

GROW
Upward. Inward. Outward.

ADULT CONNECTION



SEPTEMBER 2016

JONAH



The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

A Note From Our Pastor

Dear FBC family and friends,

Our Connection Classes are the discipleship arm of the ministry of our church. They are vital to the spiritual health and growth of our church and its members. The long-standing tradition of this ministry is that we teach the Bible first and foremost with the aid of curriculum for unity and centrality of purpose. In each of these classes, we are so blessed to have Bible teachers with many years of experience in teaching God's Word in addition to their individual and personal walk with the Lord. With this in mind, I am excited to introduce to you our new curriculum, written and produced by our staff that will continue the primary goal of teaching the Bible as well as assisting you in your walk and relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

The layout of this new curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for both the teacher and the members to engage in each week's study by internalizing and applying it. We also acknowledge that teachers may have their own approach for preparing the lesson and we encourage them to teach in the way that makes him or her most effective in presenting God's Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7-day approach for their own personal study and encouragement.

We are anticipating great things through this new approach and curriculum for the Connection Classes. We invite you to give us feedback as we seek to make this as good or better than any curriculum we could find anywhere. Our primary goal is for all of us to know the Bible and grow in the process.

-Blessings
Pastor Don



Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively

Introduce

Day 1: Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Instruct

Day 2: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

Day 3: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

Inspire

Day 4: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Incorporate

Day 5: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

Day 6: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

Day 7: Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

Contents
September Lesson Plan

3



September 4, 2016

God's Call for
Evangelism

Jonah 1:1-16

17



September 11, 2016

Jonah's Cry of
Repentance

Jonah 1:17-2:10

31



September 18, 2016

Nineveh's Conviction
for their Sin

Jonah 3:1-10

47



September 25, 2016

Jonah's Criticism
of God's Mercy

Jonah 4:1-11

September 4, 2016



God's Call for Evangelism

Jonah 1:1-16

Focal Verse:

"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me."

Jonah 1:2

Key Question

What do I fear that causes me to shy away from sharing the gospel every day in my walk with Christ?

Undoubtedly, many of us have heard the story of Jonah from our childhood about how God used a great fish to teach him a valuable lesson about evangelism to the Assyrians—a violent, unloving, and cruel society who waged war on many nations, including Israel, in much the same way that ISIS has waged war on the West today through terror and torture. Yet, how many of us can identify with Jonah? We have a relationship with the Lord through the forgiveness of Jesus in His sacrificial death on the cross, but we have an unexplainable fear and uncertainty that keeps us from communicating the gospel in our daily lives. Jonah did not have many of the fears that we as modern followers of Christ do, but rather He loathed the Assyrians because of their wickedness and brutality against Israel. Instead of desiring to see the Assyrian capital of Nineveh repent and have a relationship with the Lord, Jonah desperately desired that they would receive the penalties of their sin under the wrath of God. Although some of us today may cry for this type of justice forgetting that we ourselves have only been saved by grace, many of us have other fears that prevent us from heeding the call of God to evangelize the world.



THE CALL TO EVANGELIZE:

Beginning like many of the prophetic oracles in the Old Testament (Hosea 1:1; Joel 1:1), Jonah receives a direct call from the Lord when He reveals His plan through His **word**. The revelation, not short on specifics, expresses God's divine intention to impart a message to a particular people—in this case the city of **Nineveh**. Consequently, God issues a command for Jonah to **arise** and **go**, which would have loudly resonated in the prophet's ears for no other prophet from Israel had ever been asked to go to a foreign land to deliver a message of judgment prepared by God. Other prophets, such as Isaiah, had certainly received such messages for other nations, but none of them had actually been called to travel to the foreign land against which they were to speak.

Who has God called you to evangelize?

Question
1

Today, this would be akin to God calling one of us to deliver a message of divine judgment upon one of the cities in the Middle East. How would we respond if the **word of the Lord came** to us and told us to **arise** and **go** to Baghdad for its **wickedness** has impugned it? We would already have three strikes against us: first, we come from a Western culture which they despise, particularly the U.S.; second, their religious convictions differ drastically from our own; third, we have been asked to deliver a message of judgment upon them if they do not repent. It's one thing to remain in the relative safety of the U.S. and condemn the **wickedness** of

a foreign godless land, but it's quite an entirely different scenario to **arise** and **go** to the actual place where God will judge the people lest they repent.

Jonah would have naturally feared the response of the citizens of **Nineveh**—not only because he carried a message of judgment from the Lord and was an unwelcome foreigner, but also because the Assyrians were a cruel people by any standard and persisted in their **wickedness**. The **great city** of Nineveh was a bastion of evil and because of its regional domination and influence its wickedness penetrated and

In-Depth Information



*The Hebrew word translated **great** used to describe the city of Nineveh signifies its importance rather than its largeness. Although the city had a large population (120,000), as the capital of the Assyrian Empire Nineveh wielded significant political, cultural, and economic influence over the entire region—much like Washington, D. C. does throughout the U.S. and world today.*

Throughout ancient literature, including the Bible, the Assyrians were well-known for their **wickedness**. In fact, the prophet Nahum chastises the Ninevites for their cruelty when he proclaims, “Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and robbery. Its victim never departs” (Nah 3:1). The prophet ends by noting the scope of their wickedness when he asks, “For upon whom has not your wickedness passed continually?” (Nah 3:19).

THE CIRCUMVENTION OF GOD'S CALL:

Because of his animosity and fear toward the Assyrians, instead of obeying God's call Jonah tries to escape it. Residing in the Northern Kingdom of Israel probably near Samaria, Jonah flees to the Gentile port city of **Joppa** where he pays the fare to board a ship going to **Tarshish**.

In-Depth Information



Various areas in the Mediterranean, such as Spain, Sardinia, and Carthage, have been identified as Tarshish. Technically, the word designates the “open sea” which would be westward over the Mediterranean Sea—the exact opposite of Nineveh.

Geographically in the opposite direction of Nineveh in the east, Jonah wanted to flee to the west where he thought that the people would have not heard about the Lord and, therefore, would not worship Him. Twice within verse 2, the author notes that Jonah desired to “**flee . . . from the presence of the Lord.**” What an utter picture of disobedience and sin this presents when Jonah flees in the opposite direction of where God has called him. This same prophet who under the reign of Jeroboam was identified as the “servant” of the Lord (2 Kings 14:25) now wants to escape His presence and refuses to bring the divine message to a people who needed desperately to hear it.

How have you failed to share the gospel when God had clearly called you?

