



So What's the Story With Jonah?

Jonah 2:8: (NASB) *Those who regard vain idols forsake their faithfulness...*

Everybody knows the story of Jonah and the whale, perhaps because of the drama of the account - you know, being swallowed by a fish and then being spit back up onto shore three days later. What everybody doesn't seem to pay attention to is the *rest* of the story and the drama and lessons it shows.

What do we know of the history of Jonah and Nineveh?

Jonah lived during the reign of King Jeroboam II. He could have been contemporary with Amos and Hosea or slightly earlier, since they both lived toward the end of the Jeroboam's reign. It was an interesting time for Israel. Wars with Damascus (Syria) weakened the nation. And their Assyrian Empire, of which Nineveh was the capital, was on the rise.

Jonah is mentioned only one place outside the book of Jonah:

2 Kings 14:25: (NASB) *He (Jeroboam) restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, which He spoke through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gathhepher.*



Jonah,
as depicted by
Michelangelo
in the Sistine Chapel.

What do we know about Jonah:

- He was a recognized servant of God;
- He had spoken prophecies that had already come true;
- As a prophet, he would have been highly respected in Israel;
- As a prophet, he may have been widely known and esteemed in other nations as well.

Biblical Evolution - History of Nineveh and Jonah, University Lecture

- *Nineveh was the capital of the hated Assyrian empire, a nation that laid siege to Jerusalem and exacted tribute from Judah for many years...*



So, it is in the context of these circumstances that we begin our story.

Jonah 1:1-2: (NASB) ¹*The word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying,*
²*Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.*

This was a simple command, but not an easy one.

The story of Jonah - God commands Jonah, Mary Margaret on youtube.com

So, what would our reaction be if God had delivered such a responsibility to us?

Here are some possibilities:



Wow - our enemy has God mad! Awesome!

If I go "cry against" them, they could turn on ME!

If I go "cry against" them, they just might listen! Then what?

If they repent and I prophesied their destruction, then I could be seen as a false prophet!

What would make someone run away from God?

Jonah 1:3: (NASB) But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

Jonah went the exact opposite direction!

 **The story of Jonah - Jonah decides to run, Mary Margaret on youtube.com**

Compare **Jonah's** reaction with another individual given a similar command by God, **Ananias**. Ananias was the first Christian to meet the Apostle Paul after Paul's fierce persecution of Christians as Saul.

- Both told to "get up"

(Jonah) Jonah 1:2: (NASB) Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.

(Ananias) Acts 9:11: (NASB) And the Lord said to him, Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying,

- Both are given a specific message to deliver

(Jonah) Jonah 1:2: (NASB) Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me.

Paul's dream about Ananias:

(Ananias) Acts 9:12: (NASB) and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight.

What Ananias is told:

(Ananias) Acts 9:15-16: (NASB) ¹⁵But the Lord said to him, Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; ¹⁶for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.

- Both were going to a confirmed enemy

(Source: *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*) God had called him (Jonah) to visit the very heartland of enemy territory and to give the hated Assyrians a chance to repent! It was a radical order that would have taxed the obedience of any prophet. Jonah's grudging attitude should not blind us to the fact that he did carry out God's command.

(Ananias) Acts 9:1-2: (NASB) ¹Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, ²and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

- Both showed personal doubt



Archeological find:
Bronze lion from
Nineveh



(Jonah) Jonah 1:3: (NASB) *But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.*

(Ananias) Acts 9:13-14: (NASB) ¹³*But Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem;* ¹⁴*and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.*



"Jonah and the Whale," Louis Armstrong

Running from God...this is not a good idea and certainly not a new idea:

Genesis 3:8: (NASB) *They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.*

Sometimes we are in a position where we feel we are not capable of doing what God wants us to do, and that can get us into trouble.

What are the consequences when someone runs away from God?

Jonah 1:4-6: (NASB) ⁴*The LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up.* ⁵*Then the sailors became afraid and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down and fallen sound asleep.* ⁶*So the captain approached him and said, How is it that you are sleeping? Get up, call on your god. Perhaps your god will be concerned about us so that we will not perish.*

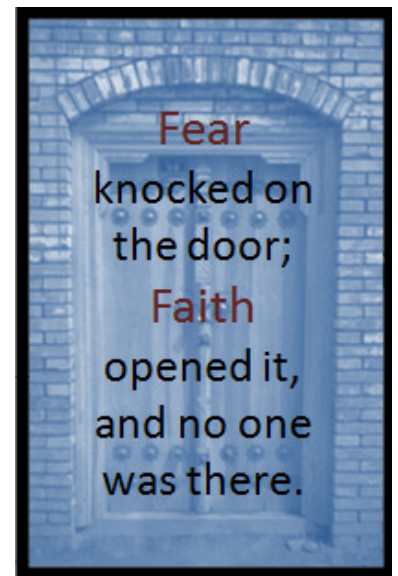


Observations regarding Jonah's disobedience:

