



WAVES OF REVIVAL

THE BOOK OF JONAH

by Lenya Heitzig

MEMORY VERSE

“When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. “Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God’s love for them. But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, ‘Salvation comes from the Lord.’”

—Jonah 2: 7-9

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DAY ONE: THE GOD OF SECOND CHANCES

We've all heard the saying, "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me." The idea is that you can't help it if someone fools you. But, if you trust them again and they trick you a second time, it's on you. My husband is a prankster. He's the guy that will tap you on the opposite shoulder as he passes by.

One of his more distasteful tricks is switching the sugar with salt when you are dining out. If you leave your iced tea unprotected when using the restroom, there's a likely chance he's swapped the condiment. Salted tea is disgusting. But he's crafty in that he doesn't do it every time. Sometimes he'll wait months before doing the ole switcheroo again. Shame on me.

Thankfully, God is the God of second chances. His track record is renown. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden the human race could have been wiped out — "you will surely die." But they got a second chance when God promised that the woman's seed would bring the Savior to rescue us all.

Likewise, David sinned notoriously by seducing Bathsheba and then having her husband killed. When Nathan, the prophet, confronted David with his sins the psalmist wrote this beautiful psalm about second chances:

"Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.
Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin" (Psalm 51:1-2).

Today we'll see God give the runaway prophet another opportunity to tell the people of Nineveh to repent of their wickedness and violence. Will God give the Ninevites a second chance?

REFLECTION

READ THE VERSES BELOW AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

“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’” (Jonah:3:1-2).



PRACTICAL OBSERVATION:

1. What word introduces the timeframe for today's text?
2. In your own words describe how God spoke to Jonah.
3. What phrase explains that God repeated Himself to the prophet and why do you think he did?
4. How did God describe Nineveh and what do you think this meant?
5. Did Jonah know what to preach and why do you think this is the case?

Word of the Lord was used over 100 times in the OT. It has few meanings. 1) Something God decreed. 2) Something God said to a human. 3) Messages God spoke through the prophets. 4) God's written Word. 5) Jesus Christ, who is the Word made flesh. “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made” (Psalm 33:6).

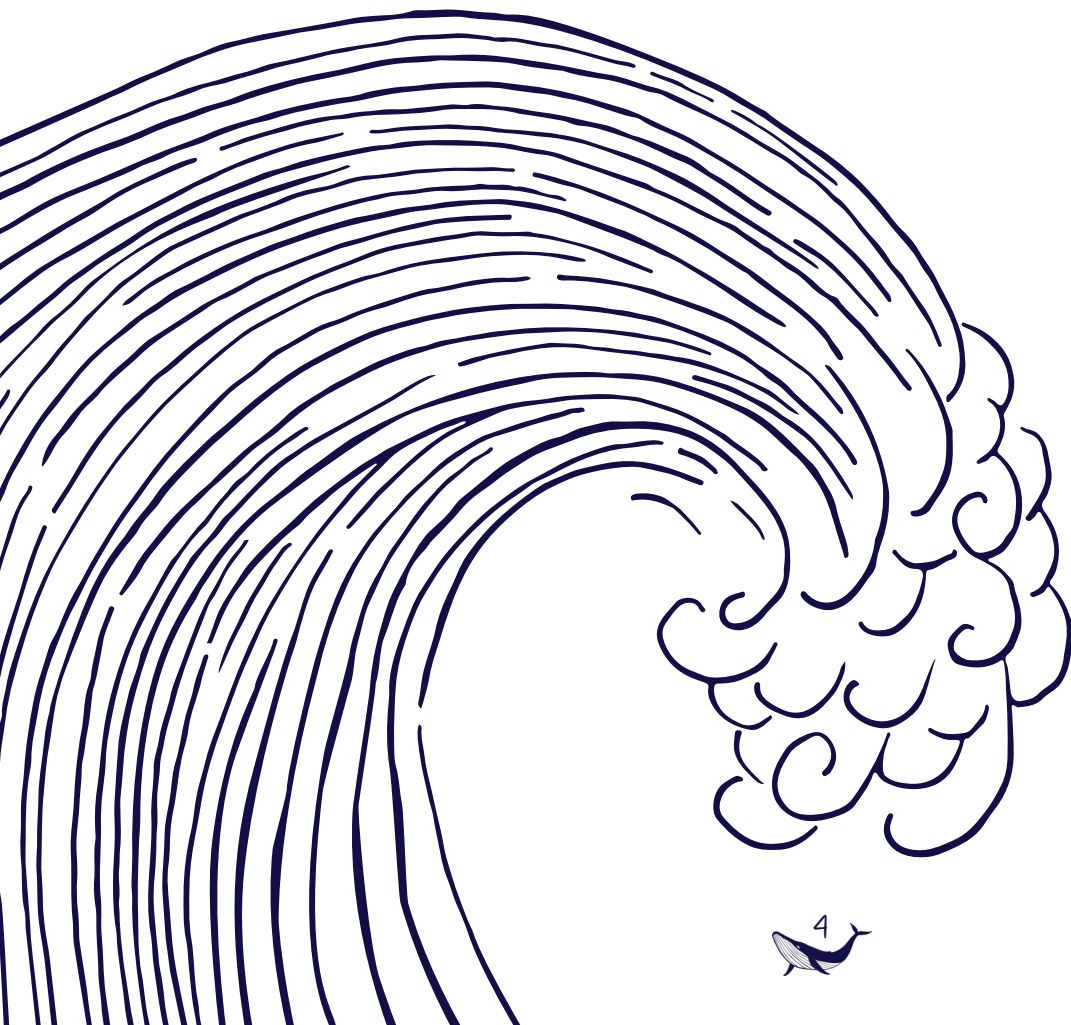
PERSONAL APPLICATION:

6. God came to Jonah a second time with the same message. Has God ever repeated Himself to you after you've ignored or disobeyed Him? Journal about that situation and what you learned.
7. Today we discovered hopefulness in the word arise. Rewrite the following verse into personal prayer asking God to arise and help you fight your battles: "Take up shield and buckler; arise and come to my aid. Brandish spear and javelin against those who pursue me. Say to my soul, 'I am your salvation'" (Ps. 35:2-3).

Preach means to proclaim the Good News. In the NT the Good News is the Gospel of Jesus Christ that saves sinners. In the OT we see Noah as a "preacher of righteousness" for warning of the impending flood and proclaiming God's ark of safety. Jonah, too, preached of God's judgment and how to escape.

"The difference between mercy and grace? Mercy gave the prodigal son a second chance. Grace gave him a feast."

— Max Lucado



DAY TWO: HIDING FROM YOUR PROBLEMS

Nineveh was beautifully situated on the east bank of the Tigris River in ancient Assyria, across the river from the modern city of Mosul, Iraq. The Bible describes Nineveh as a massive city that required three days to walk from end to end. Archaeology shows Nineveh plus her suburbs was about 60 miles across giving its 120,000 residents plenty of room.

King Sennacherib transformed Nineveh into a magnificent city with new streets, squares, and a canal system within a walled area whose reached 30 meters in height. There were 15 gates to the city flanked by colossal statues of lions and winged bulls who possessed human heads. An elaborate irrigation system of 18 canals brought water from the hills to Nineveh along a magnificently constructed aqueduct. Sennacherib's palace, which he named "palace without rival," boasted over 70 splendid rooms lined with sculptures and reliefs depicting the kings' achievements.

Jonah would have been dwarfed by the grandeur of Nineveh as a dusty prophet from a beleaguered nation. Taking a trip to the greatest capital in the known world must have been daunting. He must take God at His word to do what God asked. He found the courage to cry out to the king and his subjects that God would destroy this impressive city in forty days.

REFLECTION

READ THE VERSES BELOW AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

“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. 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!’” (Jonah 3:5-6).



PRACTICAL OBSERVATION:

1. Yesterday and today God repeated a verb. How does it set the tone?
2. Yesterday and today repeats an important phrase. Underline it and explain what it meant.
3. Describe the magnitude of Nineveh from today’s text.
4. Explain what territory that was covered by Jonah on his first day in Nineveh.
5. How would you describe Jonah’s demeanor.
6. In your own words, rephrase Jonah’s message.

