

God is Compassionate Jonah 4:1-11

Lesson Objective

- **Big Idea:** *God would rather you be compassionate than comfortable.*
 - **Problem:** *Our culture encourages a self-absorbed lifestyle which conflicts with God's heart for caring about a spiritually dead world.*
 - **Redemptive Solution:** *Remembering God's compassion & love towards us (Romans 5:8) helps us move towards others with greater God-given compassion and love.*
 - **Response:** *Identify comforts which he/she values more than compassion for the lost and then take action in compassion towards others.*
 - **Outreach Focus:** *Care*
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—>Last week's challenge was to ask at least one spiritual question to the people you've been praying for. How did that go? What kind of conversations or opportunities did you have as you stepped out in faith?

Launch

- **Can you think of a time when your personal desire conflicted with what God desired?**

Last week we saw God's compassion for Nineveh caused Him to spare them when they repented. This week we see the Lord teaching Jonah about his compassion for people.

Explore

Read Jonah 4:1-11

- **Who are the characters in this passage?** God and Jonah
- **Where do the events in this passage take place?** Outside the city of Nineveh
- **When do these events in this passage take place?** After the repentance of Nineveh
- **Why do these events occur?** Because God relented from the calamity He had pronounced on Nineveh; to teach Jonah compassion for people.
 - **What does this reveal about God's characteristics?** God is forgiving, compassionate, merciful, loving, slow to anger and He wants us to share in these characteristics.
- **What is the main message of this story?** Jonah needs God's compassion for people more than he needs comfort. God desires our compassion for others more than our comfort.
- **What stood out as significant to you? (possible significant points)**
 - **Verse 2:** Jonah's motive must have stemmed from what Nineveh meant in Israel's past and what he expected it to be in the future. He employs a confessional expression of God's character from Exodus 34:6-7. Jonah manifests none of these qualities toward Nineveh, wanting to express them only to Israel.
 - **Provided/Appointed/Arranged:** Earlier God sovereignly provided the fish to swallow Jonah (1:17). Now He provides a vine, a worm and a scorching wind.
 - **Many Cattle:** The destruction of livestock would be a waste in comparison to the value of Jonah's share plant.
- **What questions do you have about the passage? (possible questions)**
 - **Vine:** Some kind of shade plant, possibly the gourd, castor oil plant or vine. The Greek translation of the Old Testament uses the term bottle gourd which was often planted on the shores of the Tigris River.

- o Scorching East Wind: Known as the scirocco; constant hot wind which eliminates all moisture from the air causing the skin to draw tight. It could affect neurotransmitters in the brain resulting in exhaustion, depression, and bizarre behavior.
- o Their right hand and their left: Probably an expression for the complete moral guilt and lawlessness of the people of Nineveh.

Let's explore further the contrast between God's compassion and Jonah's compassion.

- **What does God do in verses 3:10, 4:6, 4:7-8?** Relents (forgives Nineveh); Provides vine; Provides worm and wind
- **What is Jonah's attitude in verses 4:1-3, 4:6, 4:8? Why?** Very angry; Very happy; Very angry
- **God asks, "do you have a right to be angry?"**
 - o **How does Jonah answer?** Leaves and watches
 - o **What does Jonah desire?** Wants to die
- **In chapter 4, what thing was Jonah concerned with?** Vine
- **In chapter 4, what thing was God concerned with?** People of Nineveh
- **Why was Jonah concerned about the vine?** Comfort
- **Why was God concerned about the people of Nineveh?** Compassion
- **How was Jonah related to the vine?** Not at all
- **How was God related to the people of Nineveh?** Their creator and Savior

What do we learn from comparing Jonah's compassion to God's compassion? God is concerned about people. We tend to be more concerned about ourselves.

- **What did Jonah believe about God?** He was gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in love.
- **What was the heart of Jonah's problem?** He desired God's character for himself but not for others.

If you have extra time.

Let's look at some other passages in Scripture that talk about God's compassion for people:

Psalm 103:8-14: **What does this passage reveal about God's compassion towards us?**

Mark 1:40-42: **What does this passage reveal about God's compassion towards us?**

Jonah knows that God is gracious and compassionate and loves to heal people, but his problem is that he solely wants the Lord's compassion for himself and for Israel. He doesn't want God to have compassion on the Ninevites.

Apply *Pass out handout!

- Where are some areas you tend to value your own personal comfort over showing God's compassion to people? Who are some people or groups of people you have been unwilling to show God's compassion to?
- What does it mean to take a genuine interest in others? Why do you think curiosity matters for living a sent life?
- What most needs to change in your life to show curiosity and devotion to others?

Practical Steps this Week: *Remembering God's compassion & love towards us (Romans 5:8) helps us move towards others with greater God-given compassion and love. What are some tangible ways you can show compassion this week?*

- Continue to pray and engage in conversations with your 5 people as God allows.
- This week specifically, think about a specific way you can show CARE to these people.
 - What are the unique physical or emotional needs you see in their lives?
 - How can you bless and encourage them with your time or resources?
 - Is there something you can join them in that they care a lot about?
 - Is there an event (like Real Life or Church or a social hang out) you can invite them to this week?

Leader close in prayer to wrap up our Jonah studies.

***You could use Jonah prayer on handout if you want.**