

## Jonah 3 The Reluctant Evangelist – a call to repentance

1. What are the signs of true repentance in a person's life?

Read Jonah 3:1-8.

2. What do we know about the city of Nineveh from the book of Jonah itself (cf. Jonah 1:2, 3:2-3, 4:11)?

3. Nineveh was a 'three-day-visit city'. How long did it take before Jonah begins to get a response? What is significant about this?

4. Read Jeremiah 18:7-10. Although this was written after Jonah's time, it provides a pattern for God's interaction with a pagan nation. List what the nation does and what God does.

5. What is the trigger for the repentance of the Ninevites?

6. What are the signs of repentance displayed by the Ninevites in:

a) Their thoughts

b) Their words

c) Their actions

7. Read the following descriptions of repentance. Put together a 'profile' of a repentant person.

(You might like to split in to twos or threes and then report back).

a) 2 Kings 22-23

b) Ezra 9-10

c) Daniel 9:1-19

d) Luke 18:9-14

e) 2 Corinthians 7:5-13

8. What part does hearing/reading God's word play in these acts of repentance?

Think and discuss

9. Think back to the last time that you heard or read God's word and were confronted by your need to change.

a) What did you think?

b) What did you say (even if it was only to yourself or God)?

c) How did your actions change as a result?

10. Are there areas you need to repent when it comes to sharing your faith?

11. As a group, make a list of some practical ideas to help yourself and others to follow through better on repentance and to make it lasting.

**Pray** for our individual witness to those around us. Pray for lives to be impacted at our Special Parish Dinner on Wed 27 Feb, and courage to invite others.

Pray also for those on your *Catch the Vision 2019* planner.

## Extra notes for group leaders

The sermon on this passage focused on our witness, and remembering that we need a sense of gravity, urgency and expectancy in our message.

This study focuses more on the issue of personal repentance, though there is overlap. There are many areas we need to repent in, but given our current focus on evangelism, question 10 focusses on that particular area.

Note on verse 3

Don't get bogged down in guessing exactly what the 'three days visit' means. There are various theories. But main points seem to be (1) that Nineveh was a big place, and (2) the response to the message was immediate.

Also, the English Standard Version records an alternative translation for the phrase "an exceedingly great city". It can more literally be rendered "a great city to God". I.e. it is a city God is concerned for, much to Jonah's dismay!

Later history of Nineveh

There is nothing like this complete and universal expression of corporate repentance in the history of Nineveh, at least up until the time of Jonah.

Just as the repentance of the pagan Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Daniel does not appear to suggest his conversion, so it is here. Moreover, the repentance did not endure either, since Nineveh continued to be a nation noted for its great evil. What did happen here was that when God confronted them at this particular point in their history, they showed genuine and apparently heartfelt contrition. This was enough for God to do as he had done often enough with his own people—relent from sending calamity, even though sin was all so quickly renewed.