



Jonah & Habakkuk

God's Heart for the Nations

Sample Lesson #1
and
Leader's Guide Answers

ONE

REBEL ON THE RUN

**Read Jonah 1:1–9;
other references as given.**

A. B. Simpson (1843–1919) was a famous pastor and the founder of a global missionary movement. A Christian man arranged a meeting with Simpson to see if he could understand his great heart for missions. Upon arriving at the Simpsons' home, the man was informed that their meeting would be canceled due to an unexpected change in the pastor's schedule. Disappointed, the man woke early the next morning to return home. As he passed by Simpson's study, he noticed the pastor's study door was cracked open, and there was Simpson draped over a giant globe of the world. Simpson was pleading with God for lost souls with tears streaming down his face and falling on the globe. The man didn't meet A. B. Simpson that day, but he understood his heart for the nations. It was God's heart for the nations in A. B. Simpson.

The book of Jonah reveals God's heart for the nations and His love for the wicked (the Assyrians) and the wayward (Jonah). The book of Jonah has been called the "Book of Acts" of the Old Testament because it reveals God's passion for the lost. Before you begin this lesson and every lesson in this study, ask God to reveal His precious truths to you and to transform you into the image of His Son.

1. Jonah is the fifth of the twelve Old Testament books known as the Minor Prophets, so-called because of their relative size compared to the Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah,



**Lombardi Time
Rule:**

*If the leader
arrives early, he
or she has time to
pray, prepare the
room, and greet
others personally.*

—
ADD GROUP
INSIGHTS BELOW

Ezekiel, and Daniel). The book of Jonah, with its famous story of him being swallowed by a great fish, has fascinated believers of all ages. The book of Jonah provides us with only a brief introduction of the prophet himself (Jonah 1:1). What else does the Bible tell us about Jonah (2 Kings 14:23–25)?

2. The opening words **Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah** (Jonah 1:1) literally mean the word of the Lord “was” or “became” to Jonah. We are not told how it came to the prophet, nor is it important since it is the message (inerrant Word of God; 2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:21) rather than the messenger that’s essential.

a. What did God command Jonah to do (Jonah 1:2)?

b. How did the prophet respond to His divine command (Jonah 1:3)?

3. Jonah lived during the reign of King Jeroboam II (793–753 BC), when the neighboring nation of Assyria (modern Syria) was in the declining years of its military domination of the Middle East. The Assyrians were known for their extreme cruelty to their enemies and for being a constant danger to God’s people.

a. Jonah’s desire to flee from the presence of the Lord seems surprising when we consider that he had been faithful to God in the past. *Why do you think* he rebelled

against God when he had been a faithful prophet in the past?

- b. Many New Testament believers are surprised that Jonah would blatantly reject God’s command to tell the people of Nineveh of His coming judgment. There is, however, a striking similarity to a command that Jesus has given to every Christian. What command has God given every believer and church that is equally ignored by thousands of believers (Matthew 28:19–20; Acts 1:8)?

- c. If you are a Christian, are you fleeing from the Lord’s command to help rescue the unsaved from the coming judgment of God? Yes No
 I am trying to do my best to reach people for Christ.

4. As you read the beginning verses of Jonah chapter 1, it’s easy to focus on the prophet’s defection and to overlook what God was doing. List five things the Bible teaches us about God and what He was doing (Jonah 1:1–7)?

1. _____
_____ (_____)

2. _____
_____ (_____)

3. _____
_____ (_____)



Zip-It Rule:

Group members should agree to disagree, but should never be disagreeable.

ADDITIONAL
INSIGHTS

ADDITIONAL
INSIGHTS

4. _____
_____ (_____)

5. _____
_____ (_____)

5. When God's people disobey His commands, they sin against Him, and others are hurt in the process. The sinning believer is often oblivious (asleep like Jonah) to the effects of the sin on others (Jonah 1:4–6).

a. At least four individuals or groups were either directly or indirectly affected by Jonah's rebellion. Try to identify them, and list how they were affected. Like Jonah, you might have trouble identifying all four individuals or groups, but think hard, because there are at least four.

1. Individual/group: _____

Hardship: _____

2. Individual/group: _____

Hardship: _____

3. Individual/group: _____

Hardship: _____

4. Individual/group: _____

Hardship: _____

b. Has there been a time when you sinned against God, and others were hurt? Yes No

I can't think of a time when that happened.

c. If so, what were the circumstances, and what spiritual lessons did you learn from that experience?

