

Repent and Live



01. READ



¹ The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: ² "Get up! Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach the message that I tell you." ³ Jonah got up and went to Nineveh according to the Lord's command.

⁴ Jonah set out on the first day of his walk in the city and proclaimed, "In forty days Nineveh will be demolished!" ⁵ Then the people of Nineveh believed God. They proclaimed a fast and dressed in sackcloth—from the greatest of them to the least.

⁶ When word reached the king of Nineveh, he got up from his throne, took off his royal robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. ⁷ Then he issued a decree in Nineveh: By order of the king and his nobles: No person or animal, herd or flock,

is to taste anything at all. They must not eat or drink water. ⁸ Furthermore, both people and animals must be covered with sackcloth, and everyone must call out earnestly to God. Each must turn from his evil ways and from his wrongdoing. ⁹ Who knows? God may turn and relent; he may turn from his burning anger so that we will not perish.

¹⁰ God saw their actions—that they had turned from their evil ways—so God relented from the disaster he had threatened them with. And he did not do it.

02. REFLECT

Imagine you are living in Nineveh during Jonah's day and age. You're strolling down the sidewalk, minding your own business trying to find an ice cream shop, when all of a sudden this man comes walking through the streets yelling, "In forty days Nineveh will be demolished!" A little crazy and out of the ordinary, right?



So, you go home empty handed because your ice cream quest got interrupted and ask your parents about this strange man's doom-filled announcement. There's an awkward silence while they look at each other with fear and disbelief. Then they tell you that the king made a very similar announcement and he is calling for some serious changes in the city of Ninevah. He is asking the people to do hard things in an effort to save the city. Everything is going to change rapidly and before you know it, your hometown seems like a foreign country.

Everyone is wearing what looks and feels like a potato sack, yourself included. Your parents hid the food and they won't go to the well to draw water. And they spend most of their time on their knees crying out to someone by the name of "God." You've never seen them do this, you have no idea who God is, and you don't understand how any of this is going to prevent disaster from coming to Ninevah. Exasperated, you shake your parents and beg them to tell you what is the meaning of all of this and how is God going to help?!

Then, after that awkward silence again, they begin to explain how much they love this city and would do anything to save it. But most importantly, they love you and couldn't bear the thought of anything catastrophic happening to you. They knew that Ninevah was a wild and crazy city at times, and had only gotten worse over the years, but they never felt in danger until now. In the past, they might've had an inkling that some of the activities they participated in were wrong, but over time they became numb to those feelings. They completely embraced the culture and everything in it, throwing caution to the wind. This was not just a trend in your family, but a trend throughout the whole city.

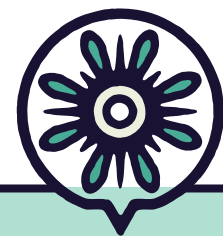
All that to say, when Jonah entered the city and the king issued a decree, your parents knew it was time to make things right. It was time to repent of all of their wrongdoings and turn to God, in hopes that He would relent disaster. And as crazy as that sounds, it worked. Not to mention, you learned a lot about God during this unexpected season. You and your parents heard stories about people who followed God wholeheartedly and through that you understood more about God's character, compassion and goodness. Even though fasting and repentance were some of the hardest things you ever had to experience, you realized it was all worth it get to know God and save your family and city.



Fast forward to now. Do we live in a time when the knowledge of God is scarce? Is our culture in line with the Bible or is it opposed to the ways of God? Maybe you live in a home where attending church is a priority and Jesus is a common subject of your family's conversations. Or maybe you are the only Christian in your home and you wish your family would live in a way that is gospel-centered. Either way, we live in a day and age where we can't assume that people possess a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. But we can be the image bearers of Christ and bring hope to our community. We can share the love of Jesus in an effort to change people's lives and bring peace to the world. Will you spread the word? Will you be a light in the darkness?

03. RESPOND

- ▶ *Do you think the COVID-19 season has changed the way our culture views the church? Why or why not?*
- ▶ *Why do you think God gave the people of Ninevah such a drastic wake-up call? Has God ever had to get your attention in a similar way?*
- ▶ *Why did God choose not to destroy the city of Ninevah? What can you learn from the people of Ninevah that applies to your relationship with Jesus?*



04. REMEMBER

The path of repentance might be difficult, but getting to know Jesus is worth every step.