Minor Prophets

Small in Size, Mighty in Message
A 12-Week Journey Through the Minor Prophets

Introduction

Small in Size, Mighty in Message is a 12-week Bible study journey through the twelve Minor Prophets—Hosea through Malachi. Although these prophetic books are called “minor” because of their shorter length, their messages are anything but minor. Together, they reveal God's holiness, justice, mercy, faithfulness, and unwavering desire to restore His people.

Throughout the series, participants will explore the historical setting and central message of each prophet while discovering how these ancient words continue to speak powerfully to believers today. The study will examine recurring themes such as spiritual unfaithfulness, idolatry, injustice, pride, repentance, judgment, restoration, faithful living, and hope.

Each week will introduce the prophet, explain the historical context, examine key passages and major themes, identify connections to Christ and the New Testament, and provide practical applications for Christian living. Participants will also see how the twelve books fit within the larger biblical story—from Israel's divided kingdom and the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions, through exile and restoration, to Malachi's anticipation of the coming Messiah.

The books may be minor in length, but their message about God and His

Syllabus

- Week 1 (9/9): Hosea — wedding ring or broken/restored heart
- Week 2 (9/16): Joel — locusts
- Week 3 (9/23): Amos — scales of justice
- Week 4 (9/30): Obadiah — mountain/cliff representing Edom and pride
- Week 5 (10/7): Jonah — sea/great fish
- Week 6 (10/14): Micah — scales/justice
- 10/21: **KAHOOT TIME! What did you remember?**
- Week 7 (10/28): Nahum — Nineveh/ancient city
- Week 8 (11/4): Habakkuk — watchtower
- Week 9 (11/11): Zephaniah — trumpet or approaching day
- Week 10 (11/18): Haggai — rebuilding the Temple
- Week 11(11/25): Zechariah — lampstand/visions
- Week 12(12/2): Malachi — messenger or sunrise
- 12/9: **KAHOOT TIME! What did you remember?**

Why Were They called Minor Prophets?

They are called the Minor Prophets because their books are shorter, not because the prophets themselves—or their messages—were less important.

The Old Testament prophetic books are traditionally grouped into two categories:

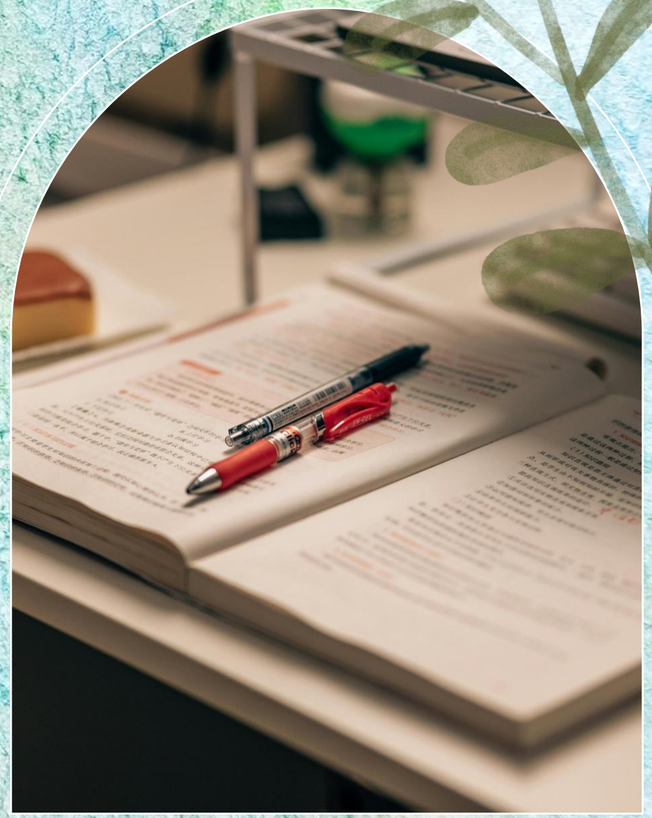
- Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. These books are generally much longer.
- Minor Prophets: Hosea through Malachi—the final 12 books of the Old Testament. These writings are considerably shorter.

