



GOD'S SPOILED BRAT: JONAH

A study guide based on Jonah 1

Created by Trish Morris

Jonah wanted the privilege of belonging to God without accepting that God had the right to ask something of him.

Before reading Jonah 1, what comes to mind when you hear someone described as spoiled?

What makes obedience especially difficult when we strongly disagree with what God is asking?



1 God tells Jonah to go

The book begins without background or explanation. God speaks, and Jonah knows exactly what he has been told to do.

Read Jonah 1:1–3

Notice the clarity of God's command and the direction Jonah chooses instead.

What does God ask Jonah to do? What part of the command might Jonah have found hardest to accept?

Jonah does not argue or ask questions. What do his immediate actions reveal about his answer to God?

Is there something you know God is asking of you that you have been avoiding because you do not like it?



2 Running in the opposite direction

Jonah does not simply delay. He deliberately chooses a destination in the opposite direction and pays his own way to get there.

Stay with Jonah 1:3

Follow Jonah's movement: away from Nineveh, down to Joppa, onto the ship, and away from the presence of the Lord.

What effort does Jonah put into avoiding the one thing God asked him to do?

How can running from God look less dramatic in ordinary life?

Have you ever spent more energy avoiding obedience than obedience itself would have required? What made resistance feel preferable?



3 The storm does not affect Jonah alone

Jonah's decision is personal, but its consequences are not. The sailors lose cargo, face danger, and become caught in a crisis they did not create.

Read Jonah 1:4–6

Notice what God sends, what the sailors do, and where Jonah is while everyone else is trying to survive.

How are the sailors affected by a decision they did not make?

Where have you seen one person's resistance, avoidance, or disobedience create a burden for other people?

Without taking responsibility for everything around you, is there anyone currently carrying a cost connected to something you are avoiding?



4 Asleep in the middle of the storm

While the sailors pray and throw cargo overboard, Jonah has gone below deck and fallen asleep. He has withdrawn from God, from the crisis, and from the people affected by it.

Read Jonah 1:5–10

Compare the sailors' urgency with Jonah's disengagement. Notice also what Jonah knows and what he admits about God.

What strikes you about Jonah sleeping while the sailors are afraid and praying?

Jonah says that he fears the Lord, the God who made the sea and dry land. How do his words conflict with his behaviour?

Where might you know the right words about God while resisting what that truth requires of you?



5 Jonah would rather go overboard

Jonah recognizes that the storm is connected to him, but he still does not offer to turn around and obey. He tells the sailors to throw him into the sea.

Read Jonah 1:11–16

Notice the sailors' reluctance to harm Jonah, their efforts to reach land, and their response when the sea becomes calm.

What do the sailors do before they finally throw Jonah overboard? What does their response reveal about them?

Why might surrender sometimes feel harder than accepting painful consequences?

When have stubbornness, pride, resentment, or fear made it difficult for you simply to change direction?



6 The fish is also a rescue

Jonah is responsible for his choices, but God does not abandon him to the sea. The great fish is frightening, yet it is also the means by which Jonah's life is preserved.

Read Jonah 1:17

Sit with the tension in this verse. God is confronting Jonah's resistance and saving him at the same time.

How does the fish change when you see it not only as discipline, but also as mercy?

Can you think of a difficult interruption that eventually prevented greater harm or brought you back to something you were avoiding?

What does this verse show about God's willingness to keep dealing with Jonah?



7 What Jonah 1 leaves with us

Jonah knows God, speaks truth about God, and belongs to God. Yet he still resists God's right to direct him. Chapter 1 asks us to examine not only what we believe, but whether we are willing to surrender.

Return to Jonah 1

Read the chapter once more as a whole. Notice Jonah's downward movement, the widening consequences of his resistance, and God's persistent pursuit.

What part of Jonah's behaviour is easiest for you to recognize in yourself?

What has your resistance been costing you or the people around you?

What would turning toward God look like in practical terms right now?

What do you want to ask God for as you respond to this chapter?

God's pursuit of Jonah does not excuse Jonah's resistance. It shows that God is still at work even when His child would rather run than surrender.