1. Hiding in sleep - ignoring the problem never makes it go away!

Psalms 32:3-4: (NASB) ³*When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long.* ⁴*For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah.*

Jonah 1:7-12: (NASB) ⁷*Each man said to his mate, Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity has struck us. So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.* ⁸*Then they said to him, Tell us, now! On whose account has this calamity struck us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?* ⁹*He said to them, I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land.* ¹⁰*Then the men became extremely frightened and they said to him, How could you do this? For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.* ¹¹*So they said to him, What should we do to you that the sea may become calm for us?—for the sea was becoming increasingly stormy.* ¹²*He said to them, Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm has come upon you.*



The story of Jonah - Storm at sea, Mary Margaret on youtube.com



2. The voice of responsibility had to awaken his strength towards God.

Psalms 32:5: (KJV) *I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah*

Jonah 1:13-17: (NASB) ¹³However, the men rowed desperately to return to land but they could not, for the sea was becoming even stormier against them. ¹⁴Then they called on the LORD and said, We earnestly pray, O LORD, do not let us perish on account of this man's life and do not put innocent blood on us; for You, O LORD, have done as You have pleased. ¹⁵So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging. ¹⁶Then the men feared the LORD greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows. ¹⁷And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights.



"Jonah and the Whale," Louis Armstrong

3. The consequence of Jonah's disobedience - notice it wasn't removed just because he "confessed." Confession is the beginning of a process.

James 5:16: (NASB) *Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.*

What do you do now that your running from God has you trapped?



The story of Jonah - Swallowed and worried, Mary Margaret on youtube.com

Jonah 2:1-3: (NASB) ¹Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish, ²and he said, I called out of my distress to the LORD, and He answered me. I cried for help from the depth of Sheol; You heard my voice. ³For You had cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the current engulfed me. All Your breakers and billows passed over me.

➔ **Do we acknowledge the depth of our weakness, or do we just "row harder"?**

Mark 9:23-24: (NASB) ²³And Jesus said to him, If You can? All things are possible to him who believes. ²⁴Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, I do believe; help my unbelief.

We don't necessarily take the steps required to help our own unbelief.

Jonah 2:4-6: (NASB) ⁴So I said, I have been expelled from Your sight. Nevertheless I will look again toward Your holy temple. ⁵Water encompassed me to the point of death. The great deep engulfed me, weeds were wrapped around my head. ⁶I descended to the roots of the mountains. The earth with its bars was around me forever, but You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God.

Sometimes we get what we ask for and it wasn't the way we wanted it. Jonah wanted to hide from God, and now here he has been "expelled from Your sight."

➔ **Are we held captive by our inability to truly give our problems to God?**

1 Peter 5:5-7: (NIV) ⁵Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. ⁶Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. ⁷Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.



"Jonah and the Whale," Louis Armstrong

Jonah 2:7-10: (NASB) ⁷While I was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to You, into Your holy temple. ⁸Those who regard vain idols forsake their faithfulness, ⁹But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving. That which I have vowed I will pay. Salvation is from the LORD. ¹⁰Then the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land.

Lesson

→ Do we struggle to hold onto our way and God's way at the same time?

2 Corinthians 10:3-5: (NIV) ³For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

What do we do when given another chance?



"Jonah and the Whale," Louis Armstrong

Jonah 3:1-4: (NASB) ¹Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, ²Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you. ³So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three days' walk. ⁴Then Jonah began to go through the city one day's walk; and he cried out and said, Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown.

(Source: *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*) At the time of the greatest prosperity of Nineveh as described by Jonah, the city was surrounded by a circuit wall almost 13 kilometers (eight miles) long. This "great city" would have had an area sufficient to contain a population of 120,000, as indicated by Jonah 4:11 and 3:2.

God repeated the same original command: "Arise, go to Nineveh..."

This time, in spite of this being a big city with natural enemies, and the instructions going contrary to Jonah's own will, he threw his heart into his work. He was as good as the words of his prayer from the fish's belly.



"Jonah and the Whale," Louis Armstrong

The most important thing is to move forward and do the will of God!

This teaches such a lesson:

Micah 6:6-8: (NIV) ⁶With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? ⁸He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

The answer is simple. God is interested in our hearts, not our things. This is what we are required to do, even if the path isn't comfortable or what we want.



So Jonah moves forward in heralding the warning and holds nothing back!