6. God could have turned His back on Jonah and chosen another prophet, but He pursued Jonah with a love that stood in sharp contrast to the prophet's spiritual indifference for the lost.

a. What three things did God do to restore Jonah to spiritual fellowship and service (Jonah 1:4–8)?

1. _____
_____ (_____)

2. _____
_____ (_____)

3. _____
_____ (_____)

b. What two things does God command believers to do when another Christian falls away from the Lord (Galatians 6:1; James 5:16b)? (Letter designations *a*, *b*, and *c* signify the first, second, and third portions of longer verses.)

1. _____

_____ (_____)

2. _____

_____ (_____)

7. God sent **a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up** (Jonah 1:4). Jonah was awakened by the anxious captain, and the superstitious mariners cast lots (also known as *cleromancy*, an ancient way of determining the will of God or gods [Proverbs 18:18; Acts 1:26]) to determine who was responsible for the storm. When Jonah was chosen, he responded by saying **“I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord,**



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ADDITIONAL
INSIGHTS

the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land”
(Jonah 1:9).

- a. Jonah's words seem hollow and falsely religious in light of his rebellion. How do we know Jonah did not have a full understanding of the fear of the Lord at this time (Proverbs 8:13; 14:27)?

- b. Take a minute to examine your life. When you consider the things you do (both in public and privately), can you honestly say that you fear the Lord? Yes No
 I'm growing in my fear of the Lord.

LEADER'S GUIDE

Lesson 1: Rebel on the Run

1. Jonah was a prophet from the Zebulunite city of Gath Hepher who minister during the reign of a wicked king of Israel named Jeroboam II, the son of Joash (2 Kings 14:23–25).
2.
 - a. God commanded Jonah to go to the Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, and preach against all the wickedness of the people.
 - b. Jonah rejected God's command and went down to the port city of Joppa, which was located on the Mediterranean Sea. He boarded a ship bound for Spain to flee from the presence of the Lord.
3.
 - a. Answers will vary. At this point in the book we aren't told why he fled. Some Bible scholars speculate that Jonah knew that God was going to use the Assyrians to conquer Israel, and he did not want to assist them in their destruction of his people.
 - b. God has commanded all believers to make disciples of Jesus Christ of all nations. Believers are to be personally engaged in evangelistic outreach to the unsaved, leading them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, seeing them baptized, and then training them to obey all the ways of God. Believers must realize that they are not fulfilling God's will if they simply attend church and avoid the sins that are common among the non-Christian community.
 - c. Answers will vary.
4.
 1. God communicates with man (Jonah 1:1, "Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah").
 2. God opposes sin and wants people to turn from it (Jonah 1:2, "cry out against it").
 3. God sees the works of man (Jonah 1:2, "their wickedness has come up before Me").
 4. God commands man and expects him to obey (Jonah 1:2, "Arise, go").
 5. God has control over the seas (Jonah 1:4, "the Lord sent out a great wind").

5. a.
 1. Sailors. / Experienced fear
 2. Captain. / May have lost his job because he was responsible for the **safe** of the cargo
 3. Ship's owners. / Lost revenue
 4. Other ships and crews. / Experienced the storm
 5. People of Nineveh. / Did not hear God's message until later
- b. Answers will vary.
- c. Answers will vary.

6. a.
 1. God used nature ("a great wind ... and a mighty tempest", Jonah 1:4) to cause distress in Jonah's life.
 2. God used the unsaved (the ship's captain) to confront Jonah with his selfish disregard for the welfare of the other sailors and the ship (Jonah 1:6).
 3. God allowed Jonah to be identified through the casting of the lot (Jonah 1:6-7).
- b.
 1. A believer should attempt to restore the sinning brother or sister in a spirit of gentleness after a time of self-examination to eliminate any hint of a critical or judgmental spirit (Galatians 6:1).
 2. A believer should pray fervently for the fallen Christian (James 5:16b).

7. a. A true fear of the Lord causes an individual to depart from evil (Proverbs 8:13). It is likely that the prophet Jonah would have known that his rebellion against God's direct command was an act of evil. Jonah would also have been experiencing the spiritual dryness that all believers experience when they walk away from the Lord. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life that brings joy, peace, and blessing (Proverbs 14:27). Those who have experienced the goodness of God in earlier times soon realize its absence when they walk away from God.
- b. Answers will vary.