The word “minor” refers to length, not significance.

For example, Obadiah has only 21 verses, while Isaiah has 66 chapters. Yet Obadiah's message concerning pride, judgment, justice, and God's sovereignty is still significant.
Why are the 12 grouped together?

In the Hebrew tradition, these twelve prophetic books were collected together as a single collection often called “The Twelve.” Because the individual books were short, placing them together on one scroll also helped preserve them as a collection.

Each prophet may have given us a relatively short book, but each carries a powerful message from God concerning sin, justice, repentance, judgment, mercy, restoration, hope, and the coming Messiah.



Where in History do the Minor Prophets Fit?

Prophet	Approx. Date	Biblical-History Setting	Primary Audience	Main Historical Connection
Hosea	755–715 BC	Divided Kingdom; shortly before Israel falls	Northern Kingdom — Israel	Israel's spiritual unfaithfulness; Assyria rising
Joel	Date debated	Setting uncertain; often placed either before exile or after exile	Judah	Locust devastation; repentance; Day of the LORD
Amos	760–750 BC	Divided Kingdom; prosperous period before Israel's fall	Northern Kingdom — Israel	Jeroboam II; prosperity, injustice and spiritual complacency
Obadiah	Likely c. 586 BC*	Jerusalem destroyed; Babylonian crisis	Edom	Edom's response to Jerusalem's destruction
Jonah	c. 785–760 BC	Divided Kingdom; Assyria growing in power	Nineveh/Assyria	God sends an Israelite prophet to Israel's enemy
Micah	740–700 BC	Assyrian crisis; Israel falls in 722 BC	Judah & Israel	Samaria's fall; Jerusalem threatened
Nahum	c. 650–630 BC	Assyria still powerful but approaching judgment	Nineveh/Assyria	Predicts Nineveh's fall, which occurs in 612 BC
Habakkuk	c. 609–597 BC	Babylon rising; Judah approaching destruction	Judah	Babylon will be God's instrument of judgment
Zephaniah	c. 640–609 BC	Reign of King Josiah; before Jerusalem's fall	Judah	Coming Day of the LORD; call to repentance
Haggai	520 BC	After Babylonian exile; Jews returned to Jerusalem	Returned exiles	Rebuilding the Temple
Zechariah	520–518 BC+	After exile; restoration period	Returned exiles	Encourages Temple rebuilding and future hope
Malachi	c. 450–430 BC	Post-exilic Jerusalem; Temple restored	Judah	Spiritual complacency after the return from exile

Book Resources

1. The Holy Bible
2. Mark J. Boda — The Message of the Twelve: Hearing the Voice of the Minor Prophets
3. T. Desmond Alexander & David W. Baker, eds. — Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets
4. Gordon D. Fee & Douglas Stuart — How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth
5. Andrew E. Hill & John H. Walton — A Survey of the Old Testament
6. Tremper Longman III — Old Testament Commentary Survey

Where in History do the Minor Prophets Fit?

Understanding when the prophets spoke helps us understand why they spoke.

1. Before the Exile — Warning is coming
Jonah • Amos • Hosea • Micah • Nahum • Zephaniah • Habakkuk
(Joel may belong here depending upon dating.)

2. Around Jerusalem's Fall — Judgment has arrived
Obadiah — connected by many interpreters with Jerusalem's destruction around 586 BC.

3. After the Exile — God is restoring His people
Haggai • Zechariah • Malachi
(Joel is placed here by many scholars who favor a post-exilic date.)

Jonah / Amos / Hosea → Micah → Nahum / Zephaniah → Habakkuk → OBADIAH → Haggai / Zechariah → Malachi

Divided Kingdom → Assyrian Crisis → Israel Falls (722 BC) → Babylon Rises → Jerusalem Falls (586 BC) → Babylonian Exile → Return (538 BC) → Temple Rebuilt (516 BC) → Post-Exilic Community

Bottom takeaway:
The prophets didn't speak in a vacuum. God sent His messengers into real historical circumstances with a specific word for His people.