Question
2

THE CONSEQUENCE OF DISOBEDIENCE:

Instead of preaching the message of judgment unto the Ninevites as directed by God, Jonah now incurs judgment on his own life for his sinfulness. Suddenly a fierce storm comes upon the vessel while at sea causing it nearly to capsize and be destroyed by the waves. As the audience we are acutely aware that the Lord caused the wind to whip the waves because of Jonah's disobedience, but the crew aboard the ship frantically searches for a cause. Living in a polytheistic society, the crew prays each to his own god in hopes that this storm would subside once they had appeased the angry god responsible.

In-Depth Information



In antiquity, three types of gods were believed to exist: personal gods worshiped by each individual, family gods worshiped by the household, and national gods worshiped by a country. Compare this with Israel's view of one true God (Deut 6:4-5; Exod 20:3-6).

To no avail, they then begin to jettison their cargo to prevent the ship from sinking, but again this failed and the storm intensified. Eventually, the crew finds Jonah in the belly of the ship sound asleep, so the captain approaches to rouse him and interjects, “**Arise, call on your God.**” This must have startled Jonah for these were the same two words that the Lord used when He instructed him to go to Nineveh. In verse 2, God bid Jonah to **arise** and then **cry against** the city, but now the tables have turned and Jonah realizes that this tumultuous storm was indeed meant for him because no matter how hard he had tried he could

Instruct

not escape **the presence of the Lord**. Instead of the Ninevites facing judgment, Jonah has now become the object of God's displeasure and divine wrath.

To assess the situation more clearly, the crew **cast lots** to determine who was responsible for this supernatural storm.

In-Depth Information



Lots are similar to dice, but rather than having numbers the sides were either light or dark; two light sides meant yes and two dark sides meant no in answer to the question being posed.

This starkly contrasts with Jonah's own reason for fleeing because he had already passed human judgment upon the Ninevites and determined in his mind that they should perish for their wickedness. The crew, however, jumps to no such conclusion about the mysterious passenger and actually seeks to give him every possibility to explain himself.

How have you ever passed judgment upon someone without giving them the opportunity to respond?

Question
3

After the lot falls to Jonah, the crew asks him a series of questions to find out who he is, where he is from, and why he boarded their ship in hopes that they might appease his God for whatever reason this calamity had befallen them. Whereas Jonah has exhibited an ungodly bitterness and hatred toward the Ninevites by his refusal to go as directed by God, the

crew who has no relationship with the Lord responds in a rational and compassionate way—doing everything possible to save the life of Jonah from certain death and destruction.

Jonah, knowing why the ship was in peril, makes a brief confession that he worships the God of heaven—the one who created the **sea** and the **land**.

In-Depth Information



*The word translated **fear** in verse 9 can mean to be afraid, but in this context it means to revere, honor, or worship.*

In a way, he uses this opportunity to evangelize the sailors for he introduces them to the one and only true and living God who is the Creator of the universe and in control over nature.

How aware are you of opportunities to share the gospel?

Question
4

In response, the crew asks him what to do so that the storm may abate. Jonah knows, however, that the penalty for sin is death (Rom 6:23), so he tells the crew to throw him overboard—for Jonah would even rather be dead and suffer the penalty of his disobedience than fulfill God's desire that he preach to the people of Nineveh. The crew hesitates fearing that they might still be making a mistake by shedding innocent blood so they furiously try to row back to shore without any luck. After praying to the Lord and maintaining their innocence of the prophet's death, the crew throws Jonah overboard and immediately the storm ceases.

THE CULMINATION OF GOD'S WORK:

Despite Jonah's reluctance to proclaim God's word to the Ninevites and even through his brief presentation of the gospel unwittingly to the sailors, God reveals Himself through the circumstances in a mighty way to the polytheistic crew. The word **feared** in this context is best translated as revered in the sense that they honored God through a **sacrifice** once they returned to land; in actuality, the phrase **feared exceedingly** seems to indicate that the men recognized the power and sovereignty of the Lord and believed in Him. Although the text doesn't specify that they forsook all of their other gods in favor of the Lord, it does clearly portray that they had come to the realization of who the one living God truly is because they **took vows**. The text doesn't tell us the nature of these vows, but we can surmise that it was to worship the Lord based on His revelation to them during the tumultuous storm. In some circumstances, when we fail to share the gospel, God does not let His word go unuttered and through circumstances and even unwilling individuals makes Himself known in such a mighty way that remarkable transformation occurs among people. Even though God still disseminates His word as He intends, this does not excuse us from obeying His command to evangelize.

Inspire

Regardless of any nation or person's wickedness, God still affords them a chance to repent, just like He does with us, so He sends people like Jonah to deliver the message personally. Like Jonah, we also have been called to share the gospel to those who are perishing in their wickedness; for just as the **word of the Lord came to Jonah**, Jesus has also called us to "go therefore into all the world" (Matt 28:19). Some of us may receive a call to travel to foreign lands on mission, but the majority of us are like Israel's other prophets who deliver God's message to the people here at home. We need to **arise** and **go** to the people whom God has placed on our hearts, whether locally or internationally, and proclaim the message God has given us boldly.

No wickedness is too great for God to overcome with His forgiveness and mercy—including our own sinfulness; however, sometimes in our own humanity we find it difficult to forgive others and overlook their evil deeds, especially when they are directed toward us, so that we might share the gospel with them. We harbor bitterness and resentment in our lives which cause us to shirk our call by God to evangelize all people from every nation; therefore, we need to extend compassion and mercy toward all people without a judgmental and condemning spirit just as Jesus states in John 3:17: "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." Even though we



cannot save people in and of ourselves, we do have a message which introduces them to the Messiah who can.

Because we have been called to share the gospel, we must ask ourselves: How have we responded to God's call? If we proclaim the gospel on a daily basis, let us continue that good work which God has begun in us. If we have become obstinate and uncompassionate like Jonah, then we ought to cry to God in repentance and seek a renewed spirit that exhibits love and grace to share the gospel with all people—not merely on the international mission field, but also here at home. Have we run from God's call to evangelize here at home because we have found it difficult to love our neighbors and family members or because we fear a vindictive retaliation by a culture which has become as wicked and brutal as Nineveh? If we can answer yes to that question, then we need to repent and turn to Him for forgiveness ourselves. When we repent our actions will be transformed and we will respond to God's call to share the gospel daily.

In Prayer



Ask God how you should respond... to your neighbors, family, friends, co-workers, acquaintances, or even strangers. Provide a meal or dessert for a neighbor and share the gospel. Take a family member or friend on an outing they enjoy—fishing, crafts, sporting event, etc.—and share the gospel. Send a note to co-workers when they are sick or even one of their family members are.

BE INTENTIONAL!

