

**The Book OF Jonah Lesson 3
Nineveh Repents**

Jonah 3:1-10



The book of Jonah, Lesson 3: Nineveh Repents

Jonah 3:1-10

Note to servants: -

Always review the introduction Lesson at the beginning of each new chapter in the form of question and answers with the children/refer to the Introduction lesson and its content.

Memory Verse:

Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?" JONAH 3:9

LESSON TIME!

The Bible says "God so loved the world..." (John 3:16). God cares for all the people of the world. The reluctant prophet Jonah had much difficulty grasping the fact that God loved even the prideful, wicked, and rebellious people of Nineveh who seemed to show no regard for God or His people, the Israeli nation. But God in his love called the people of Nineveh to repentance and desired to use Jonah as his messenger. God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4.) **God desires all men to be saved.**

Jonah 3:1-3

3 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you." 3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent

God called on Jonah a "second time" to preach His message to the people of Nineveh. Remember what happened the first time God called Jonah to preach? God is gracious and merciful. When we repent and turn from our rebellion, he will "re-commission" us (assign us once more to the task He wanted us to do)—giving us a second chance to be used by Him and see His purposes accomplished.

Remember, Nineveh was a large city, the capital of the Assyrian empire. It was an evil city, filled with crime. It was not safe to live there. The Assyrians were enemies

of Israel. The nations hated each other. For Jonah to go into this city could be putting his life in danger; *but* God was with Jonah.

When Jonah was given a second chance to live, having once undergone death, God recalled him to service so that the Gentiles may enjoy life as well. Strangely enough, God did not reproach Jonah at all or hurt his feelings in any way for his running away from his first mission. The Bible says: "Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you. So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was as exceedingly great city, a three-day journey to an extent. He describes Nineveh as, "a great city, a three-day journey," literally it means that it was a vast city and a person can cover it in three days, or roam its streets for three days; spiritually, as the capital of Assyria, Nineveh delivered itself to the devil, worshiping idols, but God still looks out for it as His great city voluntarily usurped by the enemy. God does not disdain His creation, especially human beings even if they deviated from His way

Jonah 3:4

⁴ And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

As Jonah entered the city, he started to cry out over and over, "Nineveh is going to be conquered in 40 days." The people knew that they were guilty of sin and listened to Jonah's message.

Jonah's message was straightforward. Jonah was now willing to do what God told him to do, but he was still not happy with the nature of his assignment. He still had no love for the people of Nineveh as evidenced by the abrupt message he gave which included no mention of God's mercy should the people repent.

A deep Look: Jonah preached that in forty days Nineveh would be overthrown; and in the Septuagint it is said that after three days the city of Nineveh would be overthrown.

The figure forty represents our earthly life that is why the Lord Jesus fasted forty days so that we might fast all the days of our lives. Nineveh would be overthrown in 40 days; consequently, heaven and earth vanish so that we may enjoy the new heaven and earth. Since the figure three represents the resurrection with the Lord Jesus, then it is imperative that the old Nineveh be destroyed so that the new one

would rise in Him.

Optional Activity: Pass It On!

Have the children get in a large circle. This is a game similar to the old game of "telephone." The object is to whisper into a child's ear and see if everyone can pass the message on without missing a word.

Think of a phrase or something from today's lesson to pass around. Whisper the message into the child next to you; Have them pass it around by whispering until it returns all the way around. The last child should then shout the message. It will be fun to see how much it changes by going through the circle. Keep playing with new phrases until the class gets it right or they tire of the game.

Jonah had a message from the Lord. It spread around Nineveh like wild fire. How important do you think it was for that message to remain the same wherever it went?

Jonah 3:5-6

⁵ So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. ⁶ Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered *himself* with sackcloth and sat in ashes.

⁷ And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. ⁸ But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.

