

## DOCTRINE FOR THE YOUNG

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# JONAH

by the Rt. Rev. Alfred Acton

This lesson is about the Book of Jonah. It is a short, but important book with only four chapters. Jonah was the Lord's prophet who had refused to do what the Lord wished. He had tried to run away from the Lord because he so hated the people of Nineveh. But no one can escape the Lord. A storm came upon the ship he was in, and at last the other people in the ship threw him overboard. A great fish came and swallowed Jonah, and when he repented or said he was sorry for disobeying the Lord, the fish set him upon dry land. The men of Nineveh were not doing what was right, but they did not know that what they were doing was wrong. The Word of the Lord had not come to them. Jonah was to take that Word to them. He refused. Do we ever see someone doing something wrong and refuse to help them learn to do what is right? Are we afraid to point out to them the wrong they do? Do we believe that they are not worth helping, that the Lord should be helping us and not them.

Now, Jonah went back to Nineveh, and the people had repented. But because Jonah considered himself favored of the Lord, he was very angry that the Lord should be kind to them. Jonah was jealous of the happiness the people of the city were having because they had turned to the Lord and were doing what was right. He was so jealous that he wished to die instead of staying alive and having to watch them in their happiness.

Are we ever jealous like Jonah? Do we ever think we are the best at something, and when a parent helps someone else to do it, do we get mad? Do we ever get angry with our playmates simply because they are having fun doing something we think we can do better than they can? Would we rather die than join with them in the fun? Do we ever get jealous with others over their success?

The Lord taught Jonah that he should not be jealous of other people's happiness. He taught that He loves all things of His creation, and that people should not be angry when He shows His love to others.

The Lord taught Jonah this truth in a special way. Jonah sat outside the city, Nineveh. It was very hot. Jonah was uncomfortable there. Then the Lord caused a special plant to grow up beside Jonah to put shade upon him. He would not be so hot. Jonah loved the tree because it cooled him. But then the Lord killed the tree, just as Jonah had wanted Him to kill the people of Nineveh. Jonah became angry with the Lord for killing the tree. When it was something he loved which the Lord killed, Jonah could see that such killing was wrong.

The Lord answered Jonah's anger with a question: "If you can see that something you love should not be killed, can't you see that the innocent children of Nineveh should be saved? I, the Lord, love all things I have made. Why should man be jealous of one another when I show my love to them?"

Destroying innocent people, or for that matter the jealousy and hatred we show others, just as surely kills those people in our hearts as the worm killed the tree that helped Jonah.

Next time we allow conceit, the feeling that we are better than others to get in the way of our being kind to them, the next time we are jealous of others, let us remember Jonah. Let us remember how the Lord taught him that He, the Lord, loves all men, and always wants to help them if they will turn to Him.

**Text: Jonah 3-4**