Jonah 3:5: (NASB) *Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them.*

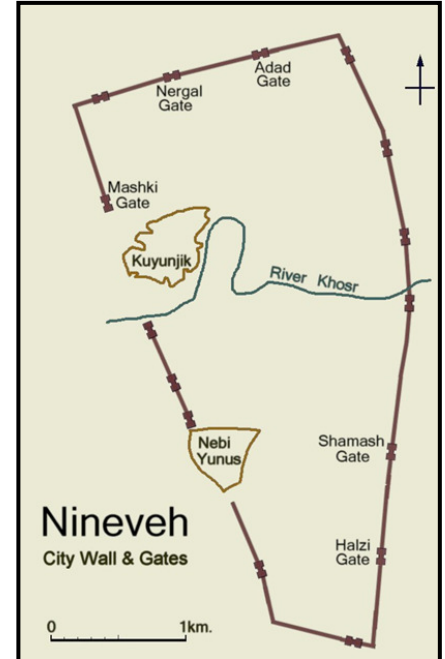
The entire city of people quickly repented!

 **The story of Jonah - Preaching and repentance, [Mary Margaret on youtube.com](#)**

Jonah 3:9-10: (NASB) ⁹*Who knows, God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger so that we will not perish.* ¹⁰*When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.*

- Never in all of the recorded history of the prophets of God had there been such a total and immediate conversion of sinful people to God's ways.
- This repentance was without a guarantee of forgiveness!
- God forgave them!

Luke 15:4-7: (NASB) ⁴*What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?* ⁵*When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.* ⁶*And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!* ⁷*I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.*



All should now be right - Jonah follows God's will and is massively successful!
It's all good, right...?

What do we do when our character flaws are revealed?

Jonah 4:1-2: (NASB) ¹*But it greatly displeased Jonah and he became angry.* ²*He prayed to the LORD and said, Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.*

What happened?!? How could such a great prophet with such a great success after such a great rescue from certain death have such great anger?

 **Heart Disease symptoms, [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#)**

- *Hardening of the arteries is a condition that can lead to heart attacks... but a more serious condition than that is the hardening of the heart and it cannot be prevented by any wonder drug.*

Jonah seemed to have that condition of a hardness of heart.



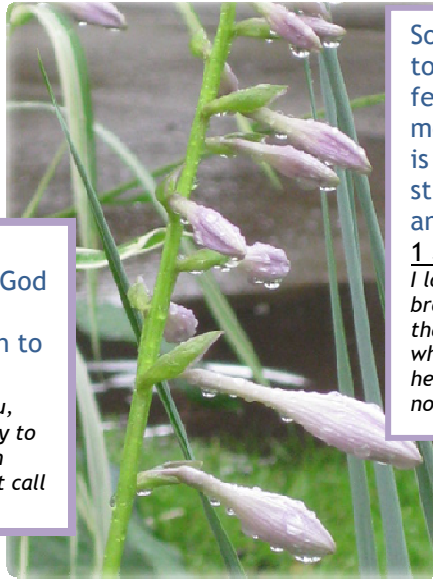
Jonah 4:3: (NASB) *Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life.*

Pretty dramatic contrast from his desire to live while he was in the belly of the fish! What happened to casting off lying vanities?

Can we be used of the Lord and still be so off base like Jonah?

Other families and countries belong to God as well. The mercy shown to us is shown to them also.

Psalms 86:5: *For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.*



Sometimes we hold on to anger that makes us feel special. God's mercy and compassion is bigger, better, and stronger than that anger.

1 John 4:20: *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*

Jonah 4:4-5: (NASB) *⁴The LORD said, Do you have good reason to be angry? ⁵Then Jonah went out from the city and sat east of it. There he made a shelter for himself and sat under it in the shade until he could see what would happen in the city.*

God gently questions Jonah. But Jonah doesn't answer; he just leaves the city to go and watch to see if God would really spare them.

God's capacity to forgive far exceeds our ability to sin.

"Anger is a wind which blows out the lamp of the mind."
-Robert Green Ingersoll

At the end of the chapter, God prepares things for Jonah's learning - a plant, a worm to eat the plant and an east wind. Jonah again wishes to die. (See Bonus Material at the end of this Rewind for more on this!)



Lessons from Jonah - God knew what was best, Pastor Greg Langley

- *I don't understand how anybody could read that passage and teach that God only provides help, wealth and prosperity for His people.*
- *These were things that Jonah did not want, yet God knew what was best for him even when He sent along things that looked like adversity.*

Here is how the account (abruptly) ends:

Jonah 4:9-11: (NASB) *⁹Then God said to Jonah, Do you have good reason to be angry about the plant? And he said, I have good reason to be angry, even to death. ¹⁰Then the LORD said, You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work and which you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight. ¹¹Should I not have compassion on*



Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?

