

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ recognize their need for a Savior (Romans 3:22–24).

SCRIPTURE

JONAH 3



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Nineveh is referred to as “that great city” in this passage. As the center of the growing Assyrian empire, it is believed to have had a population of nearly a million people in and near the city fortified by towers and walls.¹ Obviously, a city far from the ways of God (why else send Jonah), it must have been a violent place (Jonah 3:8; Nahum 3:1–3). This might explain part of the reason Jonah ran from God’s calling the first time. But fresh from the big fish’s belly (Jonah 2:10), Jonah was much more receptive to God’s instruction when it came the second time. God’s message through Jonah drastically changed “the great city” of Nineveh for the better.

Check out the *Teacher Prep Video* for this lesson: <https://vimeo.com/1065876236>

OPENING

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

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MEDIA AS STUDENTS ARRIVE

1. Play background music (optional)
2. Display **SERIES TITLE Slide** and announcement slides in a loop or customize the provided **PowerPoint**.
3. Play a 5-minute Countdown Timer 5:00 minutes before you start.

GAME or ICE BREAKER

Based on your group’s size, choose a **Game** from **Deep Discipleship Games** OR use the **Ice Breaker** prompt.

- **Game**—We recommend **Good or Evil?** or choose another screen game from **Deep Discipleship Games**
- **Ice Breaker**—What’s the worst news you’ve ever had to give someone? What was the best news?

DEEP DISCIPLESHIP GAMES

Find free games in **Deep Discipleship Games**. It’s already included with your Deep Discipleship subscription. View the game in advance in case you need supplies or slides.

WORSHIP

Craft a time of worship with a live band or sing along to a playlist.

- Check out our curated Spotify list. We understand that every church has a different theological view of worship. These songs are suggestions, please pick what works best for your church.
- <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/2xmeIKGUjkEE7bJYScbRwe?si=d254ec715a4749e5>

SLIDES (optional)

Use **SERIES Background & Blank Slides** or **PowerPoint** to create lyric slides.

TRANSITION TO MESSAGE

Include a brief element that transitions students from worship to teaching time, like a prayer or video. This will keep students focused and prepared for the message while the band leaves the stage.

VIDEO (optional)

Show **SERIES Promo Video** or **LESSON Intro Video** after the last worship song.

MESSAGE

Use the following teaching points and suggested illustrations as a starting point to build your message.

POINT 1: Jonah delivers God’s Word

Read or have someone in your group read Jonah 3:1–4

God’s instruction to Jonah in this passage is almost identical to his first message to Jonah (v. 1:2). If Jonah had obeyed God the first time, he probably could have saved himself a lot of trouble and pain—a lesson we can all learn from Jonah.

ILLUSTRATION: Tell a **personal story** about a time you chose to take your own advice instead of following the advice of someone else (someone you respect/look up to/authority figure), and then after, you wished you would have listened to your friend/coach/parent.

Either way, Jonah is obedient now that he is fresh out of the fish vomit (v. 2:10). The message Jonah is tasked to deliver isn’t an easy one, nor are the people he has to share the message with. Jonah is an outsider walking into a large city full of “evil” people (v. 1:2; if you want a more detailed description of Nineveh’s wickedness, check out the book of Nahum), warning them of a coming destruction from a God they don’t know. Jonah, with good reason, might have been afraid of what might happen to him as he walked the streets and spoke against its people. But Jonah obeyed God’s calling.

SLIDES (optional)

Use the **SERIES PowerPoint OR the Background & Blank Slides** to create these slides to support your message:

- Jonah 3:1–4
- Point 1

POINT 2: Ninevah repents

Read or have someone in your group read Jonah 3:5–9

The first sentence in verse five is a big one, “And the people of Nineveh believed God.” Note, they didn’t believe *Jonah*, they believed *God*. The message might have come from Jonah, but it was the word of the Lord that the people believed. Their belief, as all true faith does, led to action—they repented from their evil ways and demonstrated remorse by fasting and wearing sackcloth.