Like Jonah, God calls us to action when we hear His word spoken; He didn't tell Jonah to stay and meditate on His word or only pray for the citizens of Nineveh, rather He told the prophet to **arise** and **go**. In what way has God called us to arise and go? Instead of fleeing in the opposite direction of God's call on our lives, we need to carry out His directive to go into all the world. Consequently, we need to develop a plan of action to fulfill the mission which God has given us.

Spend time in prayer by name for those who you know do not have a relationship with the Father and make a list of all their names.

Develop a plan for how you will share the gospel with them; if you've already shared the gospel with them, consider asking someone else to go with you so that they might be able to share with them. Find ways that you can put this plan into action and be intentional about sharing the gospel in your families, at work, within your social network, and in the community.

Incorporate

Also spend time in prayer that God will bring individuals within your life daily who need to hear the gospel and that He will give you the discernment and boldness to share with them.

Finally, write your testimony of how God has transformed you and practice telling other Christians so that when the opportunity arises you will be prepared to give a response for the hope that is within you.

Journal: Document God's Work

September 11, 2016



Jonah's Cry of Repentance

Jonah 1:17-2:10

Focal Verse:

"When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; and my prayer went up to You, into Your holy temple."

Jonah 2:7

Introduce

At the age of ten, Ted Stone began a relationship with Christ even feeling called as a pastor. After graduating from Wake Forest, he served as a pastor for seven years, but he never felt successful or satisfied so he turned his attention to secular business ventures where in the eyes of the world everything looked promising. Still attending church, Stone began battling addiction with alcohol and even tried to stop by focusing on his work as a deacon. The pressure of the secular lifestyle, however, eventually overcame him and he began to consume large quantities of amphetamines. Soon Stone stopped attending church altogether and his drug addiction increased exponentially.

While in the hospital suffering from an overdose, he began to plot how he could become a successful criminal to fuel his drug habit. After his release, he began to rob convenience stores until he almost mortally shot the cashier of one. Stone was arrested and sentenced to prison; he had hit rock bottom in his attempt to garner success in his own mind while fleeing the call that God had placed on his life.

After some time in prison, the chaplain asked Stone to share his testimony and even preach to the inmates. At the conclusion of the sermon, an inmate approached to give his life to Christ. Because of this monumental decision, Stone recalls how he cried to God for reconciliation, promising to quit drugs and surrender his life fully to Him. Now deceased, Stone became a long-time trustee for Southwestern Seminary and a crusader against drugs and alcohol and promoter of hope in a relationship with Christ.

Like Stone, Jonah was a wayward child who attempted to flee God and even find solace in death rather than preaching to the Ninevites. Yet, God had a plan for the prophet; in his greatest moment of despair and affliction, Jonah found reconciliation.

Key
Question

Describe a time in your life where in your deep affliction God used it to reconcile you.

Instruct

Jonah 1:17

GOD'S CORRECTION OF JONAH:

Just as we saw God's hand in stirring up the storm at sea, we see His hand here in providing a **great fish** not only to teach Jonah a lesson, but also to mercifully spare his life. Often we regard the fish only as an instrument of punishment, but in reality it was also a place of mercy and grace where God revealed Himself in an intimate way and restored Jonah into a right relationship. The author goes to great lengths to note that Jonah was in the fish's **belly** for **three days and three nights** in order to stress the miraculous nature of the prophet's deliverance by God. In other words, God rescues Jonah who is as good as dead and restores life unto him. Jonah, in modern terms, was already in the grave, but God wasn't finished with him; despite his rebellion, God still has a plan to restore him to the original purpose for which he has been called.

What experiences has God used in your life to correct your thinking and restore your relationship with Him?

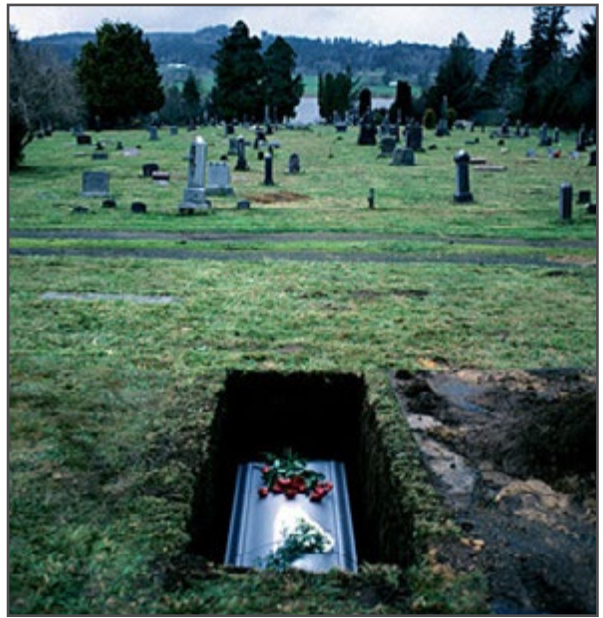
Question
1

Jonah 2:1-3

JONAH'S CONSCIOUSNESS OF HIS SITUATION:

With **three days** inside the **fish**, Jonah has time to contemplate the course of his life. In his **affliction**, Jonah **cries** to God who answers him—which ironically serves to highlight his dependence upon the very One from whom he had tried to flee to Tarshish. The only relief Jonah has in his miserable condition comes in the form of prayer. In contrast to many

people who consider themselves self-sufficient and offer only inauthentic prayers when circumstances look most dire, Jonah doesn't use insincere words, but he offers praise unto God for his rescue despite his disobedience. Jonah has come to realize that without God the belly of this fish would become his watery grave, yet even in **Sheol**, that is a metaphorical grave, God answers him graciously.



In-Depth Information



*The Hebrew term **Sheol** has a variety of meanings, but most frequently refers to the abode of the dead whether righteous or unrighteous. In modern terms we would identify this as “the grave.” For example, in Job 14:13, the beleaguered saint cries, “Oh, that You would hide me in **the grave**, that You would conceal me until Your wrath is past, that You would appoint me a set time, and remember me!” In Jonah, some translations use Hell or Hades for this term, but this is misleading based upon the context; Jonah doesn’t believe that he has descended into Hell separated from God, but rather that he was as good as dead in the grave without God’s intervention.*

Jonah recognizes the predicament that he encountered was God’s response to his disobedience for three times in the passage he notes

Instruct

God's sovereign actions through the pronoun **You**. Just as he did when he instructed the sailors to throw him overboard, he acknowledges that ultimately God is the one who **cast him into the deep**. As he splashed into the midst of the sea, Jonah describes how the **flood surrounded** him and the **billows** and **waves** crashed over him. What a terrifying scene this must have been to know that despite anything that he could have done he would not have seen the shore again unless God intervened.

At what times in your life have you cried out to God in the midst of trouble? How has God answered you?