Though Jonah's message brought no hope that the people's repentance would make a difference, "the people of Nineveh believed God." Everyone in the city repented from his or her sins. They demonstrated their repentance by proclaiming fast, going without food, and humbling themselves by putting on sackcloth [which is a rough material that they used to use for storage] and sitting in the ashes. Even the king came down from his throne and took part.

Jonah did not say repent; he just warned them that the city will be destroyed, But the People knew it was because of their sins; they knew what to do; they knew

that they needed to repent. The king and his rulers made it a law that no man or animal was to have anything to eat. Everyone was to humble themselves and repent from their evil ways and from the violence that they were responsible for. They were to cry out loudly to God for forgiveness. The whole city was to cry out to God for mercy!

They were led into that parade of repentance, the king and the royalty in advance; all participated in it, even the animals. This took place despite the fact that Jonah did not give them any glimmer of hope, nor did he talk to them about God's love and mercy, nor did he teach them anything about repentance. Hence Nineveh became a living, beautiful example of true repentance.



Jonah 3:9-10

9 Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?

10 Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

Even though the king and the rulers were given no idea that repentance on the part of the people would bring God's mercy, they understood they were deserving of judgment and that indeed judgment would come. They knew only God's mercy would save them, so on the slimmest threads of hope they repented fully and completely, for "who can tell?"

God is merciful. For that reason, he sent Jonah to warn the people of Nineveh. When God saw that they were truly sorry and were turning from their evil ways, He relented and did not bring the disaster upon them. In [2 Peter 3:9], we are told that the Lord is "longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." God does not want to punish sinful man. For this reason, God sent His Son to die for the sins of the whole world that "whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). **God desires all men to be saved.**

What attracts our attention in Nineveh's repentance is the joyful hope. Jonah's words were few and stern, but Nineveh's people did not lose their hope in the merciful God. St. **John Chrysostorn** says: [God's message as told by Jonah was clear. He did not say anything about their being accepted if they repented, but they still announced their repentance, saying, "who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish" [9]. If the ignorant Gentiles could comprehend this, how much more should we, who enjoyed tutorship concerning divine teachings and witnessed a number of these examples throughout history and in our present experience, realize25?!]

The Holy Bible did not say: "When the Lord saw their fasting, prayer and affliction", but said: "Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way". Therefore, repentance was the reason for God's mercy on them. Their fasting, prayer and humiliation were but fruits of repentance. [**Pope Shenouda the 3rd.**]

Jonah warned the people of Nineveh that the city would be destroyed in 40 days yet the people won God's heart in 3 days with their true repentance. Jonah did not promise them that if they repented that they will be accepted. Yet they did it anyways and repented from the heart with no promises and that is one important element that God looked at; they decided to do good anyways. Would you decide to do good even if you were not promised no reward.

Activity: Thank You Letter to Jonah

Imagine that you are a resident of Nineveh. Jonah has come and the whole city has repented and turned to God. What were some of the things that may have changed in Nineveh? Take a few moments and write a thank you letter as a resident of Nineveh to Jonah. (Maybe you can imagine such a letter will help change the attitude Jonah had about preaching to Nineveh.) For younger children, perhaps they could draw a picture about what they think the people from Nineveh were thankful for.

Teachers, use this activity to reinforce today's lesson. Allow the children to color the letters or make envelopes. You could use stickers for stamps.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving for God's extended mercy and salvation. Ask God to allow us to repent and accept our repentance

Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJ-09mNOKyw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BAaR6eKfzXY>

Activity:

<https://calvarycurriculum.com/pdf/Curriculum/Original/Curriculum/CURR162.PDF>

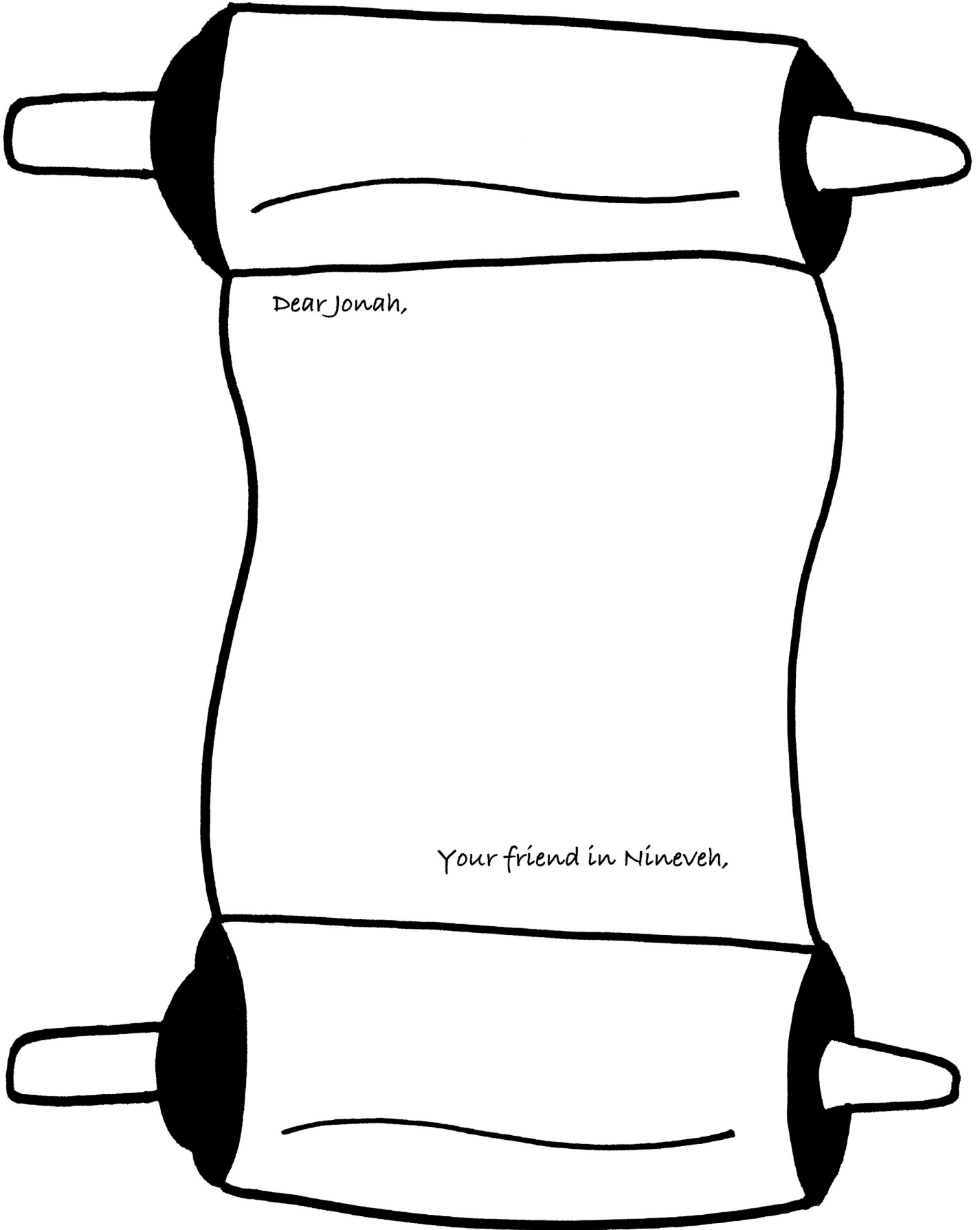
Email to Parents: -

Dear Parents,

We learned about the calling of Jonah to the City of Ninevah to repent and how they repented; fasted and humbled themselves before God; they were not promised that they will be accepted by Jonah; But they repented anyways and God saw their hearts and their honest repentance and accepted them, and did not punish them; God is Merciful and desires for everyone to be saved.

Please enjoy reading Jonah Chapter 3 with your children and review with them what they have learned.

Template - Thank You Letter to Jonah



Dear Jonah,

Your friend in Nineveh,