

THE

RUNAWAY

THE BOOK



OF JONAH



life group
material

THE BOOK OF JONAH

At the end of the day, God is less concerned with what we do for Him than who we are in Him. Few figures illustrate that truth better than Jonah. Focused on the prophet rather than his prophecy, the story of Jonah gives us a picture of a man on the run due to his own selfish desires. Instead of showing mercy to his enemies, he determined to keep God's grace to himself rather than share it with those he considered undeserving. Can you relate?

Over the course of 8 verse-by-verse sessions, pastor and author Eric Mason expands our vision to see that Jonah's story is our own. Far more than a thrilling Sunday school adventure, it offers a profound glimpse into the conflict that occurs when God calls resistant believers to His mission. More importantly, it underscores the depths of His compassion not only in redeeming the lost, but redeeming those He has called to participate in His reconciling work.

So climb aboard and settle in as Eric reveals how God uses extraordinary circumstances to break our hearts of selfishness, convince us of His tender care, and unite our lives to His glory.

Accessing The Material

On the following pages you will find all of the information needed to go through the Jonah Life Group Material. There are corresponding videos that can be accessed through our "RightNow Media" account with the church. If you don't have an account, simply go to rightnowmedia.org/Account/Invite/BrackenRidgeBaptistChurch. After creating an account simply search "The Book Of Jonah" to access the 8 weeks or click [HERE](#) if viewing on your computer.

rightnow MEDIA

If you are unable for some reason to access the material through these different means, please simply email office@brbc.org.au or call 07 3261 5045.



BRACKEN RIDGE
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Session 1: Jonah 1:1–3

OPEN

Can you think of a time when you reacted poorly to an inconvenient situation? (flat tire, difficult boss, traffic jam, dead phone battery, disobedient children, etc.)

What did you learn about yourself from the way you reacted?

Often times, the best judge of someone’s character is how he or she responds when faced with a challenging circumstance. From beginning to end, the Bible teaches us that our actions and attitudes indicate the contents of our hearts—the book of Jonah is no exception. Even more, it introduces us to a God who faithfully draws to the surface those portions of our lives that are not in full submission to Him. From the very start of Jonah, we will find both of these points to be true. In this session, Jonah’s response to the call of God gives us clear insight into the priorities of his heart.

READ

Read Jonah 1:1–3.

WATCH

Show Session 1: *Jonah 1:1–3* (8:40 minutes).

DISCUSS

As you listened to Eric Mason, what made an impression on you? What stood out?

What did Eric key in on as the main focus of this passage, and as the running theme for the book of Jonah?

The first three verses along with the book as a whole demonstrate how our response to God's call unearths the character of our hearts and underscores our desperate need for Him.

What did you learn about Israel and Nineveh at the time of Jonah's life? How did Eric describe each nation?

GO DEEPER

*Learn more about the historical setting of Jonah in the following passages:
2 Kings 13:1–5, 10–11, 14–19, 22–23; 14:23–27*

What do these verses teach us about the state of Israel during Jonah's time? It was besieged by Syria, but protected by the kindness of God (2 Kings 13:23). They also experienced prosperity and restored borders despite the evil of their king (14:23, 25).

Who was Israel's king when God called Jonah? How does Scripture describe him? (2 Kings 14:23)

Judging by the character of its leadership, Israel's spiritual state was clearly lacking. **What does Israel's disobedience teach us about the character of God? What words would you use to describe His interactions with His people?**

Eric listed the following items as possible descriptors of Jonah's inner life:

- He hated Assyria, of which Nineveh was a major urban center.
- He feared how the people would treat him.
- He saw Israel as more deserving of God's love than Nineveh.
- He had the right theology, but the wrong disposition.
- His personal preferences conflicted with God's character.
- He refused to love the unlovable.

Ultimately, we will find that his disobedience stemmed from fear, namely, fear that God would relent and allow Nineveh to endure in response to their repentance (4:2).

GO DEEPER

Compare Jonah's response to that of other notable figures in the Old Testament (key in especially on the initial action of each following the call of God):

Gen. 12:1, 4; 22:2–3; 1 Kings 17:9–10; 18:1–2; 2 Kings 1:15; 1 Chron. 21:10–11, 18–19

How did each individual respond to God's call? (He rose/went, as was the expectation for God's prophets—to obey His word.)