Faith will be evident through action. James tells us that it’s not enough to simply hear the Word of God; we must actually do what it says. Otherwise, we are just fooling ourselves (James 1:22–23). The people of Nineveh respond with action to the message Jonah delivers. This includes *all* people. When the king hears Jonah’s warning, he acts immediately and decrees that all people and animals demonstrate their remorse. They are putting their hope in the mercy of God, hoping he will relent from giving them what they deserve.

SLIDES (optional)

- Jonah 3:5–9
- Point 2



POINT 3: No one is beyond salvation

Read or have someone in your group read Jonah 3:10

SLIDES (optional)

- Jonah 3:10
- Point 3

God witnesses Nineveh turn from their evil ways and express their sorrow. Because of his great mercy and storehouse of forgiveness, God refrains from causing the destruction that Nineveh deserved. Instead of wrath, God gives Nineveh another chance.

ILLUSTRATION: Tell a **personal story** about a time you deserved punishment but were shown grace and mercy. How did you respond? What did you do with your second chance?

God’s love and forgiveness are for everyone. He offers Nineveh, a wicked city, the same kind of mercy and grace that he did Jonah, one of his prophets. No one is beyond salvation. No one is “too bad” for God to love and forgive. God desires for all people to know him and be saved (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

CLOSING

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ recognize their need for a Savior (Romans 3:22-24).

SLIDES (optional)

- Mark of a Disciple

FACILITATOR NOTE: DO YOU HAVE SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION RIGHT AWAY?

- If YES, then **STOP HERE**, divide into groups, and provide Small Group Leaders with the **Small Group Breakout Questions** on the next page.
- If NO, then end your gathering with the **Reflect & Respond** questions and **Prayer** prompt below.

REFLECT & RESPOND

Give the students time to silently think through what they have heard and contemplate these questions:

- Have you ever thought of yourself as too much of a sinner for God to love or forgive?
- Is there anyone you consider to be “too bad” for God?

SLIDES (optional)

Use the **SERIES PowerPoint OR the Background & Blank Slides** to display the **Reflect & Respond** questions.

FACILITATOR NOTE: Don’t rush this part. Give the students a few minutes to really consider the incredible ability of God to love us despite our brokenness.

PRAYER

Take time to pray that your students will embrace God’s grace for them and others.



SMALL GROUP BREAKOUT (OPTIONAL)

Pick a few questions from each section to discuss. Close with prayer.

BREAKOUT QUESTIONS

Build Meaningful Relationships

- Share a time you were nervous/scared to do something you knew God wanted you to do.
Answers will vary. Come prepared with your own example to help get the conversation started.
- How has God used your obedience to him to impact the lives of others?
Answers will vary but may include: sharing the Gospel with friends and they became believers, showing kindness to someone else and others followed your lead, etc.

Share Personal Stories & Ask Intentional Questions

- Since they weren't followers of God, why do you think the Ninevites believed God and his message through Jonah?
We can't know for sure. It's possible people witnessed Jonah being spit out of the fish and word spread about the miracle. What's important to note is that our job is to obediently share God's Word. How people respond is between them and God.
- How is your faith in God evident through your actions?
Answers will vary but could include displays of fruit from the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-24), consistently choosing God's way over our own (Matthew 16:24-25), thinking of others above ourselves (Philippians 2:3-4), etc.
- What do you think happens when our words about following Jesus don't match up with our actions?
It's hard for nonbelievers to see the importance of Jesus and the life-changing difference he brings when there is no difference between our words and actions and the words and actions of nonbelievers.
- Is it possible for someone to be so sinful that God refuses to forgive them?
No. It is possible for people to refuse to seek God's forgiveness, but if we repent and confess our sins, God is faithful in his forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

Make Life Application & Hold Students Accountable

- If God is willing to give forgiveness to anyone who wants it, what does that mean for us?
Obviously, we are to forgive others as God has forgiven us (Ephesians 4:32). This is easier said than done, but if Jesus can forgive the people who killed him while they were killing him (Luke 23:34), we can forgive others for whatever they've done to us.
- Who in your life do you need to forgive or seek forgiveness from?
Answers will vary. Don't rush through this last question. Give students time to think. Tell them to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal their hearts.

PRAYER

Take time to pray that your students will embrace God's grace for them and others.
Use this space to keep track of any prayer requests.

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¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Jon 3). Victor Books.