Week 5: Jonah

Running From God: Obedience, Mercy & Second Chances

Big Idea: God's mercy reaches farther than our failures, our prejudices, and our boundaries—and He calls us to share heart for people.

Key Scripture: Jonah 2:9
"Salvation is of the LORD."

God is concerned not only with how we worship Him, but with how we live after worship.



Week 5: Jonah

Who was Jonah?

- Jonah means **“dove.”**
- He was the **son of Amittai**.
- Jonah was a prophet from **Gath-hepher in Israel**.
- Unlike most prophetic books, Jonah focuses heavily on the **prophet himself**, not simply his message.
- Jonah is also mentioned in **2 Kings 14:25**.
- Jesus later referred to Jonah and his experience in **Matthew 12:39–41**.

What makes Jonah different?

God sends an Israelite prophet **outside Israel** to preach to **Nineveh—an enemy city**.

Teaching Point:

Sometimes God's assignment takes us to people and places we would never choose for ourselves.



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Week 5: Jonah

Where Jonah Fits in Biblical History

Approximate Period: 8th Century BC
Jonah ministered during the reign of **Jeroboam II**, king of Israel.

2 Kings 14:23–25

Historical Timeline
Divided Kingdom → Jeroboam II → JONAH → Amos/Hosea → Assyria grows stronger → Israel falls to Assyria (722 BC)

Jonah lived **before Assyria conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel**.

Nineveh eventually became the great capital of the **Assyrian Empire**.

Why is this important?
Jonah wasn't being sent to friendly neighbors.
He was being sent toward the people of an empire that would become one of **Israel's greatest enemies**.

Teaching Point:
Understanding who the Ninevites were helps us understand why Jonah did not want to go.



Week 5: Jonah

Jonah's Assignment
Read Jonah 1:1–2
“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it…”
God's instructions were clear:

ARISE → GO → PREACH

But Jonah did the opposite.
God said: Go to Nineveh.
Jonah: Went toward Tarshish.
Jonah wasn't confused about God's instructions.
He simply didn't want to obey them.

Discussion Question:
Have you ever known what God wanted you to do but struggled because you didn't want to do it?



Week 5: Jonah

Running From God

Read Jonah 1:3

3 But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.

Jonah went:

Down to Joppa → Down into the ship → Down into the sea

Later he describes going down toward the depths.

There is an interesting literary picture:

Jonah keeps going DOWN.

He was physically traveling away from Nineveh, but spiritually he was moving away from God's assignment.

Yet Scripture says Jonah was attempting to flee:

“from the presence of the LORD.”

Teaching Point

You can change your location, but you cannot escape God's presence.

Compare **Psalm 139:7–10**.

Week 5: Jonah

Running From God

Psalm 139:7-10 New International Version

7 Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
10 even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.

Week 5: Judah

God Sends a Storm

Read Jonah 1:3–16

“But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea…”

Jonah 1:3-16 New International Version

3 But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went
aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.
4 Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. 5 All the sailors were afraid and each cried out
to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship.
But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. 6 The captain went to him and said, “How can you sleep? Get up and call on your
god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish.”
7 Then the sailors said to each other, “Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity.” They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 So they
asked him, “Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From
what people are you?”
9 He answered, “I am a Hebrew and I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”
10 This terrified them and they asked, “What have you done?” (They knew he was running away from the LORD, because he had already told them so.)
11 The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, “What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?”
12 “Pick me up and throw me into the sea,” he replied, “and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you.”
13 Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before. 14 Then they cried out to the LORD, “Please,
LORD, do not let us die for taking this man’s life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, LORD, have done as you pleased.” 15 Then they
took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. 16 At this the men greatly feared the LORD, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made
vows to him.

Week 5: Jonah

God Sends a Storm

Read Jonah 1:3–16
“But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea…”

Notice:
Jonah ran.
God pursued.
The storm became so violent that experienced sailors became afraid.
Ironically:
The pagan sailors prayed while God's prophet slept.
Eventually Jonah admitted:
“I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.” — Jonah 1:9

Teaching Question
Is it possible to know the right things about God while still living in disobedience to God?
Jonah knew **who God was**, but his actions weren't aligned with what he knew.