Question
2

Jonah 2:4-7

JONAH'S CRY OF REPENTANCE:

Jonah has come to understand God's grace in a tangible way because in reality he should have perished in the sea for his disobedience. Sin, as the prophet knows, separates us from God and for this reason he laments that **he has been cast out of God's sight**. Perhaps something similar to Isaiah's proclamation echoed in Jonah's ears: "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Isa 59:1-2). Unconfessed sin in our lives prevents us from being used effectively by God, so we must take time to assess our relationship with Him.

What in your life hinders God from using you in the way that He most desires?

Question
3

Jonah notes that sin not only separates him from God, but it also leads to death as its ultimate penalty (Gen 2:17; Rom 6:23). Once again, he recalls the depth of his despair by recounting the harrowing experience he faced in the ocean. Like a casket being lowered into a pit and then covered with dirt, the **waters surround** Jonah who plummets so deep that he sees the bottom of underwater **mountain** ranges and seaweed is strewn about his **head**. As he sinks into the depths, he realizes he has been sentenced to death when the earth figuratively **closed** its **bars** around him like those of a prison when a criminal has been convicted of a crime. What hope does he now have but to resign himself to the reality of his death?

How have we responded to times in our lives which have seemed hopeless and our fate sealed?

Question
4

Even in the darkest hour of despair, hope exists because grace triumphs over sin and God has provided a way for us to have a restored relationship with Him. Just as determined as he was to flee God's presence, Jonah resolves to **look again toward His holy temple**. Not only did the temple represent God's presence dwelling with the people, but through its sacrifices it also



provides reconciliation with God when people have a contrite heart and penitent spirit (Psalm 51:17). Hopeless as he is, Jonah **remembers** the solution, so he prays to **the Lord** who alone can rescue him. God hears Jonah's prayers for repentance and responds through grace and mercy to deliver him from his condition. In a sense, God resurrects Jonah and restores life unto him so that Jonah exclaims **You have brought up my life from the pit.**

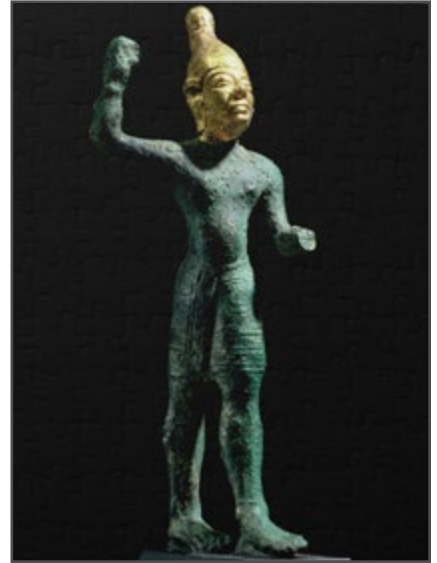
In-Depth Information



Today, we have forgiveness not through an annual reminder of the sacrifice conducted in the temple, but through the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Jesus upon the cross. Jonah's figurative death to his sin and old way of life pictures the New Testament understanding of how we too must recognize that we are sinners in the need of a Savior and die to our old way of life (Gal 2:20). Moreover, his plunge into the watery grave of the sea shares parallels with the symbolism behind baptism: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Rom 6:4-5).

JONAH'S CONFESSION ABOUT GOD:

Perhaps recalling the vain attempts of the sailors to appease their gods and quell the angry waves, Jonah mocks their **worthless idols**. Since no other gods exist, they cannot hear prayer or respond to human needs (Psalm 115:4-5)—it's as if the people who worship them have abandoned any attempt to receive **mercy** because these gods are unable to provide. This leads Jonah to assert his allegiance to the only true and living God who created the world and who alone



deserves our praise. In his jubilant offering of thanksgiving, Jonah commits to do the will of the Lord as a testament of worship and service to Him—even if it means that he must go to Nineveh; therefore, he will **pay** the Lord **what** he has **vowed** because salvation belongs to Him alone (Acts 4:12). No other god in the universe could have saved the ship and its crew, no other god could have saved Jonah from the depths of the sea, and no other god could have saved Nineveh from its own destruction and wickedness—what a merciful and loving God we serve who loved us so much that even though we were disobedient He provided a way for us to be saved and have a relationship with Him.

In what idols does the world trust today?
How can we help them to see that God
alone provides salvation?

Question
5

Instruct

Jonah 2:10

GOD'S CESSATION OF DISCIPLINE:

The fish that God uses to bring Jonah to repentance expels its unusual cargo back on dry land. Likely back in close proximity to where he had begun his journey to flee God, Jonah now must make good on his promise to worship the Lord—this time he must heed the call to go to Nineveh no matter how vehemently he hates it. The same grace and forgiveness that God offered Jonah he must now extend it to the citizens of Nineveh for salvation belongs only to the Lord who chooses to offer it to all who will accept it.

Inspire

Because we are God's children through Jesus, He corrects us just as a loving earthly father would (Heb 12:5-8). Sometimes God must allow us to experience self-induced **affliction** so that we realize how far off course that we have gotten and how much we have dishonored Him. As parents, we can warn our children about the dangers of touching a hot stove and we can do everything humanly possible to guide them and keep them safe, but frequently our children learn valuable lessons only through experience; when they touch something hot and experience it for themselves, they will learn to listen to our advice and not to touch forbidden things that can cause burns.

Jonah also learned by experience what it meant to flee God and reject the assignment that he had been given. God taught him a valuable lesson about grace and forgiveness while submerged in the sea and swallowed by the fish so that he would be able to communicate His message to the Ninevites. Every one of us has a testimony about how God has restored us from a disobedient life choice so that when we share

the gospel we can speak from experience and point others to the same grace and forgiveness that God has offered us. In order to be fully surrendered to God and become effective servants capable of being used by Him, we must die to our fleshly desires and wants so that we become in tune with God's will. Because the Christian life is a journey and no matter how much we ask, "are we there yet," we never fully arrive in perfection until Jesus calls us home or returns to collect the church at the end of history. Consequently, we need to examine our lives continually to mature in our walk with Him so that we might be found worthy of the gospel. Therefore, we must ask ourselves in what ways have we seen God's hand of correction in our lives and through that experience how did God restore us into a relationship with Him? When we identify God's grace and forgiveness in our own lives, we can then share that testimony with others in a real and tangible way.

In Prayer



Briefly recall times when God transformed your life by allowing you to experience affliction and correction. Spend time praising God for transforming you through His salvation, but ask God to show you other areas in which you need to surrender completely to Him.