Arise means “to begin to happen,” or “to come into being,” or “to begin to stand up.” It’s a hopeful term of renewal or action. “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you” (Isaiah. 60:1). that because of God’s unlimited power He is in control of all nature and history.

Overthrown in the original language means to overturn, retire, or to tumble. God declared the same tragedy over Babylon through the prophet Isaiah. “Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms, the glory of the Babylonians’ pride, will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah” (Isaiah 13:19).

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

7. Look up the following verses and in the space provided write what you've learned about the Word of the Lord.

Psalm 18:30 _____

Psalm 33:6 _____

1 Peter 1:24-25 _____

8. Jonah preached repentance to the Ninevites. As Christians we are called to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all the world. Read the following passage and answer the questions below: "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage-with great patience and careful instruction" (2 Timothy 4:1-3).

- a) List the reasons Paul gives for asking Timothy to preach the Gospel.
- b) Describe the preparedness Paul expects Timothy to have.

Cry Out *Jonah cried out to the people of Nineveh which showed the passion and compassion the prophet felt. We, too, are to be bold to tell people of the judgment to come. But we must also do so with "great patience" and be careful to prepare our message in advance.*

"I would have every minister of the gospel address his audience with the zeal of a friend, with the generous energy of a father, and with the exuberant affection of a mother."

—*Francois Fenelon*

DAY THREE: FROM THE BOTTOM TO THE TOP

A grassroots movement is a bottom to top organization drawing its power from a large number of ordinary people who seek to create change on a local, regional, national, and international level. Rather than money, these movements harness the energy and a shared sense of justice or knowledge to influence society. They do this through making phone calls, sending emails, or posting on social media. Just five members have the potential to reach 5,000 people in a week. They do so by training others to be leaders and activists.

Today, grassroots movements work to influence social issues such as sexual abuse in the #metoo program or raising awareness for the disease ALS through the Ice Bucket Challenge. One of the earlier grassroots movements known as MADD was founded by Candy Lightner in 1980 after her 13-year-old daughter was killed by a drunk driver. Lightner grew just with a handful of grieving mothers in California to hundreds of chapters throughout North American. They championed stricter DUI laws, raising the drinking age from 18 to 21, and lowering the legal blood alcohol level from .12 to .08 nationwide. It is one of the largest and most successful grassroots movements in history.

Today we'll see Jonah as the catalyst for a grassroots movement in Nineveh. As he preaches repentance and pending doom ordinary people begin a fast that reaches the throne room of the king. The revival in Nineveh is likely the biggest revival of all time.

REFLECTION

READ THE VERSES BELOW AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

“So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes” (Jonah 3:5-6).



PRACTICAL OBSERVATION:

1. Describe the response of the people of Nineveh.
2. What two things did the people do to show they were sincere?
3. How far did Jonah's message reach?
4. Who else heard about Jonah's message and describe its importance.
5. What did the king do to show his earnestness.

Fasting is a voluntary sacrifice of food or drink for spiritual purposes. It was sometimes adopted as a sign of distress, grief, or repentance. Moses fasted for 40 days and nights when he was atop of Mount Sinai.

Sackcloth and Ashes was a sign of contrition. In the Bible, when a person was mourning, they would put on sackcloth that was a coarse, itchy fabric often made of goat's hair. They would then cover themselves with ashes. David said, "You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness" (Psalm 30:11).