LESSON So did Jonah finally learn his biggest lesson? God gave *him* another chance at life, rescued him after he ran away because he no longer wanted to serve God well. But yet *he* was found, punished, repented and did what was required, so he was allowed to live. The question to Jonah was: Can't you also have compassion on these people who have also repented just like you? We hope that he did finally learn this lesson.

Here is another prophet, Jeremiah, with similar frustrations - how does he handle them?

Jeremiah 20:7-9: (NASB) ⁷O LORD, You have deceived me and I was deceived; You have overcome me and prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all day long; Everyone mocks me. ⁸For each time I speak, I cry aloud; I proclaim violence and destruction, because for me the word of the LORD has resulted in reproach and derision all day long. ⁹But if I say, I will not remember Him or speak anymore in His name, Then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire shut up in my bones; and I am weary of holding it in, and I cannot endure it.

We need to get into the mindset of Jeremiah, who realized that the word of God is more important than the consequences of life.

*So what's with the story with Jonah?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

*And now even more to think about...
only in the **Full Edition** of CQ Rewind!*



They are borne along by the violence of their rage, and think it is a waste of time to ask who are guilty.
- Lucanus

Do not teach your children never to be angry; teach them how to be angry.
- Lyman Abbott



I really like the following verse from Jonah's prayer, as I think it captures the major character lesson from this prophet:

Jonah 2:8: (KJV) *They that **observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.***

The following is a more in depth look at this verse and its meaning:

Observe: Strong's #8104 shamar (shaw-mar'); a primitive root; properly, to hedge about (as with thorns), i.e. guard; generally, to protect, attend to, etc.:

KJV-- be circumspect, take heed, keep, mark, look narrowly, observe, preserve, regard, reserve, save (self), sure, (that lay) wait (for), watch (-man).

Some uses of Observe #8104:

Genesis 4:9: (KJV) *And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's **keeper**?*

Leviticus 19:30: (KJV) *Ye shall **keep** my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD.*

Job 29:2: (KJV) *Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God **preserved me**;*

Lying: Strong's #7723 shav' (shawv); or shav (shav); from the same as 7722 in the sense of desolating; evil (as destructive), literally (ruin) or morally (especially guile); figuratively idolatry (as false, subjective), uselessness (as deceptive, objective; also adverbially, in vain):
KJV-- false (-ly), lie, lying, vain, vanity.

Some uses of Lying #7723:

Exodus 20:7: (KJV) *Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in **vain**; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in **vain**.*

Psalms 31:6: (KJV) *I have hated them that regard **lying** vanities: but I trust in the LORD.*

Vanities: Strong's #1892 hebel (heh'bel); or habel (hab-ale'); emptiness or vanity; figuratively, something transitory and unsatisfactory; often used as an adverb:
KJV-- altogether, vain, vanity.

Some uses of Vanities #1892:

Jeremiah 16:19: (KJV) *O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, **vanity**, and things wherein there is no profit.*

Ecclesiastes 11:10: (KJV) *Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are **vanity**.*



Forsake: Strong's #5800 `azab (aw-zab'); to loosen, i.e. relinquish, permit, etc.:
KJV-- commit self, fail, forsake, fortify, help, leave (destitute, off), refuse, surely.

Some uses of Forsake #5800:

Genesis 2:24: (KJV) *Therefore **shall** a man **leave** his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*

2 Kings 2:4: (KJV) *And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not **leave** thee. So they came to Jericho.*

Their own mercy: Strong's #2617 checed (kheh'-sed); kindness; by implication (towards God) piety: rarely (by opposition) reproof, or (subject.) beauty:
KJV-- favor, good deed (-liness, -ness), kindly, (loving-) kindness, merciful (kindness), mercy, pity, reproach, wicked thing.

Some uses of Their own mercy #2617:

Proverbs 3:3: (KJV) *Let not **mercy** and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:*

Psalms 119:149: (KJV) *Hear my voice according unto thy **lovingkindness**: O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment.*

Jonah 2:8: (The "Rick Translation") *They that guard and protect their own evil and empty ideas, lose their grip on their own piety...*

The "Preparations" of God

Jonah 4:6-8: (KJV) *⁶And the LORD God **prepared** a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. ⁷But God **prepared** a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. ⁸And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God **prepared** a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.*

Same word as with the fish:

Prepared: Strong's #4487 manah (maw-naw'); properly, to weigh out; by implication, to allot or constitute officially; also to enumerate or enroll:
KJV-- appoint, count, number, prepare, set, tell.

1. God prepares comfort for Jonah through the gourd - Jonah is happy!
2. God prepares a worm (at night) to eat the gourd - Jonah is probably changing his tune!
3. God prepares a strong east wind (at night) to test Jonah - the wind and the unfiltered sun make Jonah want to die again!

God is clearly preparing a pointed lesson for Jonah - when he prepares pointed lessons for us, are we listening?