



Jonah and the Big Fish

(Jonah 1-4)

BIBLE
BACKGROUND

About This Story

The story of Jonah teaches important foundational things about God. First, God's saving love is huge—much bigger than we think. Second, God's ways are not our ways. And third, God *wants* to work with us. In four short chapters we see these themes play out in the book of Jonah.

God wanted to work with Jonah. God called him to go to Nineveh and preach repentance and change to the people there. Jonah responded with, "Sorry God, not my plan." He boarded a ship headed for Tarshish, which was in the opposite direction from Nineveh.

While on board the ship to Tarshish, there was a terrible storm. Jonah took full responsibility for having angered God. He was thrown overboard by the ship's sailors and the storm immediately stopped. The sailors rejoiced and professed faith in Jonah's God. Then a big fish swam by, swallowing Jonah up and saving him from himself by sinking to the bottom of the sea.

In the belly of the fish, Jonah sees the error of his ways and prays to God. The fish throws him up on dry land and Jonah heads to Nineveh as God asked. Jonah preaches to the Ninevites, telling them God's message. They all repent. God decides to save the Ninevites. At this news, Jonah gets angry! God is exasperated. "What right do *you* have to be angry?" God demands of Jonah. "I am God and if I want to save them, why can't I?"

Why This Story Matters

We are not like God and God is not like us. We are not the boss of God. Jonah's response to God's plan was petty and mean—he wanted the Ninevites destroyed. But we worship a God who saves.

We also worship a God who wants to work through us—even when we aren't very cooperative. God wants our help. God wants us to tell others the good news. God always gives us another chance to join in the healing and saving activity that God is all about.

God's love and imagination are so much larger than ours. We can't run away or hide from God. God always knows where we are. And God will always give us another chance to tell the good news!