

## **Bible Month Jonah's Monologues**

*The following monologues for Jonah 1 – 4 have been written by Revd Dr Paul Glass, and are free to use for Bible Month in services, small groups, Sunday Schools and/or youth groups.*

### **Bible Month - Week 1**

#### **The Words of Jonah 1**

I tell you I'm sick of it. Sick of God. Sick of a deity who is constantly coming after me, who will not leave me alone.

I mean why? Why me? Is there really nobody else? Nobody else to be picked upon? Hounded? Nobody else whose life can be made a misery?

Who wants to go to Nineveh anyway? Particularly all alone to tell them off? To lay into them with a message effectively telling them they've got it all wrong and they need to stop what they're doing? I mean - that'll go down well. Have you seen the people of Nineveh? Well have you?...Well, no I haven't either. But I've heard about them. And what I've heard isn't good. Isn't good at all. To go to that that kind of city with that kind of message...well it's suicide, that's what it is. And I've got a rather greater love of life than that.

Well I thought I had.

And so I ran. Ran away as fast as I could. Where will God not find me? I thought. Where is the last place that God will look for me? Where can I get away from that call that nags and pursues and will not let go? Now I know it's not very original - but I thought that getting on a boat might work. If I show I'm not interested. If I make life difficult, I thought, God might give up. Choose somebody else. Think that the effort isn't worth it anymore. But of course that was never going to happen - because my God is a God who pursues. Who does not let go.

The sailors could see that. Could see - despite the fact that they're not of my faith - that there was something up. 'Call on your God,' they said. 'Maybe your God is the one who will take notice of us and save us.' Typical - even people who don't believe in the same way that I do could see what was going on.

And I thought I had a great love of my own life...and I do really. It just appears that on occasion I'm capable of sacrifice. Capable of offering my life for the life of others. Capable of acts of kindness and compassion. And so here I am - on the deck of a boat, in the middle of a storm, waiting to be thrown into the abyss. And still I can feel God pursuing me. What did I tell you? My God is nothing if not persistent.

## Bible Month - Week 2

### The Words of Jonah 2

Not to get all metaphorical on you but I have just gone into poetry. Did you notice that? In my little book? Prose to poetry? Narrative to prayer?

Well there are some things aren't there? Some things that are so big, so deep (in all kinds of senses of the word) that you find yourself changing tempo. Changing your mode of expression. Because words aren't quite enough. Telling a narrative - thrilling and exciting though it is - isn't enough. Sometimes you've got to shift your process - change gear.

There'll be loads of people who aren't surprised by the disaster in this story. I mean we're not a great sea faring nation us Jews. Not prone to grand adventure on the wind and the waves. My mother always used to tell me - 'it's nice enough to look at Jonah - but only a fool goes bobbing around on the top of it.' She wouldn't have been surprised that disaster struck as soon as I launched out on a, frankly ill advised, escape attempt. 'On the water?' she'd have said...'it's bound to come to a fishy end'. And then she'd have smiled as she noticed that she'd just made a play on words, and that would have pleased her.

Have you noticed also - how many times I talk about depths and the deep in that prayer poem? Well it was pretty deep. Falling down and down, deeper and deeper. Somebody once said - I can't remember who - that 'the deepest thing loves the highest thing'. I wish I'd said that. I think it might be true. A plaintive cry to God from out of the deep. But not a cry of anger, nor a scream of despair - as I finally decided to talk to God. It's a word of thanks. Because for all of my running away, for all of my anger and bitterness, for all of the sense of 'why one earth did you choose me for this?' - I know, somehow, in some deep part of my being (there I go with that word 'deep' again) that God will raise me up, that this is not the end, that after three days in the darkness and in the depths - light and life will come.

Now that sounds like a recurring theme...

## Bible Month - Week 3

### The Words of Jonah

Have you looked at where Nineveh is on a map? Well have you? I'm just saying because before you start saying 'oh there's Jonah complaining again', if you look at a map you'll see how far I had to blooming well travel to get to that God forsaken place and speak to them.

I say 'God forsaken' - of course I don't really mean that. One of the things that I've discovered to my cost on this journey of mine so far is that while we might like to think that somehow we are bringing God to people (on our great missionary enterprises) - to a place that God hasn't been previously - that's actually a load of rubbish. God is always and has always been there before we - you or I - ever got there.

So 900 miles. Yes - let me say that again - 900 miles across some pretty unpleasant terrain. Walking. Day after hot and blistering day. Gives you time to think - to contemplate. Now you might think that would be a good thing. That my stopping running away and finally doing what God had wanted me to do in the first place might have calmed my spirits. Given me a feeling of natural and accepting peace and contentment. After all here I was following the divine will (finally). So I should have been all sweetness and light, full of the joys of knowing that I was doing the will of God.

You're having a laugh aren't you? Not a bit of it. By the time I got to Nineveh I was more angry and cheesed off and morose than ever. But I did what God wanted me to do. I shared God's message. I told them - 'You've got 40 days' I said. '40 days to get yourselves sorted. To turn your lives around.' And what do you know...they listened. Even the King and the court. They listened and acted - they did what God had asked. Sackcloth, ashes - the whole lot. My words have never been listened to like that before. Been so successful.

It did make me think a little bit.

God didn't need me to be onboard. God didn't need me to be happy about it or signed up - because I wasn't. Has there ever been a more miserable, half hearted prophet I thought? A prophet whose heart isn't really in it. A prophet who'd rather be anywhere than here. And yet God still used me - changed lives through me, worked transformative love through me. Makes you think.

## Bible Month - Week 4

### The Words of Jonah

By now you probably want me to be sent on some kind of anger management course. 'Calm down Jonah' you're going to say. 'Look on the bright side' you're going to say. 'God was always going to be loving and forgiving' you're going to say.

Don't you think I know all of that? Of course I had an inkling God was going to do that - to be kind and merciful and loving. And that's why I'm so angry. I mean really angry - sat here in the heat of the desert, my anger boiling away inside of me. Heat everywhere Evil people should come to wicked ends - that's what I say. And be honest - that's what some of you say too. Admit it. But oh no - God wants to forgive them. Longs for them to make a new start. Crowns them with mercy. It makes me so angry.

So I sit and I watch and I wait for something to happen. Lightning bolts to come down from the sky. An earthquake to swallow them up. Anything to show divine, righteous anger. But no. It would appear that God is far more interested in dealing with me. So I'm the one who gets a nice shady plant, and then a worm and then a wind. All sent for my benefit. All sent to engage with me. Because clearly God hasn't finished with me yet. God has a point to make and it's going to be made.

I know, I know. You want there to be a happy ending. You want us to make up, God and me. You want me to revel in the goodness and the grace of God and to realise that it was all my fault. You want me to be pleased for the people of Nineveh and for all the loose ends to be tied up nicely. Well I'm sorry. That's not the way this ends. This ends with me still being angry - looking down on a city that God has saved. What are tens of thousands of lives against one? God will say. Why can you not be happy - you've done my will? Well I'm sorry - the anger is still there and I need to find a way to deal with it. Anger aimed at love, at mercy, at a God who forgives. I know it sounds petty and cruel. But isn't that what we all have to deal with? Emotions that betray us, thoughts of cruelty that threaten to drown us? A complex relationship with a loving, forgiving creator that takes a lifetime to work out? A God who surprises and shocks with love everyday? So don't get angry with me for being human...I've got enough anger for all of us.