How is Jonah 1:3 similar to these passages? What might an Israelite have expected Jonah to do upon reading verses 1–2?

What are some contemporary examples of similarly shocking decisions, like that of Jonah's decision to do the opposite of God's charge? (extramarital affair, embezzlement, pastoral moral failure, denial of the faith, etc.)

God calls us to faithful gospel ministry with those He has placed in our midst, which always brings to the surface the issues we hide inside. When that happens, we are faced with the same decision as Jonah—to obey God’s call to share the gospel with the lost or to turn away to our own preferences.

Who are the “unlovables” in our lives?

What do we reveal about ourselves when we fail to love the “unlovables” in our lives the way God has loved us?

Eric showed that Jonah betrayed his belief that Israel stood on a higher moral ground than Assyria. In doing so, it showed that Jonah had forgotten the unlovable state in which Israel stood prior to God’s saving them. The same could be said for Nineveh at his time as well as anyone else we fail to love with the love of God today.

What are some of the personal beliefs that can govern our theology if we are not careful?

1. Politics
2. Ethnicity
3. Nationality
4. Religion
5. Comfort
6. Socio-Economic Status

As Eric said, the Church today is known less for what it supports than for what it opposes. Because of that, many see the Church as lacking compassion, even though Jesus demonstrated tremendous compassion throughout His earthly life.

As you think about the life of Jesus, what are some examples of His compassion that come to mind?

What keeps you from seeing the lost like Jesus?

Who is God calling you to show compassion toward today? What is behind your theology that keeps it from becoming faithful obedience?

LAST WORD

God's Word is far more than ink on a page. It is living and active and calls us to respond appropriately. Following God requires the right information, but also the correct disposition. In the case of Jonah, he understood his theology well, but he did not put it into practice in a way that honored God. Instead, he allowed his preferences to rule his response.

We are prone to the same. God's Word actively confronts us, and our response demonstrates the contents of our hearts. Many times our response reveals a preference for comfort over ministering to others, let alone our enemies. But God's compassion extends to people from every tongue, tribe, and nation.

Pay attention to your life. Be honest about your response. Allow God to diagnose your condition. We serve a gracious God and if our misdeeds are never hidden from Him, neither are our needs (Isa. 40:27).

LIVE IT OUT

Prayer: Before you start each day this week, stop and ask God to give you the boldness to love those who feel unlovable in your life.

Encouragement: Identify someone struggling with an area of life where God has called him or her to challenging obedience. Be intentional about making time to speak words of hope and comfort to them to build them up in bold obedience.

Confession: If you find yourself in a similar season of running from God like Jonah, seek out a believer you trust and talk to them about your struggles. Do so anticipating the kindness and mercy of God extended to you in Jesus Christ.

Journaling: Each evening this week, take a few moments to reflect on your day and write out three ways you responded to circumstances that stood out to you, good or bad.

Worship: Think back on your life and list out some of the significant times God has called you out of comfort and into fruitful obedience. As you go about your week, make time to intentionally thank Him through song, prayer, and praise.

DUST OFF THE HEBREW

In verse 4, God is said to have “hurled a great wind upon the sea.” Other English versions of the Bible translate the verb (*tu/*) as “sent.” All of them point out that God has an active role in the distressing circumstances that follow. Elsewhere, the term is used to describe a person throwing a spear (1 Sam. 18:11; 20:33) and God’s active judgment in the form of sending (or “hurling”) the disobedient into exile (Isa. 22:17; Jer. 22:26). The same verb is used three more times in the chapter—the sailors “hurl” cargo into the sea (1:5), Jonah asks to be “hurled” into the sea (1:12), and the sailors comply (1:15). Interestingly enough, when the term is used of God and the sailors, it is active describing them as the agents of the action. When it is used in connection with Jonah, he is a passive agent asking others to complete the action for him. This gives us further insight into his spiritual disposition.