Repentance without action is worthless just as a fruit tree that bears no fruit. If Jonah had prayed unto God and made promises to worship Him and fulfill His will, but never did, we would call him insincere and hypocritical. In the same way that Ted Stone's life was dramatically changed after he was released from prison and Jonah from the prison of the fish's belly, we too need to use the experience of God's correction in our lives to be transformed and grow in Him. God will send people into our lives who have a similar journey in life so we can encourage and witness to them. The following questions will help you to formulate a plan for sharing personal experiences when witnessing so that it helps others to see the tangible transformation in your life—to which they can have no argument.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-12. How does this passage correspond to Jonah 1:17-2:10? How did God speak to you through this passage and motivate you to action?

Incorporate

Pray and ask God to reveal someone in your life, or even send someone into your life, who has gone through a similar journey and needs to hear the gospel. If God brings people to mind, list them here.

Finally, using your testimony that you wrote last week especially if you were general in the plan of salvation, incorporate times when you personally experienced God's correction, but also his forgiveness and grace. Rewrite your testimony here.

Journal: Document God's Work

Journal: Document God's Work

September 18, 2016



Nineveh's Conviction for Their Sin

Jonah 3:1-10

Focal Verse:

"So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them."

Jonah 3:5

Introduce

"I accepted Jesus Christ and committed my life to him," explained Tom Phillips, CEO of Raytheon Corporation, as he looked across the room at a promising lawyer who had resumed his practice after taking four years off to serve as Special Counsel to Richard Nixon and run his 1972 presidential campaign. The forty-one-year-old lawyer had noticed a change in Mr. Phillips, but this announcement startled him primarily because he had been searching for meaning in his own life and felt inexplicably empty. Shortly before the Watergate scandal became front-page news, Chuck Colson became convinced that Jesus was indeed the only solution to his problems so he repented of his sins and began living a radically transformed life. Part of this transformation became manifest in Colson's conviction that he plead guilty to obstruction of justice for the Watergate break-in and face the consequences for his actions rather than pleading the Fifth.

From his prison experience, Colson developed the basic strategy for Prison Fellowship which would seek to transform inmates' lives by introducing them into a relationship with Jesus Christ. One of its core principles was the necessity for true conversion which can only occur through Jesus because He alone convicts people of sin and offers redemption as a gift. At the time of Colson's release from prison, the inmate population was 229,000 whereas by 2008 it had exploded to more than 2.3 million. The problem, Colson lamented, resided with the faulty reasoning of Edwin Sutherland (1948) and other humanists who surmised that crime was caused by one's environment, thereby removing any responsibility or conviction from the wrongdoer.

However, an in-depth scientific study by Yochelson and Samenow (1976) alternatively showed that "individuals making wrong moral choices," not "environment, poverty, deprivation, or racism" contributed directly to the increase in prison populations. Their secular study suggested that the "conversion of the wrongdoer to a responsible lifestyle" is the only way to combat the chronic problem

Introduce

of crime. Indeed, this has been proven through studies on the recidivism rate, that is those who are released from prison and return multiple times—Prison Fellowship in the study had an 8% rate of repeat felons whereas the national rate was 60%.



When people acknowledge responsibility for their sin and repent, they will experience radical, life-changing transformation in Jesus Christ which lasts. Like Colson and many in his Prison Fellowship, the people of Nineveh became convicted of their sins and through true expression of genuine remorse and repentance their lives were so dramatically changed that God relented in His anger and forgave them.

In-Depth Information



- *Chuck Colson's testimony was presented in a 2008 lecture at the Veritas Forum of Columbia University titled "How God Turned around Nixon's Hatchet Man."*
- *Edwin Sutherland Principles of Criminology (1948) pages 4-8*
- *Yochelson and Samenow "A Study of Thinking Patterns in Criminals" (1976)*

GOD RE-CALLS:

The first two verses of chapter 3 almost replicate Jonah's call verbatim from 1:1-2 where **the word of the Lord** comes to the prophet and bids him to **arise** and **go** to that **important city** of Nineveh to **preach** against it. However, in this call in chapter 3, the narrator adds two important phrases to highlight both God's mercy toward Jonah and the seriousness

of the call. First, God gives Jonah a mulligan—a second chance—to emphasize His mercy; in a game of informal golf amateur players, and professionals who care to admit it, who have a severe slice may wish to replay the stroke that went terribly awry without any penalty. Thus, the narrator shows that **the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time** so that he could fulfill



the promises which He had uttered to God from the stomach of the great fish where he proclaimed **I will pay what I have vowed**. The Bible has a long history of humans who have failed, whether Adam, Noah, David, or Peter, and have been given second chances; fortunately, for Jonah and for us, God grants second chances liberally if we repent and turn to Him for reconciliation and guidance.

Second, the narrator qualifies the source of the **message** as the one that God will give him explicitly. Perhaps in lesson 1 when asked the question—“What do I fear that causes me to shy away from sharing the gospel every day in my walk with Christ?”—some of us answered that we have little theological training or that we don’t know how to answer difficult questions. Like Jonah, we can be assured that God will give us the exact **message** that He desires for us to deliver (Exod 4:10-12; Luke 12:11-12). Like Jonah, we must rely on God’s wisdom through the Holy Spirit for we are merely mouthpieces for God; the message is not our own, but the one that God has given us through His Word.

In-Depth Information



*In 1:2, God instructs Jonah to **cry out against the wickedness** of the city of Nineveh whereas in 3:2 He directs him **to preach to it**. In actuality, they are the same word in Hebrew, but are translated differently because they have two different focuses. In 1:2, the word of the Lord focuses on the wickedness of the people and the revelation of judgment that Jonah will offer about their sinful choices. Conversely, in 3:2, the focus shifts to the people receiving the message of judgment and not merely the revelation of the city’s wickedness in preparation for their change of heart and repentance.*

What second chances has God given you?

Question
1

JONAH RESPONDS:

Jonah’s response differs dramatically from the first time when he attempts to flee God’s presence; instead this time the prophet obeys when he arises and goes to Nineveh **according to the word of the Lord**. Next, the narrator describes Nineveh in two ways: 1) in terms of God’s perspective and 2) in terms of its size. First, the text identifies Nineveh as an important **city** to God which shows His love for mankind and His mercy despite their wickedness. Nineveh, like any city or nation, is important to God because He desires a relationship with all men and has established a plan to restore them if they will accept it; in the New Testament, God reveals His love for all nations when He expresses His desire that all men be saved (1 Tim 2:4) and that He wants none of them to perish, but for them to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

Why should we view other people and nations from God’s perspective?

