

Repent and obey



■ READ: Jonah 3:1-5

The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying, "Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you." So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk across. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

■ REFLECT:

Let's play a word association game: I say, "Jonah." You say, "_____."

If you said "whale," I don't blame you. That's the first thing that pops into my head, too. If you said "sackcloth," bonus points for you! Because the story of Jonah doesn't end in the belly of the fish. The story of Jonah is actually about calling the city of Nineveh to repentance, and that's exactly what happens. The story doesn't end until the people listen to Jonah's message about God, repent of their wrongdoing, and turn to what's right.

And their change only happens once *Jonah* listens to God, repents of *his* wrongdoing, and turns to what's right—namely, bringing God's message to Nineveh. It's a good reminder that we're capable of standing in the way of others' obedience. Once we obey, they can, too.

Thankfully, Jesus, who also spent three days in a dark, dank place, was obedient. His obedience, even to the point of death on a cross, has made it possible for the rest of us to be obedient, too.

When we abide in Jesus, we don't have to scorn Nineveh and run the other way. We can proclaim Jesus so others can follow, too.

■ PRAY:

God, search my heart and point out the places where I haven't been following you. I confess that I have fallen short. Help me, like Jonah and Jesus, to be obedient. To where or what are you calling me? I want to follow. Amen.