As we learned at the start, actions teach us something about the character of those we are watching. In the case of Jonah, his actions demonstrate a heart of bitterness and unforgiveness toward his enemies. **What does God’s willingness to intervene in our idolatry teach us about His character?**

What are some examples of things that compete with God’s call for our attention?

Jonah’s hatred for Nineveh drove him to flee from God. Rather than go to the city to which he was called, he traveled in the opposite direction, went down to the bottom of a ship, and lay down. Though he tried to move farther away from God, he could not escape. God was close at hand, drawing Jonah back to Himself.

LAST WORD

When we flee from God, we do nothing but damage to ourselves. In reality, there is no escape. He is everywhere, always, and He will do whatever it takes to get to the heart of those He desires. For Jonah, that meant sending a violent storm that threatened to destroy the ship on which he slept.

God's commands are rarely easy, but they are always good. As we saw in this session, the Bible portrays a close connection between joy and obedience. When we run from God, we descend spiritually to an unhappy destination. Thankfully, we have a merciful God who is faithful in His love to break apart whatever stands between us and His call on our lives.

His storms are meant to gain our attention. If you are experiencing one today, choose not to see it as an inconvenience, but an opportunity. Wherever you find yourself, commit to talking with God. Trust Him with your fears, your struggles, and your weakness. Allow Him to use you for your good and for His glory.

LIVE IT OUT

Prayer: Whether or not God is confronting self-centeredness in your life, ask Him to shape your heart to see His interruptions as blessings.

Listen: Identify two or three mature Christians and ask to spend time connecting with them. Ask about the ways God has interrupted their lives for spiritual maturity and let their testimonies encourage you onward.

Perspective: As you go about your week, pay attention to the interruptions to your routine. Make a conscious effort to view them as God-given opportunities to grow in your faith.

Draw: What comes to mind when you think of the words "asleep" and "awake"? Create a visual image that best represents your understanding of how God has woken you from spiritual slumber.

Memorize: Commit Ephesians 5:14 to memory with the prayer that God would awaken you spiritually wherever needed.

DISCUSS

At the beginning of the video, Eric offered a brief review of what we have studied up to this point. We can summarize the main themes of our first two sessions as:

- Session 1: Jonah's rejection of God's call
- Session 2: God's commitment to Jonah in the midst of his disobedience

These are big themes that touch all of our lives at different points. Even as believers, we never obey God perfectly, yet He remains committed to finishing the work He began in us through faith in Christ. So before we begin this session, let's take a minute for reflection. **How has God been using the book of Jonah in your life over these last two weeks? Where are you feeling convicted to grow? In what ways have you felt encouraged to live differently?**

For today's session, the main theme is:

- Session 3: The contrast in character between Jonah and the sailors

What are some of the ways Jonah 1:7–16 contrasts Jonah's character with that of the sailors?

The following is a list of examples from the passage:

1. Jonah shows no reverence for God; the sailors exhibit legitimate fear (1:10).
2. Jonah has no value for his life; the sailors try to spare his life (1:12–13).
3. Jonah does not pray; the sailors cry out to God (1:14).
4. Jonah is thrown overboard; the sailors sacrifice and make vows to God (1:15–16).

Even though the ship's crew did not cast lots out of obedience to God, He used their actions to shed light on Jonah's guilt.

What does the scene with the sailors casting lots teach you about God?

How does it reveal His sovereignty?

How does Jonah respond? In what ways does he model for us what not to do when God confronts us in our sin?

Eric made the following observations on 1:8–10:

“I am a Hebrew”

Jonah exhibits pride masking his need for God

“I fear the LORD”

Jonah answers theologically without application

“...the God of heaven, who made the sea and dry land”

Despite knowing his God, Jonah continues to run from the Ruler of creation

Eric summarized Jonah's response saying, “He has the theological aptitude without the practical application.” In other words, Jonah had all the right answers, but his actions did not reflect a true belief in what he claimed.

Why is it important that our lives actively reflect what we believe?

How have you worked to make the connection between belief and action in your own life?

Where could you improve?

What are the consequences for failing to make that connection? How does Jonah's story teach us the ways in which our disobedience affects others?