Question # 2

In-Depth Information

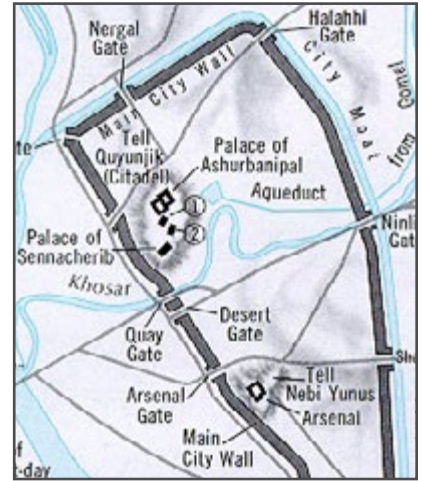


The Hebrew text of Jonah 3:3b literally reads: **And Nineveh was a great city to God**. Most of the translations, however, regard the phrase **to God** as a superlative which means God-sized; consequently, they translate the phrase as **an exceedingly great city** or a **very large city**. Thus, they view it like an idiom, such as “every thing’s bigger in Texas.” In lesson 1, we observed that the word **great** in relation to Nineveh is best translated as **important**. For this reason, 3:3b should be translated as **and Nineveh was an important city to God**. continued →

In-Depth Information-continued

This translation best captures the theme of the book; even though Jonah despised and hated the Ninevites, God loved them and desired a relationship with them—God saw the wicked Ninevites as important so He sent a messenger to warn them to repent or face impending judgment.

Second, the narrator describes the size of Nineveh as a **three-day journey**. When we think of a **three-day journey**, we view it as how long it would take us to travel from Point A to Point B in a linear motion—such as from Fort Worth to Seattle; however, in this context, this phrase signifies the days that it would take Jonah to preach to the population of the city—hence a **three-day visit** to the city. With a population of 120,000 (Jonah 4:11), for most of its citizens to hear the message it would require Jonah to walk throughout the city and preach for three days just to cover it sufficiently.



The narrator adds this detail about the size of the city in order to highlight how quickly God’s message spread and how quickly the people repented. In verse 4, Jonah begins to **enter the city on the first day’s walk**, preaching the message of judgment that God has given him. Instead of taking three days for Jonah to preach to the city, the message penetrates the hearts of the citizens all the way to the king in only one day. The city’s response is immediate. When someone has experienced

radical transformation because of God’s forgiveness, they don’t wait for a preacher to come with another message to their friends and family, but rather they go themselves and tell others what has happened to them. The message spreads like wildfire not because of Jonah’s preaching, but because the change in the Ninevites’ hearts compels them to share what God has done for them.

Jonah 3:5-9

NINEVEH REPENTS:

Nineveh responds favorably to Jonah’s warning from God by repenting. They repent not merely through words of contrition, but rather by deep-seated actions of remorse. The people heed the prophet’s warning and they **believe** God; through Jonah’s short sermon, God convicts the Ninevites and moves them to repentance. The first step in repentance is the admission or acknowledgment of God’s truth—that we are sinners and need restoration. The Ninevites express their belief in God and acknowledge their sin visibly by proclaiming **a fast** and wearing **sackcloth**; the king even sits in **ashes** as an expression of grief and remorse over his sin. The whole city, **from the greatest to the least of them**, participates in this act of repentance to demonstrate how thoroughly the message has penetrated their hearts.

Not only do we acknowledge our repentance verbally by expressing sorrow for our sins, but we also demonstrate it through our changed lives. Going through outward religious motions like fasting, donning sackcloth, and



Instruct

sitting in ashes falls woefully short of true repentance unless accompanied by a change in lifestyle. In addition to these city-wide expressions of repentance, the king declares in his proclamation that **everyone** should **turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands**. If we are genuinely sorrowful for our actions and not just the fact that we have been caught in our sins and want to avoid punishment, then we will no longer habitually live according to our sinful, fleshly ways. Although we may stumble at times in our lives, when we repent we have turned to walk with God so that we might be worthy of the calling with which He has called us and we might represent Him by the righteousness that we exercise in our lives as assisted by His Spirit.

What does it mean to repent? How would you explain the concept of repentance to someone?

Question
3

Jonah 3:10

GOD RELENTS:

As a God of mercy and grace, the Lord responds to the genuine repentance of the Ninevites by relenting from the judgment that He would have brought upon them. God, who sees the heart, identifies their sincerity here both through their **works**, that is verbal and visible expressions of sorrow like fasting and wearing sackcloth, and by the fact that they **turned from their evil way**. God does not desire meaningless religious rituals or hypocritical prayers just so that we can avoid punishment, but rather He desires a genuine, heart-felt response that leads to lasting change. In his advice to King Saul, Samuel asks a rhetorical question and provides the answer: "Has the Lord as great

delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams” (1 Sam 15:22). Praise be to God who gave both Jonah and the Ninevites a second chance—and who still extends those second chances today for people who believe in Him and follow His prescription for repentance by turning from their wicked lifestyles.

What are some ways that we just go through the motions rather than experience genuine repentance?

Question
4

Inspire

From children who don't like the results of a particular game and cry "do-over" to adults who have messed up so badly on a project that we just throw up our hands and exclaim, "I might as well just start over," we all want second chances in life. Every one of us who has a relationship with Jesus has been given a second chance because at one point our lives were like an instruction manual that we didn't read and we attempted to begin the project on our own only to find out that we have messed it up so badly there is no hope to revive it, but instead we just have to begin again. Fortunately, we have a God who doesn't hold our past mistakes against us, but readily forgives all who seek genuine repentance with Him.

Through our study in Jonah, we have observed how Jonah received a second chance to preach to the Ninevites and how the Ninevites received a second chance to repent from their wicked ways before suffering disaster. As we mature in our lives, sometimes we forget that God has given every one of us a second chance and we look at others, just as Jonah did, with contempt and disgust rather than compassion which compels us to share the gospel. When we realize how many second chances that God has given us, it will inspire us to share God's

love with others in a real and tangible way.

When a city and nation experience genuine repentance and realize how God has graciously given them a second chance that was undeserved, then they will respond by telling others.

Too many of us have great news, but we keep it a secret because we don't share the gospel. If you were to receive \$1,000,000, what would your first reaction be

after screaming with joy? Most likely, you would call your friends and family to let them know what has happened to you. The Ninevites responded to God's message by telling their friends and family so that it took Jonah only one day to reach the population which would normally have taken three days. On mission trips, people who have responded to the gospel immediately tell their friends and family members or bring them to hear the good news that they have just heard. Let's be inspired to share the good news that we have received in a world that desperately needs a second chance to repent before they face disaster for their sinful choices.



Bible in hand, American evangelist Billy Graham speaks to a crowd of intent listeners packing London's Trafalgar Square. (1954)

In Prayer



Recall times in your life when God has given you a second chance. How did you respond to God and how did God respond to you? Spend time praising God for giving you a second chance and ask Him to reveal any other areas in your life that you might need to repent from unconfessed sin. Don't dwell on the sin, but confess it and turn to God for strength in helping to overcome it (1 Cor 10:13).