Week 5: Jonah

The Great Fish

Read Jonah 1:17
“Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah.”

Notice that Scripture says:
GOD PREPARED THE FISH.

The fish was not simply Jonah's punishment.
It became God's means of rescue.
Without the fish, Jonah would have drowned.

Teaching Point
Sometimes something that initially looks like **judgment** may also contain **God's mercy**.

Jonah spent:
Three days and three nights inside the fish.
Jesus later connected Jonah's experience with His own death and resurrection.
Matthew 12:40



Week 5: Jonah

Was the "great fish" a whale?

Not necessarily. The Bible **does not specifically say that Jonah was swallowed by a whale**. It says God appointed a **"great fish."**
Jonah 1:17 (KJV): "Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."

Why do people call it a whale?
The Hebrew expression in Jonah is דָּג גָּדוֹל **(*dag gadol*)**, literally meaning **"great/big fish."** It does not identify the species. So from Jonah alone, we cannot say whether it was a whale, a large fish, or some extraordinary sea creature specifically appointed by God.
The whale association partly comes from **Matthew 12:40**, where Jesus compares His coming burial and resurrection with Jonah:
"For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly…" — **Matthew 12:40 (KJV)**
The Greek word there is **κῆτος (*kētos*)**, which has a broader meaning than the modern biological term *whale*. It can mean a **large sea creature/sea monster**. That's why many modern translations render it **"great fish"** or **"huge fish."**

Here's the important point for the Jonah Bible Study:

The biblical emphasis isn't on **what species swallowed Jonah**, but on **Who appointed it**.
Jonah 1:17 says **"the LORD had prepared [appointed] a great fish."** Later, God also appoints a plant (Jonah 4:6), a worm (4:7), and a scorching wind (4:8). This reinforces one of Jonah's major themes:

God is sovereign over creation.
The storm, sea, fish, plant, worm, and wind all respond to God—even while Jonah struggles to obey Him.
That could make an excellent discussion question for your lesson: **"Why do you think Scripture tells us that God 'appointed' the fish rather than telling us what kind of fish it was?"**

Week 5: Jonah

Jonah Prays

Jonah Chapter 2

Inside the fish, Jonah finally prayed.
“I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me…” — Jonah 2:2

Jonah recognized:
- His helplessness
- God's power
- God's deliverance
- God's mercy

And then comes one of the great statements of the book:
“SALVATION IS OF THE LORD.”

Jonah 2:9
“But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD.”
Jonah is recommitting himself to God. In effect, he is saying, **“Lord, I will do what I promised you.”** This is particularly significant because Jonah's problem began when he refused God's command to go to Nineveh.

God then commanded the fish to release Jonah onto dry land.

Teaching Point
You are never too far away for God to hear you when you call upon Him.

Week 5: Jonah

The God of Second Chances
I would make this one of your major teaching slides.
Read Jonah 3:1
“And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time…”
THE SECOND TIME.

Jonah failed.
Jonah ran.
Jonah disobeyed.

But God wasn't finished with Jonah.

God essentially repeated the assignment:
“Arise, go unto Nineveh…”

Teaching Point
Failure does not necessarily cancel God's purpose for your life.
God corrected Jonah, rescued Jonah—and then **recommissioned Jonah**.

Discussion Question:
Can you think of a time when God gave you another opportunity after you failed the first time?

Week 5: Jonah

Nineveh Repents

Read Jonah 3:4–10

Jonah 3:4-10 New International Version

4 Jonah began by going a day’s journey into the city, proclaiming, “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.” 5 The Ninevites
believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.
6 When Jonah’s warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with
sackcloth and sat down in the dust. 7 This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh:
“By the decree of the king and his nobles:
Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. 8 But let people and animals be covered
with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. 9 Who knows? God may yet
relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.”
10 When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction
he had threatened.

Week 5: Jonah

Nineveh Repents
Jonah 3:4–10

Jonah preached an amazingly short message:
“Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.”
And something remarkable happened.

NINEVEH REPENTED.
From the people to the king, they responded with:

- Fasting
- Sackcloth
- Humility
- Turning from evil
- Turning from violence

The king declared:
“Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger…?” — Jonah 3:9
Then God showed mercy.