DUST OFF THE HEBREW

Jonah's first time speaking in the book (1:9) depicts a man disconnected from reality. He explained to the ship's crew that he was a Hebrew who worshiped the Creator and Ruler of all creation. Nonetheless, he was on the run from God. In response, the men cried out, "What is this you have done!" (1:10). The phrase, *mazot aseet*, is an exact copy of the question God asked of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:13). For a Jewish reader, that scene would likely have come to mind. It displays an added layer of irony since it was uttered by the ship's crew. In this scene, they are depicted as more of a prophet than Jonah.

So far, Eric has shown how Jonah's actions reflect a spiritual disconnect on the part of his inner life with what he claims to believe. Though he describes himself as one who should be committed faithfully to the desires of God, his actions do not line up. **What are some adjectives you would use to describe Jonah's inner life according to 1:10–16?**

In contrast to Jonah, how do the sailors respond?

Here are some examples from 1:10–16:

"Then the men were exceedingly afraid..."

They experience legitimate fear in contrast to Jonah's passivity

"Nevertheless, the men rowed hard..."

They attempt to spare Jonah's life while he shows not value for repentance

"Therefore, they called out to the LORD..."

They cry out to God whereas Jonah has not once prayed

"...they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows."

They exhibit devotion to God while Jonah resigns himself to his fate

What does this passage teach us about the importance of repentance?

DUST OFF THE HEBREW

Having learned they would have to throw Jonah overboard, the ship's crew "rowed hard to get back to dry land" (1:13). The term (*hatal*) translated as "row" literally means "to dig" and visualizes the sailors digging into the water ferociously. Despite their best efforts, they could not reach the shore to leave Jonah behind because the wind grew stronger and the sea increased in danger. The scene demonstrates that God had other ends in mind for Jonah's situation. Their solution was one that would have had little consequence for Jonah. But God had more in mind for the sake of calling Jonah to repentance, a posture he showed no signs of throughout this scene.

Chapter 1 comes to a close with both a warning and an encouragement. It warns us against the consequence of disobedience for both ourselves and those around us, but demonstrates God's graciousness when His people go astray.

What does this passage teach us about the character of God?

How have you seen God interrupt your life to draw you to Him?

Eric said, "No matter how bad you have messed up, God is able to bring His will to pass."

How does that statement encourage you today? How could it embolden your obedience?

In what ways should it set you free from believing God's will depends on your performance? How should it embolden your obedience, knowing that God desires faithfulness over perfection?

LAST WORD

Belief and response are inseparable. The ways in which we live our lives reflect what we truly believe on the inside. When we fail to live out our faith, we harden ourselves toward God and may bring trouble to those around us, like Jonah did with the sailors.

Of course, none of us walks in perfect obedience. We are sinners living in a sinful world, which means there will always be levels of inconsistency. But our awareness of those inconsistencies should motivate us toward repentance rather than resignation.

God is gracious, so much so that He is willing to divinely interrupt our disobedience to draw us back to Himself. Trust Him to mold you in such a way as to bridge the gap between head knowledge and life application.

LIVE IT OUT

Prayer: Invite God to bring to the surface those areas of your heart where you are resisting His desires for your life. Make that the central theme of your prayer throughout the coming week.

List: Review Jonah 1:7–16 and list out the contrasting character traits covered in the session. Over the next few days, look over your notes and consider which characteristics best resemble your life, all for the sake of identifying where you have the potential to grow in your walk with Jesus Christ.

Connect: Because of our limitations, we cannot always see the ways we resist God's call. Think about a mature believer in your life and invite him or her to speak in honest love about where they see you spiritually. More importantly, invite him or her to point out any ways they see you resisting God's call in your life.

Resolve: If you reached the end of this lesson certain of your resistance to God's call, reflect on the kindness of God to Jonah. Even more, reflect on the kindness of God to you in Jesus Christ. Lay down your fears and resolve to live in obedience in light of His love.

Volunteer: If you reached the end of this session without identifying clear resistance in your life, thank God for that gift. Look for opportunities to pour yourself out even more—volunteer this week for a duty in your church that others often avoid.

