

Download the free audio from the Shane Hipps / Rob Bell / Mars Hill Bible Church sermon series about the book of Jonah:

shanehipps.com/teachings/series/jonah/

What does this poetic, satirical story reveal about our hearts, relationships, rhetoric, and world view? Can it help us re-examine our categories, labels and boundaries? How does this story connect to your story?

THE STORY OF
Jonah



WEEK 1 / JONAH 1:1-3
The God in Nineveh

SYNOPSIS

The word of God came to Jonah, telling him to go to the city of Nineveh and preach against the wickedness of the people who live there. But Jonah does not want to go. Instead he gets on a boat and heads for a different city, called Tarshish, to flee from the Lord.

FROM THIS WEEK'S RECORDING:

If you want to experience the presence of God ... look in the dark shadowy back alleys of the soul and the world, in the parts of ourselves that we repress, deny and disown. ...

In that dark back corner room with the locked door, what you'll find nestled in between the sin and the shame and the sickness and the sorrow is the creator of the universe, reclined and relaxed, completely at home. ...

The divine dwells in the darkest places. – Shane Hipps

LOOKING FOR MORE?

Listen to researcher/storyteller Brené Brown's TED Talk: [ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability?language=en) (or else search "Brené Brown + TED + vulnerability").

How does Brown's research about vulnerability and numbing connect with our story about Jonah, Tarshish and Nineveh? How are we like Jonah? Have human beings changed very much since this story was written?

How does owning and naming our own darkness, instead of running from it, help us move forward? Would owning and naming the darkness in the world, instead of running from it, help us all move forward? How do we walk the thin line between naming the world's darkness and sitting in judgment of others?

ABOUT THE AUDIO: If the URL doesn't work, search Shane Hipps + Jonah and download the entire series. Sermons begin after a few minutes of Mars Hill Bible Church announcements at the top of each recording. ABOUT THE STUDY GUIDE: We'll provide seven sets of questions – one for each day of the week – with each sermon recording for use as a daily reflection or a group discussion.

Where is God? Where do you experience God most fully? Why do you feel God's presence so strongly in that place?

Where do you go to get away from God? Is there any place where God isn't present? Do we imagine that God abandons the darkest places and moments in our lives? Why? Is that where we get the term "godforsaken"? What does this story have to say about the presence of God? Is this a surprise? Why, or why not?

Do you think Jonah will find joy in Tarshish? Why, or why not? Is your own happiness rooted in your circumstances? Is your faith also rooted in circumstances? Does the changing world alter your happiness?

What kind of joy does God offer? Can you imagine a joy that's indestructible? Is that realistic? What does it look like? What does it feel like? Can you access that kind of joy? How do you do it?

How is Tarshish a symbol of escape, something Jonah uses to avoid the darkness? Do you ever try to escape, avoid, or block out the darker parts of your life? What do you do instead of dealing with real issues in your life? What is your escape? What is your Tarshish?

What is your Nineveh? What do you need to escape from? What makes you feel shame, fear or darkness? What don't you want anyone to know? Do you believe that you can find God even in those places?

God doesn't tell Jonah to fix Nineveh. Jonah is only asked to name their darkness. Can you do that in your own life? What happens when you're able to name your darkness?