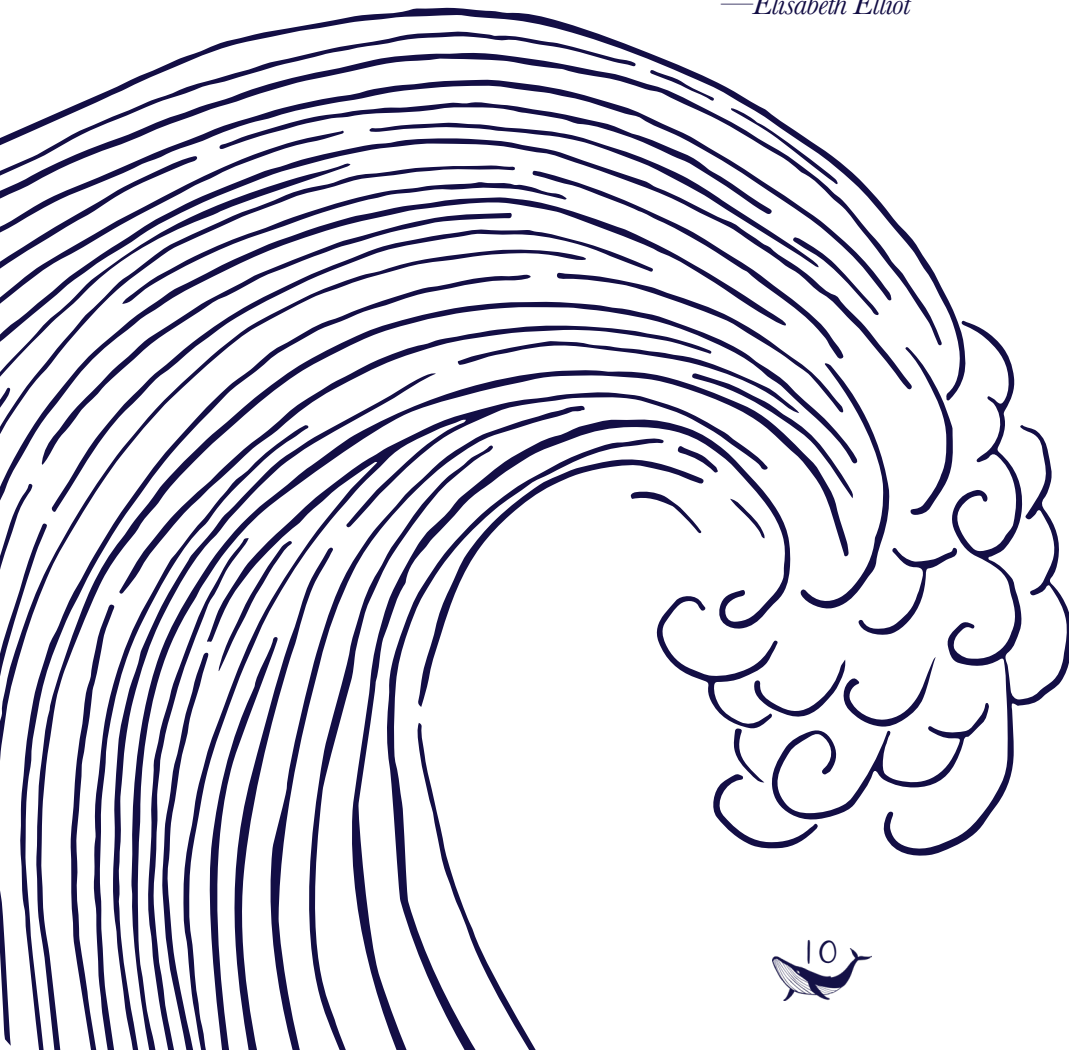
PERSONAL APPLICATION:

6. Today we saw the people of Nineveh fast in sackcloth to show their contrition for their sin and hope for God's mercy. Have you ever fasted? What did you give up and for how long? Did you accompany your fast with prayer? Journal here about your experience.
7. Perhaps God is calling you to a fast of either a food, activity, or indulgence. Using the word FAST as an acrostic list something you might forego to seek God more seriously.
F
A
S (Example: sleep)
T

Daniels Fast began when the prophet Daniel and his fellow Israeli captives in Babylon rejected the king's delicacies. Instead, Daniel and his friends choose to consume only fruits, vegetables, and water. After just 10 days, Daniel and his friends appear stronger and healthier than those on the king's luxurious diet.

“One way to begin to see how vastly indulgent we usually are is to fast. It is a long day that is not broken by the usual three meals. One finds out what an astonishing amount of time is spent in the planning, purchasing, preparing, eating”

—*Elisabeth Elliot*



DAY FOUR: LEGISLATING RIGHTEOUSNESS

Martin Luther King Jr. helped to frame an ongoing debate about how to regulate the behavior of people. He said, “Morality cannot be legislated, but behavior can be regulated. The law may not change the heart, but it can restrain the heartless.” Sadly, righteous laws do not make righteous people.