DISCUSS

From cover to cover, the Bible introduces us to a God who is faithful when we are faithless. Scripture contains countless examples of individuals who walk in disobedience—we see it in our own lives as well—yet God remains gracious and committed, introducing opportunities for repentance that His people would return to Him.

What does the fact that God “appointed” the great fish tell us about His character?

God is patient and does not abandon His people. Even in their disobedience, He provides numerous—and even supernatural—opportunities for repentance.

How has God demonstrated His compassion in your life?

How does God’s patience with Jonah encourage you in your walk with Him?

When we think of God’s pursuit, we tend to consider it in gentle terms. While God is tender, He is also serious about our rebellion, which we see in the story of Jonah. Often times, He interrupts our lives in ways that are both inconvenient and painful. **In what ways has Jonah’s story changed your thinking about the way God pursues us?**

How does this story give us a glimpse of the gospel?

Despite Jonah’s rebellion, God keeps coming after him, providing opportunity after opportunity to return to God. As Eric said, “The gospel is God coming after us, not us coming after Him...God is not just after us to come into a relationship with Him, but also to remain in fellowship with Him.”

When you think about the way God interacts with Jonah, what would you say it reveals about His utmost concern with His people?

God cares more about who we are in Him than what we do for Him. In the end, who we are will drive what we do. When our identity is anchored in Him, our lives will follow suit.

Those who have spent a significant portion of their lives in church often grow accustomed to Christian language without a deep reflection on its meaning. “Repentance”

What are some of the temporal circumstances that distract us today?

Possible answers may include:

- Our children
- Jobs
- Boss
- Co-workers
- Finances

One of the ways Eric said we can veer toward counterfeit repentance is by focusing on getting out of our difficult circumstances instead of looking for what God desires to teach us in the midst of them. **Why is an eternal focus an important part of true repentance?**

What is keeping you from true repentance today? In what ways can you identify with Jonah’s counterfeit attempts?

Eric offered the following contrasts between counterfeit and true repentance:

- Counterfeit repentance is self focused; true repentance is God focused.
- Counterfeit repentance is circumstance focused; true repentance is eternity focused.
- Counterfeit repentance lacks honest confession of sin.

One of the main ways we determine false repentance in our lives is by inviting others to speak honestly about what they see in us. Take a minute to think of someone trustworthy you could consider inviting into your life to point out false repentance.

How do you feel about asking someone to do that?

What hesitations do you have?

What kind of positive impact do you think a relationship like that would have on your life?

Despite his disobedience, Jonah continues to experience the unceasing mercies of God. Today, you and I enjoy that same love of God through faith in Jesus Christ. **How does the good news of God’s patient love encourage you today?**

LAST WORD

We all have blind spots, those areas of our walk with Christ that do not line up completely with God's Word. Coming to terms with our counterfeit forms of spirituality is a vulnerable and revealing process, but it leads to life.

As the body of Christ, we are called to encourage one another in truth, which means living in honest enough community for that to occur. Remember God's love for you in Christ and let it embolden you toward confession and repentance wherever it is needed.

LIVE IT OUT

Prayer: Read Jonah 2 followed by 1 John 1:8–9 at least four days this week. After doing so, ask God to reveal to you any false repentance in your life for the sake of healing.

Confession: The act of confession is one of agreeing with God's Word as truth. As He brings to light false repentance in your life, confess it to Him and another trusted believer. Then believe in His promise to cleanse you of all unrighteousness.

Forgive: Has someone sinned against you? Have they refused to own the pain they caused? Or falsely repented? By faith, forgive them today and seek to love them with patient kindness, like God did with Jonah.

Write: List the top three worldly distractions that shift your perspective from an eternal perspective. Place the list somewhere you will see it on a daily basis and ask God to help you view them differently.

Community: Pick one or two trusted believers in your life and ask them to identify any false repentance they see in your life.

GO DEEPER

Learn more about the danger of bitterness through these verses:
Prov. 14:10; Eph. 4:31–32; Heb. 12:14–15; Jas. 4:1; 1 John 4:7–8

- How would you describe bitterness?**

- In what ways does bitterness keep us from having compassion for the lost?**

- How does it distract us from obedience to God?**

- What should we do to pursue freedom from bitterness?**

How did the Ninevites respond to Jonah’s preaching?