In Response: How did God speak to you?

Incorporate

Repentance requires both verbal confession of our sins and asking for forgiveness, as well as the act of turning from living a lifestyle of wickedness. Besides Jonah and the Ninevites, think of people from the Bible who were given second chances. How did their lives change after they repented and God graciously gave them a second chance?

Looking back over your life, describe a time when you repented of your sin and surrendered your life to God. How did your life look before you repented and how did it look after you repented?

(If there was no difference, then we must ask whether or not we have truly repented of our sins and surrendered our lives to Jesus.)

Incorporate

How can you use your personal experiences where you repented to share with others who may need a second chance?

Journal: Document God's Work

Journal: Document God's Work

September 25, 2016



Jonah's Criticism of God's Mercy

Jonah 4:1-11

Focal Verse:

"So he prayed to the LORD, and said, 'Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, One who relents from doing harm.'" *Jonah 4:2*

Introduce

My first car was a 1987 Plymouth Horizon which had no air conditioning and smoked profusely from the oil that it burned when I drove it—sometimes producing so much smoke that it looked like a thick fog. At sixteen in the Spring of 1994, I took my driver's test using this dilapidated car which I would be resigned to drive throughout high school. Before going to college, I got a brand new 1996 Geo Prizm with about 100 miles on it. Because I had to drive my sister everywhere during high school, she was in no hurry to get her own license until I was preparing to leave for college.

As her usual chauffeur, I had to drive her to the courthouse so she could take her test, but much to my indignation my mother instructed me to let her use my new car. I protested and pleaded that I had to use an old jalopy and she should as well, but the request fell on deaf ears.

My mother had grace and favor upon my sister who had barely driven and certainly didn't deserve to take her test in a new car. Although God had shown me mercy by giving me reliable and comfortable transportation to college, I refused to demonstrate that same mercy and compassion toward my sister.

In a similar way, Jonah had witnessed the radical transformation of a wicked city who turned to God. Instead of responding with joy, however, Jonah criticized God's mercy—the same mercy that God had shown him by sending a great fish to spare his life and rescue him from drowning in the Mediterranean Sea. God expects us to extend the same mercy, grace, and forgiveness to others that He has bestowed upon us—even those who we consider our enemies or deem unworthy of such generosity.



Key Question

What times in your life have you failed to respond with grace and compassion to others?

JONAH CRITICIZES GOD'S PLAN:

In contrast to God's love and mercy which He shows to the Ninevites at the end of chapter 3 by hearing their prayers of repentance and relenting in His judgment against them, Jonah becomes **exceedingly displeased** and vents his frustration to God. Not only does Jonah display contempt and animosity toward both God and the Ninevites, he also demonstrates his own selfish attitude. A prayer, which should proclaim praise for God's miraculous work and the Ninevites' repentance, features a laundry list of complaints which is why we learn that Jonah tried to flee to **Tarshish** in the first place. This same prophet who extols the mercy and salvation of the Lord in 2:1-9 now vehemently complains that God is too liberal and free with His grace and mercy (4:2)—what utter hypocrisy this prayer shows!

What times have you been jealous or resentful about how God has worked in the lives of others around you, especially those whom you deem should have received no grace or mercy?

Question
1

Jonah knows well the attributes of God as expressed in His favor and faithfulness to Israel. Jonah can accept the repentance and forgiveness of a wayward Israel, but when it comes to a foreign nation, particularly the Assyrians, the prophet expects retribution without a chance to repent. Perhaps he recalls a similar incident in Joel 2:13 where Israel is reminded of God's benevolence toward her: "So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and

merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm." Israel, not Nineveh, in Jonah's mind should be the sole beneficiary of God's grace and mercy and Israel alone should be given the chance to repent by God who is **slow to anger** and faithful to keep His promises.



In-Depth Information



*The word translated as **lovingkindness** in verse 2 is notoriously difficult to interpret because of its many uses. The word can mean favor, faithfulness, goodness, kindness, and mercy. In English, faithfulness reflects the closest understanding of this Hebrew word—in particular God's faithfulness to fulfill His Word. The emphasis in Jonah 4 also lies with God's faithfulness because true to His Word God has forgiven the Ninevites, just as He has Israel numerous times, and relented in His judgment against them (1 John 1:9). God certainly displays His kindness to Nineveh, but it's much more than mere kindness—it's faithfulness to His Word and His covenant with mankind whom He desires to rescue and restore.*

Jonah has so much hatred for the Ninevites that he favors death over life; recalling his peril in the Mediterranean Sea when the sailors tossed him overboard, Jonah asks God to finish the job and **take his life from** him.

Instruct

Just as in the beginning of the book, he would rather be dead than to see the Ninevites repent and receive reconciliation with God. In Matthew 20:1-16 in a parable about a landowner and his hired hands, Jesus discusses a similar attitude with a great multitude which included Pharisees. In the parable, God represents the landlord who has called people to work in His vineyard, agreeing with each of them to pay them one Denarius—that is a day’s wage—regardless of what time they were hired. The first group, therefore, which is hired at 6:00 AM takes odds with the last group which is hired at 5:00 PM and only works one hour rather than the twelve hours that the first group has worked. Therefore, Jesus poses a question to the crowd, “Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?” God deals with Jonah in the same way when He chastises him for his attitude by demonstrating that He has every right to be concerned with His creation and seek to reconcile it to Him.

Jonah 4:4-8

GOD CHASTISES JONAH:

God chastises Jonah for his selfish stance by teaching him an important lesson about the value of human life. After entering the city from the west and journeying throughout its streets preaching the word God had given him, the prophet exits **on the east side** where he travels to a safe distance so he can wait the forty days to see if God would destroy Nineveh. Using the scant desert resources that he could find like rocks, clay, and small sticks, he constructs a temporary **shelter** so that he could

comfortably watch what he hopes will be a Sodom and Gomorrah-type destruction. However, like Texas heat in the later part of the summer, Jonah can find little relief from the sweltering sun and scorching wind. Just as God had appointed a fish to rescue Jonah from certain death in the sea, He once again has mercy and compassion on the prophet and **prepares** a plant that offers him relief by the shade of its leaves. The plant **delivers Jonah from his misery** for which he expresses gratitude. Despite his thankfulness toward God, Jonah doesn't learn his lesson because he remains obstinate in his bitterness and unwillingness to forgive.