God gave Moses a set of perfect laws for the nation of Israel on Mount Sinai. The Jews expanded on those laws in the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy with the help of His spirit. But just read Judges or 1 and 2 Kings to see how horribly the nation rebelled against God’s laws and eventually fell from their sins within and enemies without. God’s law failed to create righteous people.

The answer to this problem came in the New Testament when Jesus reduced all the laws to love into two prominent commands: 1) Love God with everything you’ve got. 2) Love others the way you want to be loved. We discover that it is love that leads to righteousness. God loved the world so much that He gave His son, who died on the cross. It is through faith in God’s Love and Jesus death burial and resurrection that righteousness is gained. The prophet Samuel explained it like this, “The LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (1 Sam 16:7).

Today we’ll see how Nineveh gets the right balance between love and the way we live. First the people experienced a heart of repentance that led to laws of righteousness. A heart can only become righteous through the transforming work of God in a person’s life. Then, a righteous lifestyle will overflow.



REFLECTION

READ THE VERSES BELOW AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

“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. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands” (Jonah 3:7-8).



PRACTICAL OBSERVATION:

1. What does the king do next and how did he emphasize the importance of his actions?
2. Explain what he asks the people to do.
3. Who else is included in this decree and what does it tell you about its significance?
4. “Everyone” is asked two things. What are they and what do you learn about the nation from these requests?

Decree can be translated law, edict, or enactment of a king. A king or person of authority could issue an official order or command. These decrees were often delivered by messengers who traveled throughout a realm to distant cities and towns. They were read in public places such as the city gate.

Violence in this text is tied to evil ways. When everyone does what is right in their own eyes one naturally follows the other. If you have an unwanted pregnancy, you're willing to undergo a violent procedure known as abortion. Sin is a slippery slope downward.

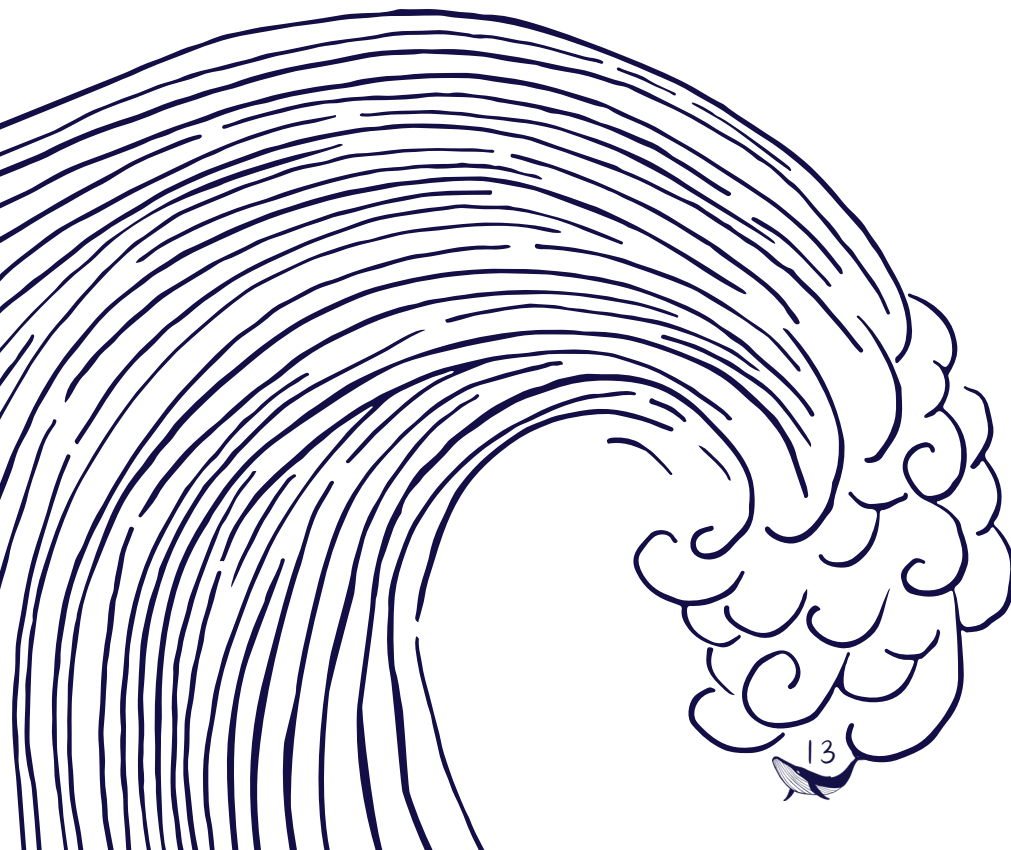
PERSONAL APPLICATION:

6. Read Exodus 20:1-17 and then list the 10 Commandments in the space below. Circle the commandments that you have broken. Journal a pray of repentance asking God to change your heart as well as your behavior.
- | | |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6. |
| 2. | 7. |
| 3. | 8. |
| 4. | 9. |
| 5. | 10. |
7. The king decrees that the people “cry mightily to God.” True repentance includes sorrow for our sins. Take time to ask God to break

10 Commandments is one of the most famous passages in Scripture. God wrote the first set which Moses broke when Israel sinned with the Golden Calf. The second set were written by Moses. Exodus 20:2 “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery” reminds us that God had delivered the Israelites literally from slavery in Egypt. If you follow these commands, you will be delivered from spiritual slavery, too.

“The whole course of human history may depend on a change of heart in one solitary and even humble individual - for it is in the solitary mind and soul of the individual that the battle between good and evil is waged and ultimately won or lost.”

—M. Scott Peck



DAY FIVE: CAN YOU CHANGE GOD'S MIND

Theologians have argued throughout history on whether or not God repents. God and repent are conflicting terms. Repent at its core means “to change one’s mind.” But the Bible teaches that God is immutable which means that is He does not change His mind—or at all. “For I am the LORD, I change not” God said through His prophet Malachi (Malachi 3:6)

One reason that God does not change is that He is perfect. For something to change means it must evolve or devolve—get better or worse. Perhaps you add or subtract something from a recipe to improve it. But God needs no additives. And if He lost something it would make him worse. Therefore, He would no longer be perfect. When Jonah says that God relented from destroying the Ninevites it is utilizing a literary skill known as anthropomorphism.

It’s a tool that gives God human attributes so that we can understand Him better. God is spirit having neither eyes or ears or wings or a halo. But for us to relate to Him, He allows the authors of the Bible to describe Him in terms of a human being. God didn’t change His mind. He knew what He was going to do before Jonah did. He lives in eternity, and we live in a limited time and space continuum. Today, we simply see Jonah catching up with God.

REFLECTION

READ THE VERSES BELOW AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

“Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish? 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” (Jonah 3:9-10).



PRACTICAL OBSERVATION:

1. List the three ways the king hopes God will be influenced.
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)
2. List the two things God saw.
 - 1)
 - 2)
3. Explain how God changed his mind.

4. Describe how the nation must have felt when God relented.

Relent is to withhold punishment because of pity or mercy held by the person who holds the upper hand.

Because Bible translators struggle with the idea of God repenting sometimes the word “relent” is used to convey the circumstances more accurately. “Now reform your ways and your actions and obey the Lord your God. Then the Lord will relent and not bring the disaster he has pronounced” (Jeremiah 26:13).

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

5. One of God's lovely attributes is His patience toward us. Sometimes we fail to show that same patience toward others who offend us. Using the following verse as inspiration thank God for his patience toward you and ask Him to give you more patience toward others. "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).
6. Describe a time that God was patient toward you withholding the judgement that you so rightly deserved.

Patience describes an ability to endure under great suffering. It is an essential Christian virtue that helps us to wait patiently on God during trials of many kinds. In fact, the word "patient" is translated "to wait" in the OT.

"Everyday God patiently bears with us, and every day we are tempted to become impatient with our friends, neighbors, and loved ones. And our faults and failures before God are so much more serious than the petty actions of others that tend to irritate us! God calls us to graciously bear with the weaknesses of others, tolerating them and forgiving them even as He has forgiven us."

—Jerry Bridges