What does their response tell us about their spiritual disposition?

DUST OFF THE HEBREW

We are not given a clear look into the message God asked Jonah to preach. At best, the book says that God wants him to “call out against” Nineveh’s evil (1:2) and deliver the message “that I tell you” (3:2). When Jonah begins to preach (3:4), his sermon in the original language is a mere five words long. It includes no reason for the threat of destruction, no call to repentance, and no hope for salvation. Yet, the Ninevites repent and obey the word of the Lord. Five words change the spiritual landscape of a city. At the same time, they are uttered by a man who, having just experienced God’s compassion for sinners, did not desire to see that grace given to others. Jonah is a convicting example that should make us mindful of our tendency to play favorites with the grace of God.

DISCUSS

Jonah 3:5 points out that belief in God had spread throughout the city of Nineveh despite the short tenure of Jonah’s preaching as well as the brevity of his message.

How did the “king of Nineveh” hear Jonah’s message?

The phrase “the word reached the king of Nineveh” suggests Jonah’s message likely came to the royal figure by way of his citizens rather than a private audience with Jonah. In other words, the message of God spread quickly.

How did he respond?

We can make the following observations from the passage:

- He rose from his throne.
- He took off his royal robe.
- He dressed in sackcloth.
- He sat among ashes.
- He issued a citywide decree requiring fasting, sackcloth, and penitent prayer.

In other words, he identified himself with the rest of his people—guilty before God—and devoted himself to approving and participating in the repentance occurring among his people.

Why do you think the Ninevites responded this way? What did they recognize about themselves?

As Eric explained, dressing in sackcloth was an act of symbolizing a state of mourning over the reality of personal sin. Through fasting, sackcloth, and urgent prayer, the Ninevites demonstrated that they understood their situation—they gave up their entitlements to embrace their need for God.

DUST OFF THE HEBREW

Part of the king's decree to his people included the command to pray. Our English Bibles incorporate an adverbial form of the Hebrew term, *bichazpah*, which they translate as "urgently" or "mightily." Its literal meaning is "with strength." In other words, the king commanded his people to call out to God with strength and force after hearing Jonah's message. His actions and those he requires of his people illustrate the depth of conviction they felt after receiving God's Word.

To truly trust in Christ, we first have to experience conviction about sin in our own lives or else we will never see our need for Him to save us. Though we might not have responded exactly as the Ninevites, life in Christ occurs through surrendering to and receiving the forgiveness of God through faith in His Son. **In what ways did your recognition of sin resemble that of the Ninevites?**

In what ways did you cry out to God for help "with strength"?

How might a response like the Ninevites' look in a more modern context?

Repentance is a comprehensive act that requires soul reflection guided by the Holy Spirit, as well as the willingness to let go of whatever distracts us from God. Like the Ninevites, we must be willing to lay aside our luxuries and desires if they get in the way of our relationship with God.

What are some fundamentally good things God has called you to let go of in order to walk in deeper fellowship with Him? (relationships, career, money, etc.)

What might He be calling you to let go of today?

Eric said that true repentance means being soul reflective and asking God to search our hearts to bring to light any sinful ways.

Someone read Psalm 139:23–24.

What does soul reflection look like in your life?

How do the Ninevites model being “soul reflective” for us?

The Ninevites repent without any guarantee that God would turn from His threat of disaster.

Someone read Jonah 3:9–10 again.

How does God respond to the repentance of the Ninevites (3:10)?

What does His response teach us about His character?

DUST OFF THE HEBREW

Upon seeing their repentance, God “relented” of the disaster He threatened to bring upon the Ninevites. The original Hebrew term is *nicham*, which carries a variety of meanings depending on context. However, it always brings with it a sense of emotional pain (Exod. 32:14; 1 Chron. 21:15; Job 42:6; Ps. 106:45; Isa. 57:6). Here, it refers to an action God considered, but never fulfilled because of how the Ninevites responded to His judgment. This scene is a beautiful illustration of the truth that God desires to redeem and reconcile those He has created. He takes no delight in the destruction of sinners (Ezek. 18:32).