In-Depth Information



*The word translated as **misery** in 4:6 is the same word used in 1:2 to describe the **wickedness** of the citizens of Nineveh. This serves to remind the audience of the connection between Jonah and Nineveh—both are recipients of God's mercy and grace. Just as God provides the plant to rescue Jonah from the brutal desert environment, so He also provides forgiveness and reconciliation to rescue the Ninevites from their sins and impending disaster.*

In what ways has God mercifully and benevolently provided for you?

Question
2

Instruct

Whereas the people of Nineveh recognize their wrongs and repent, Jonah refuses to admit his, so God **prepares a worm** to kill the plant as well as an **east wind** off of the desert to blow in hotter air. The sun **beat down on Jonah's head**, causing him to lament the loss of the shade and the merciful relief that it provided; yet, Jonah's complaint, echoing verse 3, once again expresses his selfishness. Jonah wishes that he could **die** and be put out of his misery, not only the misery the scorching heat has upon him physically, but also the mental anguish caused by God's benevolence toward his enemy—the Assyrians.

Jonah 4:9-11

GOD COUNSELS JONAH:

Using the object lesson of the plant, God counsels Jonah about the proper way to extend compassion and love to all nations, not just his own. God begins His counsel by repeating the question from verse 4, but adding the destruction of the plant as a recipient of Jonah's anger: **Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?** Astonishingly, and somewhat defiantly, Jonah contends that he has every **right to be angry, even to the point of death**. The illustration of the plant and the ensuing conversation between Jonah and God demonstrate three principles: 1) Jonah cares for the plant only because it benefited him;



therefore, it serves as a testament to his selfishness; 2) it shows God's sovereignty not only as Creator of the world, but also as the One who orchestrates nature to accomplish His will; thus, in 4:5-8 the narrator chooses to use the verb **prepared**, which can also be translated as appointed or directed, in relation to the plant, the worm, and the east wind to establish how God accomplished His purpose by utilizing His sovereignty over nature; and 3) God's right, as well as His desire, to be compassionate toward His creation.

When have you ever become angry because either you didn't get what you thought you deserved or other people got something you felt they didn't deserve?

Question
3

After Jonah's outburst where he asserted that he did have a **right to be angry**, the prophet ceases speaking and God begins to lecture him about selfless **pity**. First, God reminds Jonah about the concept of grace; Jonah has labored to construct a **shelter**, but it provided little relief. On the other hand, the **plant** is a gracious gift from God because Jonah did not **labor** or **make it grow**, but rather is the recipient of its beneficial shade. Second, God reveals the nature of His relationship to His creation since He is intimately involved in it. Jonah has nothing invested in the plant; if it were not from God, it would have been impossible for it to grow so rapidly in a desert environment. Jonah, unlike God who created it, doesn't till and fertilize the soil, he doesn't plant it, and he doesn't water it, but the plant is significant to him albeit for selfish reasons. As the pinnacle of God's creation, mankind has a special place in His

heart and plan. Unlike any other act of creation, God made man in His own image and likeness (Gen 1:27); rather than speaking man into existence, God took time to fashion him and breathe life into his nostrils (Gen 2:7). As part of His creation, God can choose to whom He offers grace and compassion and He tries to help Jonah see that He extends them to everyone—even those considered wicked and unlovable if only they would accept His gracious gift. In a final rhetorical question, God asks Jonah why He shouldn't have **pity** or compassion upon Nineveh for they too are His special creation for which He deeply cares. If Jonah cares for the plant and God cares even for the **livestock** or cattle, how much more should God care for His wayward creation who doesn't know right from wrong?

In-Depth Information



*Much debate exists about why the narrator included the phrase, **much livestock**, at the end of the question. It certainly does remind us in chapter 3 that the repentance was so thorough that the animals were also included in the actions to illustrate that the entire city came under conviction and was reconciled to God. Here in 4:11, however, it's best to regard this as an argument moving from lesser to greater; if God cares for animals, how much more would He care for human beings and extend grace unto them? Thus, God not only cares for the **livestock**, but He is more deeply concerned about the 120,000 people who are perishing apart from His plan.*

Today, we live in a self-centered world much like the prophet Jonah; everything has been tailored to suit our preferences and meet our demands so much that we no longer think about how our actions may influence someone else. We have become a nation apathetic to global terrorism, political unrest in other countries, natural disasters, or even financial unrest around the world because we no longer feel that it affects us. Although many may not state it this way but most live it, as long as some event doesn't affect our lives directly then it matters little to us. The overthrow of the Ninevites didn't concern Jonah because it didn't directly affect Him, but when the plant died as directed by God the prophet complained bitterly.

In many ways, the church as a whole has become like Jonah disenfranchised and unconcerned; we've seen God's grace first-hand in our lives and we have a secure hope in our salvation through Jesus, but we are unmotivated to tell others the same gospel message that has changed our lives. We have either become oblivious to the fact that many are facing eternal death around us or even worse we have become like Jonah and thrown our hands up and exclaimed, "Give them what they deserve!" We must ask ourselves: What if God gave us what we deserve? What if He never sent anyone with the message of salvation and hope found only in Jesus? What right do we have to be obstinate like Jonah and refuse to go into the world and take a message of hope? In reality, Jonah didn't know whether or not the Ninevites would heed the warning and repent and neither do we, but that doesn't negate our call to go and tell.

In our daily lives, we must be intentional about sharing the gospel; we must look for opportunities to minister to others, not just through kind words and not just through our lifestyle choices, but through the words that God Himself has given us to proclaim. This week begin thinking about people to whom you can minister in the month of October during our church-wide outreach campaign. Not only invite them to church, but find creative ways to start conversations where you are able to share the gospel with them verbally. God can and will change Fort Worth just like He did Nineveh if we are faithful to be His messengers.



Photo by Bob Oatman

In Prayer



Spend time asking God to help you develop a heart for evangelism. Ask Him to bring people into your life to whom you may minister. Finally, thank Him for sending someone in your life to share the good news of the the gospel with you.

Overall, the book of Jonah answers the question: Why should I care? We should care because we have a Creator who intimately cares for us and desires a relationship with us; He cares for us so much that He has provided salvation for us through the shedding of the blood of His Son—even though we did not deserve it, He has given every one of us a second chance. Because God has given us a second chance and an inheritance of eternal life, we have a responsibility to proclaim that same message of hope to the world who is lost in their own ignorance and wickedness just as the Ninevites were.

First, we must help people to understand the truth. The text states that the Ninevites couldn't discern between their right hand and their left—that is they had no moral compass to distinguish between right and wrong. In what way does this describe our society? What specific choices do you see that our society makes that should be considered wrong?

Incorporate

What can we do to bring the message of truth in these situations?

Look at the world around you. Describe the things, actions, or people in whom you can see the grace and compassion of God at work.

Incorporate to Impact



Now go impact the world and allow God to work through you as His agent of change!

Journal: Document God's Work

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