the word “great,” sometimes translated “large” in the book of Jonah!
15. Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 451.
16. The Hebrew word, *radaf*, often translated as “follow” in English, means to run after, pursue, or track down, like a hunter tracks down their prey.
17. Mark 5:1-20
18. <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/15185-zealots>, accessed 2.25.20.
19. Luke 23:40-43
20. Daniel Hill, *White Awake: An Honest Look at What it Means to Be White* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2017), 23.
21. Walton and Matthews, *IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 777.
22. Compare Psalm 30, 69.
23. Rodas, “Introducing Jonah”, 1291.
24. Ahoga, *Africa Bible Commentary*, 1072.
25. Al Tizon, “Salvation and Second Chances: Big Fish Thoughts about Grace”, sermon at Next Gen Church, Princeton Junction, New Jersey, June 30, 2013.
26. The Lausanne Movement has an excellent infographic on integral mission at this site. [https://www.lausanne.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/INFOGRAPHIC\\_INTEGRALMISSIONS\\_F.pdf](https://www.lausanne.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/INFOGRAPHIC_INTEGRALMISSIONS_F.pdf)
27. Asset mapping is a good way to start assessing the resources and needs in your community. Learn more at: [https://chalmers.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Church\\_Asset\\_Mapping.pdf](https://chalmers.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Church_Asset_Mapping.pdf).
28. Rodas, “Introducing Jonah”, 1292.
29. Ahoga, *Africa Bible Commentary*, 1073.
30. See Brother Yun, *The Heavenly Man* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009) about the movement of God in East Asia, and Jerry Trousdale, *Miraculous Movements* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2012) about God’s work in West Africa.
31. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 493.
32. Youngblood, *Jonah*, 145.
33. Al Tizon, “How to Repent: Lessons from the World” a sermon on Jonah 3:1-10, preached at Next Gen Church, Princeton Junction, New Jersey, August 18, 2013.
34. Sharon Neuffer Emswiler and Tom Neuffer Emswiler, *Women and Worship: A Guide to Nonsexist Hymns, Prayers and Liturgies*, Sharon Neuffer Emswiler and Tom Neuffer Emswiler, (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1974, 1984), 74. In *The Covenant Book of Worship* (Chicago, IL: Covenant Publications, 2003), 108.
35. Used with permission of the author. Nancy Donat is Senior Area Director for the United States and Integrated Community Transformation Catalyst in Fresno, CA with One Collective ([onecollective.org](http://onecollective.org)).
36. Simon Carey Holt, *God Next Door: Spirituality and Mission in the Neighborhood*, (Acorn Press, 2007).
37. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 508.
38. Rodas, “Introducing Jonah”, 1293.
39. Ibid, 1290.
40. Questions 3 and 4 inspired by Rodas, “Introducing Jonah”, 1294.
41. For more on peacemaking as mission, see Al Tizon, *Whole and Reconciled* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic), 171-210.
42. Cory Asbury, “Reckless Love” <https://youtu.be/Sc6SSHuZvQE> Accessed 12.23.2020.



## Get Involved with Serve Globally

Serve Globally provides several tangible engagement resources for churches, small groups, and individuals to experience transformative discipleship as we engage with God's world in word and deed. Visit [covchurch.org/sg](https://covchurch.org/sg) to learn more about various ways you can engage with our ministries!

### PRAY

Join Covenanters in praying for national partners and global personnel for the transformation of the world through God's power. For prayer resources, visit [covchurch.org/sg/get-involved/#pray](https://covchurch.org/sg/get-involved/#pray).

Serve Globally Daily Prayer Requests: To receive updated daily prayer requests and reminders from our global partners and personnel via email, sign up at [covchurch.org/prayer-calendar](https://covchurch.org/prayer-calendar).

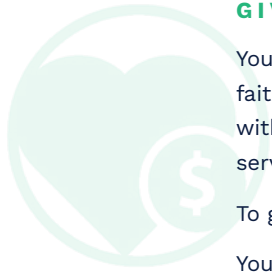
Serve Globally Prayer Calendar– Order copies of the Serve Globally prayer calendar at [covbooks.com](https://covbooks.com).

### LEARN

Serve Globally offers several resources to help you learn and participate in mission well. Individuals and churches are invited to dig deeper into discipleship and live missionally. To access these resources, visit [covchurch.org/sg/get-involved/#learn](https://covchurch.org/sg/get-involved/#learn).