Teaching Point:
Jonah wanted judgment.

God desired repentance.

Week 5: Jonah

Jonah Gets Angry

Here's the surprising part.
Nineveh repented.
God showed mercy.
And Jonah was...
ANGRY.
Read Jonah 4:1–2

4 But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. **2** He prayed to the LORD, “Isn’t this what I said, LORD, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.

Now Jonah reveals why he ran in the first place.
He knew God's character!
“…for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness…”
Jonah wasn't afraid his ministry would fail.

Jonah was afraid it would succeed.
He knew that if Nineveh repented, **God might forgive them**.
And Jonah didn't want his enemies forgiven.
Discussion Question
Are there people we want God to judge more than we want God to save?

Week 5: Jonah

Jonah's Heart vs. God's Heart

Jonah cared deeply about a plant that gave him shade.
Then the plant died.
Jonah became angry again.
God used the plant to expose Jonah's heart.

JONAH'S CONCERN
“What happened to my plant?”

GOD'S CONCERN
“What about the people of Nineveh?”

Jonah cared about something that made **him comfortable**.
God cared about **people who needed mercy**.

Teaching Point
It is possible to be involved in God's work while **not yet having God's heart for people**.

That's one of the most challenging lessons in Jonah.

Week 5: Jonah

The Question God Leaves Unanswered
The book ends unusually.
God asks Jonah a question:
Read Jonah 4:11
“And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city…?”
And then...

THE BOOK ENDS.
We are never told Jonah's answer.

Why?
Perhaps because the question isn't only for Jonah.

It is for us.
Do we care about the people God cares about?
Do we want mercy for others as much as we want mercy for ourselves?
Can we rejoice when God saves someone we believe doesn't deserve it?

Week 5: Jonah

Jonah & Jesus
Jesus specifically referred to Jonah.

Matthew 12:40
“For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

Jonah points us forward to Christ.
Jonah: Three days and nights in the fish
Jesus: In the grave and rose again

Jonah: Reluctantly preached to his enemies
Jesus: Willingly came to save sinners

Jonah: Became angry when enemies received mercy
Jesus: Gave His life so His enemies could receive mercy

Jonah: Said, “Salvation is of the LORD.”
Jesus: Accomplishes that salvation.

Teaching Point
Jonah's weakness highlights the greatness of Christ.

Week 5: Jonah

Four Chapters, Four Lessons

Chapter	What Happens	Main Lesson
Jonah 1	Jonah runs	You cannot outrun God.
Jonah 2	Jonah prays	God hears us from the depths.
Jonah 3	Jonah preaches	God gives second chances.
Jonah 4	Jonah becomes angry	God wants to transform our hearts.

And notice God's sovereignty throughout the book.
God appoints/sends:
A storm → A great fish → A plant → A worm → A scorching wind

Creation obeys God.
The sailors respond to God.
Nineveh responds to God.

Ironically, **the prophet is the one who struggles most with obedience.**

Discussion



Why do you think Jonah tried to run from God's assignment?



Discussion

What does Jonah's story teach us about trying to avoid God's calling?



Discussion

Why was Jonah angry when Nineveh repented?



Discussion

Who are the “Ninevites” in our lives?



Discussion

Is it possible to obey God outwardly while still resisting Him inwardly?



Discussion

Which Jonah are you today—the running Jonah, praying Jonah, obedient Jonah, or angry Jonah?

Conclusion

YOU CAN RUN FROM GOD'S ASSIGNMENT,
BUT YOU CANNOT OUTRUN GOD'S MERCY.

Jonah teaches us that God is:
Patient with the disobedient.
Merciful toward the repentant.
Compassionate toward the lost.
Willing to give another opportunity.

But God doesn't merely want our **obedience**.

He wants our HEART to reflect HIS HEART.

Closing Scripture: Jonah 4:2
“…thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness…”

Closing Challenge:
“Lord, help me care about the people You care about—even when they are difficult for me to love.”

Thank You

Presented by Rev. Dianne Tam