How does God’s response to the Ninevites encourage you today? Does it correct a wrong view of Him that has kept you from repentance? Why or why not?

What did Eric point to as the “fruit” of repentance? (It increases our ability to bear spiritual fruit in service to Jesus Christ.)

Where is God calling you into repentance today? What, if anything, is holding you back?

LAST WORD

As human beings, we are easily distracted. If we are not careful, any number of fundamentally good things (relationships, wealth, possessions, etc.) can come to replace God as the priority of our lives. When that happens, we have to be willing to let go of them.

You may have heard people accuse God of being a “cosmic killjoy” because He sometimes asks us to give up things that are important to us. The truth is God only desires to remove from us those things that would keep us from Him. Repentance is hard, but fruitful. It leads to greater fellowship with God and bears fruit in service to Christ.

DISCUSS

At this point, Jonah has completed the task God set before him, albeit begrudgingly. Even more, it was a huge success. Nineveh heard the word of God and responded rightly. Both God's response and Jonah's give us insight into the character of their hearts.

How does Jonah's response (4:1) to the Ninevites' repentance differ from God's response (3:10)?

What does the difference tell us about Jonah's disposition?

He had the right information, but the wrong disposition. What pleased God angered Jonah.

DUST OFF THE HEBREW

A literal translation of verse 1 reads, "It was evil to Jonah, a great evil and it burned him." The term *ra'ah* (evil) is the same word God uses to describe the deeds of Nineveh (1:2) as well as the deeds the Ninevites turned away from in obedience to God (3:10). Here, Jonah considers the "cooling off" of God's anger as *ra'ah*. Rather than rejoice in the salvation and preservation of Nineveh, Jonah hated God's mercy to the people and burned with anger towards that which pleased God. In the end, he missed out on the joy of God's redemptive work because of his own self-centeredness.

According to 4:2, why did Jonah flee to Tarshish (1:3)?

When have you experienced God's compassion extended to those you do not like?

How does bitterness cause us to misunderstand God's compassion for all people?

DUST OFF THE HEBREW

As seen previously, Jonah's accusation against God comes through his use of a well-known formula for describing the Lord (4:2). Part of the formula includes the phrase, *rab hesed*, which means, "abounding in steadfast love." There are no English words to properly convey the meaning of *hesed*, but it refers to God's covenant love with His people and underscores His unfailing faithfulness, kindness, and loyalty. Jonah experienced God's *hesed* repeatedly throughout his journey, yet desired that it be kept from the Ninevites. Though his anger may have been understandable, it was clearly unjust because it failed to display the loving faithfulness of God to all people.

Like the story of Jonah, God regularly shows kindness toward sinners, but not so that we can remain in our sin. God extends His kindness to lead us into repentance from our sin (Rom. 2:4).

How should God's kindness cause us to view the sin in our lives?

In what ways do we tend to live like Jonah?

What does our behavior reveal about our view of God's character?

What is keeping you from full submission to God's call today?

How will you begin to ask Him to do surgery on your heart?

LAST WORD

Sin is sinister. We are prone to wander into self-centeredness, sometimes to the point of viewing God's blessing to others with anger, like Jonah. The grace of God knows no boundaries and no matter how hard we try, we cannot control His compassion for others.

Rather, God extends His kindness to us to provide us with the opportunity to pursue repentance. Even more, He is willing to answer certain prayers with a "no" to keep us from further harm to ourselves.

Most of us like what God says from a distance. When He calls us into action, our hearts are exposed and the real work of life with Christ begins. No matter where you find yourself today, no matter how difficult obedience seems, remember the kindness of God as He leads you into selfless freedom.

LIVE IT OUT

Prayer: Start at least four days out of the next week by asking God to shed light on any misplaced anger in your life. As He does, pursue forgiveness and reconciliation in response.

Memorize: Commit to memory James 1:19–20. Strive to apply it to your day-to-day interactions with others. Practice being quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger.

Settle Anger: Before finishing your days this week, do whatever necessary to rid yourself of anger. If you are in conflict, apologize, seek forgiveness, and share openly to make peace in submission to God's Word.