CHILDREN	<a href="#">Kids Helping Kids Curriculum</a> <a href="#">Refugee Journey Experiential Learning</a>
SMALL GROUPS	<b>Jonah Curriculum:</b> A 6-week missional discipleship curriculum that invites small groups to deepen their relationship with God, self, each other, and the world that leads to the transformation of all as we engage and respond.
CHURCHES	<b>SG Reading List:</b> Book resources to help churches engage well in God's global mission can be found at <a href="https://covchurch.org/sg/resources/">covchurch.org/sg/resources/</a> . <b>Request a Speaker:</b> Email <a href="mailto:serveglobally@covchurch.org">serveglobally@covchurch.org</a> to have a Serve Globally staff member or global personnel preach at your church.
MISSION COMMITTEES	<b>Optimize:</b> Workshops designed to strengthen the missional impact of local congregations help leaders assess current missional practices and determine new pathways forward. Contact Missional Congregations at <a href="mailto:serveglobally@covchurch.org">serveglobally@covchurch.org</a> for more information. <b>Mission Equipping and Training Event:</b> This event provides leaders a unique opportunity to learn more about current mission trends and the values that guide Serve Globally efforts and partnerships. Contact Missional Congregations at <a href="mailto:serveglobally@covchurch.org">serveglobally@covchurch.org</a> for more information.



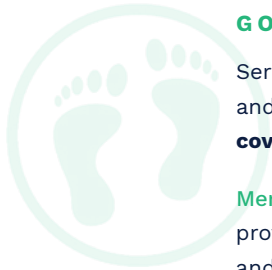


## GIVE

Your financial gift to Serve Globally continues to support our partners and global personnel to faithfully bear witness to the good news through word and deed. With your gift, you are joining with the transformative work of the Evangelical Covenant Church and our partners in loving and serving alongside the vulnerable in a way that is reflective of God's Kingdom.

To give, visit [covchurch.org/sg/get-involved/#give](https://covchurch.org/sg/get-involved/#give).

Your giving helps support the work of *102 Global Personnel* in *23 countries* and transformative evangelism and discipleship ministries of our partners in *59 countries*.



## GO

Serve Globally offers various short-term and long-term opportunities for people to learn and serve through immersion experiences globally. To learn about these opportunities, visit [covchurch.org/sg/get-involved/#go](https://covchurch.org/sg/get-involved/#go).

**Merge Trips:** 1-2 week trips designed to provide groups with opportunities to serve and learn together

**Vision Trips:** 1-2 week trips that provide congregational leaders with focused experiences and deepened understanding around missional themes in various cultures around the world

**Global Internships:** 2-12 month programs that helps individuals discern their missional calling through an experiential learning engagement in cross-cultural setting

**Global Immersions:** 3-12 month program that offers individuals an opportunity to serve alongside Covenant global partners

**Global Personnel:** Long-term opportunities for people to learn and serve through immersion experiences globally through partnerships with churches and ministries around the world

**Medical Ambassadors:** Dedicated medical professional volunteer opportunities to come alongside our partners the DR Congo

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## Ministries of Serve Globally

**REGIONS:** AFRICA — EUROPE — ASIA — LATIN AMERICA — MIDDLE EAST/NORTH AFRICA (MENA)

### GLOBAL PERSONNEL

Connecting congregations to God's work in the world through missionaries and international partners

[covchurch.org/mission](https://covchurch.org/mission)

### COVENANT KIDS CONGO

Walking alongside the children of DR Congo toward a brighter future

[covchurch.org/covenantkidscongo](https://covchurch.org/covenantkidscongo)

### PAUL CARLSON PARTNERSHIP

Raising the standard of medical care and catalyzing economic development in DR Congo

[PaulCarlson.org](https://PaulCarlson.org)

### COVENANT WORLD RELIEF

Partners in transformation through community development and disaster response

[covchurch.org/cwr](https://covchurch.org/cwr)

### CENTER FOR WORLD CHRISTIAN STUDIES

Training reflective practitioners

[northpark.edu/world-christian-studies](https://northpark.edu/world-christian-studies)

### GLOBAL ENGAGEMENTS

Providing resources to strengthen partnership with God's global missional purposes for cultivating mission intentionality and discipleship

[covchurch.org/global-engagements](https://covchurch.org/global-engagements)



