



Jonah and the Ninevites

Jonah 2-4

Woodstock slid down the central pole of the Love Sub and landed in the kitchen galley. He straightened his red, green, and orange tie-dye shirt and greeted the human hand that appeared to be attached to the wall. "Que pasa, Handsome?" Handsome the Hand waved.

Woodstock spied something that looked familiar. "Hmm," he mused. It was black and had a smooth glass front. "Oh, look! A TV screen!" He pushed the On button and sat down on a nearby stool. A light came on behind the screen and the machine made a humming sound. After a minute, it beeped and stopped working. Handsome opened the screen and handed a bowl of steaming noodles to Woodstock. Woodstock took the bowl and ate the noodles. "Groovy! Instant noodles! I guess that's what you call a TV dinner."

Suddenly, an alarm sounded and a red light flashed over Woodstock's head. "Time Travel Alert! Time Travel Alert! We have a time travel visitor in 3-2-1!" announced the computer's voice.

Woodstock jumped up. "Whoa! We're getting a visitor!" He scrambled up to the Time Tube deck. A man wearing a brown robe, sandals, and a long beard filled with seaweed slid down the tube.

"What?! Oh, no! Don't tell me I've been swallowed again!" the man cried with alarm.

"What's up, beardy dude?" Woodstock greeted.

"Ahoy there!" the man replied. "Tell me, brother, how long have you been down here?"

Woodstock looked around. "You mean inside the Love Sub?"

"Is that what you call it? The Love Sub? What a strange name for a giant fish," the man noted.

"Giant fish?" Woodstock exclaimed, then he smiled. "Oh dude, you must be Jonah!"

Jonah nodded. "Aye, I am. Are you a prophet?"

Woodstock shrugged. "Well ... yeah, kind of. My name is Woodstock. I mean, well ... I don't have a book like you do," Woodstock laughed. He waved his arms at the vessel around him. "But, I have a submarine! Welcome aboard 'The Love Sub!'"

"Is that where I am?" Jonah gasped. "I've been swallowed by a submarine! Whoa, what will God think of next?"

"That's right, dude. God had you swallowed by a great, big fish!" Woodstock remembered.

"Yes," Jonah said, "just because I didn't want to bring his message to Nineveh."

"Why didn't you want to go there?" Woodstock wondered.

"Are you kidding?" Jonah stared at Woodstock. "Shiver me timbers! Those Ninevites were terrible, awful people! God saw they were wicked and evil and He wanted to send them a message."

"So, what did you do when God told you to go there?" Woodstock asked.

"I went the other way, matey." Jonah pointed over his shoulder.

"Is that when God sent the fish to swallow you?" Woodstock wondered.

"Not exactly, first He sent a storm. Then, He sent the fish to save me from the stormy sea. I was stuck inside that fish's belly for three days until it finally spit me out on the shore, safe and sound!" Jonah exclaimed. "That's where God gave me a second chance."

Woodstock grinned and waved his arms in the air. "Far out—a second chance! A second chance!" He stopped. "A second chance for what?"

"A second chance to obey God," Jonah explained, "and you can be sure that the second time the Lord said, 'Jonah, go to Nineveh,' I said, 'Aye, aye, Sir!'"

"So, what did you do when you got there?" Woodstock asked.

"I did exactly what God told me to do. I warned the people of Nineveh." A siren's shrill alarm sounded briefly and a red light flashed. Jonah jumped. "What be that?" he asked.

Woodstock shrugged and looked around. "I think it's that TV dinner cooking thing." He suddenly grinned, "Oh no, wait! I remember that sound. It's the warning lights, man!"

Jonah's shoulders relaxed a little. "That makes sense because God sent me with a warning!"

"Well, let's read the warning straight from your book." Woodstock opened the porthole and removed the Bible. Turning to Jonah 3:4, he read, "On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: 'Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned.'"

Jonah nodded. "That's exactly what I told them. In forty days, God was going to destroy their city."

"Far out, man! That's heavy." Woodstock grinned and bobbed his head in a big nod. "So, God let you warn them, even though they were evil dudes?"

"Oh yes," Jonah confirmed. "He is the God of second chances. He gave me a second chance to deliver His message and He even gives second chances to bad guys."

"Way cool!" Woodstock exclaimed. "So man, what did you say after you warned the Ninevites?"

"Good question. I gave them a choice." Jonah jumped again as a bell rang and red and green lights flashed. However, this time he was prepared. "Let me guess. Choice lights?"

"Good guess, dude, and here's the choice." Woodstock read Jonah 3:8. "But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence."

Jonah nodded. "That's the choice God gave them. Change your ways, turn your ship around, and ask God to forgive you."

"That's kind of like the choice God gives to all of us," Woodstock agreed. "If we change our ways and follow Him, He promises we can live forever with Him."

"That's true! God always offers His children a promise—" Jonah was interrupted by the sound of people clapping and a flashing green light. "Aye, let me guess!"

"Promise lights," they said together.

"And, here is the promise God made!" Jonah recited his own words in Jonah 3:9 from memory while Woodstock followed along in the Bible. "Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish."

"So ... what happened? Did they obey God or did they perish?" Woodstock asked.

"They made the right choice! They repented and God spared their city," Jonah answered.

"That's excellent!" Woodstock exclaimed. "A second chance!"

"Aye," Jonah agreed. "That's because God cares about everyone, good or bad. He is slow to anger and full of mercy."

"Amen, dude!" Woodstock said, "Hey Jonah, you wanna stay for lunch?"

"Sure, what are we having?" Jonah agreed.

"Mmm, my favorite, seafood!" Woodstock patted his stomach.

"Well, you can never have too much seafood," Jonah laughed.

Woodstock laughed, too. "Hey man, before we eat, I just gotta tell you it was groovy you showed up today. It goes to show, that, no matter where you are in time, God is good all the time!"