Spread Compassion: Think of someone in your life you struggle to love. After doing so, write down three ways you can serve them compassionately this week. Make a point to follow through on at least one by next week.

Consider Speech: How do you speak to and about others? In your family? At work? At church? Think deeply about the influence of your words. Intentionally make changes that will make your speech an encouragement to those around you.

DUST OFF THE HEBREW

In 4:5, we are told that Jonah found a place to the east of the city where he sat to “see” what would happen to Nineveh. The same Hebrew verb is used in 3:10 to describe God’s decision to relent from the disaster He promised after He “saw” the repentance of the Ninevites. The two words could not illustrate a deeper contrast between the two characters. Whereas God looked at the transformation of Nineveh with great joy, Jonah saw God’s grace upon the city with anger and hoped they would return to evil in order to justly receive punishment.

As you reflect on your life, how have you experienced God’s grace and mercy?

How could those experiences change the way you view others—especially those who do not have a relationship with Jesus Christ?

In what ways is God calling you to grow in compassion for the lost today?

Jonah enjoyed his own experience of God’s grace, but hated the idea of that same grace being distributed to his enemies. However, this passage shows us that God is faithful not only to save the lost, but also to produce repentance in the lives of those He has called.

What is God trying to teach Jonah by appointing the plant, the worm, and the scorching wind?

How does this scene reveal the inconsistency of Jonah’s faith?

Despite witnessing God’s repeated deliverance, as well as the repentance of both the sailors and the Ninevites, the first recorded instance of Jonah rejoicing is over the shade given by the plant (4:6).

God's questions in verses 9–11 expose Jonah's hypocrisy—he is troubled over a plant God created for Jonah's comfort, but not troubled over the people God created in His image.

Read Romans 5:7–8.

How does the model of Jesus contrast with Jonah? (Jonah was called to his enemies and fled in rebellion to God. Jesus was called to His enemies and laid down His life in obedience to God.)

What obstacles keep you from loving others the way God has loved you?

Possible answers may include:

- Unforgiveness
- Bitterness
- Anger
- Personal comfort

Where is God calling you to show compassion, to forgive, to love selflessly?

What about your life needs to change to walk in greater obedience to God?

LAST WORD

The book of Jonah ends with an unanswered question, one that reaches to us today. Do we care more about our temporary comforts, or the eternal needs of those who rub us the wrong way? One way or another, God in His love will interrupt our safe places to confront the areas of our lives that need renewal.

Throughout this study, we have seen a number of ways in which the heart of God contrasts with that of humanity. And praise God for that. If it were left up to us, we would never dare extend mercy to our enemies. Yet, Jesus Christ stepped into this world, clothed Himself in our flesh, and laid down His life so that His enemies could be restored to a relationship with God by faith.

By saving us, God has called us into His work of reconciling the world to Himself. If we are to bear fruit in this charge, we must learn to lay down our lives for the lost, as Jesus did for us. It is a narrow road, but one that leads to life with our Lord. Remember God's grace to you, surrender your comforts, and follow His ways. You will not regret it.

LIVE IT OUT

Prayer: Rather than leave you to judgment without hope, God sent His Son to give His life for you, His enemy. Start each day this week on your knees, asking God to keep your heart fixed on that truth.

Reflect: How has God clearly shown His grace to you in the past? Write the five instances that most stand out to you and put the note somewhere you will see it on a daily basis as a reminder of His grace.

Show Grace: When we receive grace, we receive something we do not deserve. Think of someone in your life who does not deserve grace and be intentional about showing him or her grace over the coming week (family, work, neighbor, fellow believer, etc.).

List: Make two columns on a piece of paper. In one, think back on the book of Jonah and write down all of his ungodly characteristics. In the other, write out the perfect characteristics of Jesus in contrast to Jonah. After doing so, see where your life lines up and ask God to lead you into greater Christ-likeness.

Worship: Walk into church this week with anticipatory joy. Gather with fellow believers and praise God in worship and truth, remembering the grace He has shown to you and thanking Him for the grace He will sustain you with going forward.



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