

Compassionate God

Lesson 1

Jonah 1:1-5

July 18, 2021

God's Astonishing Compassion

Introduction

Jonah was not your typical prophet. He ran away from God, argued with God, and pouted when he didn't get his way. He never really repented for his actions, even when God called him out for his bad behavior. Jonah was a symbol of Israel's hardness of heart and their unwillingness to repent. He was more concerned with what others would think and the prosperity of Israel than with what God thought and was asking Him to do.

Like Jonah, we so often turn away from what we know God is asking us to do because it pulls us away from our comfort zone. We find all sorts of excuses—work schedules, family obligations and responsibilities, money—that keep us away from doing God's work and safely in our comfortable place. But through Jonah, we learn that God is not concerned about any of that. God isn't very interested in whether or not we know His word. He's more interested in what we do with it.

Memory verse: "On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts."—1 Thessalonians 2:4

Pray and read Jonah 1:1-5. What questions or observations do you have about this passage?

What does the passage say?

1. Who is Jonah's father? (Jonah 1:1)
2. What did God command Jonah to do? (Jonah 1:2a)
3. Why did God want Jonah to go to Nineveh? (Jonah 1:2b)
4. What did Jonah do instead? (Jonah 1:3)
5. What did God send? (Jonah 1:4)
6. How did the sailors react to the storm? How did Jonah respond to the storm? (Jonah 1:5)

What does the passage mean?

1. Jonah disobeyed God's commission to go to Nineveh. How do we show love for God? (Matthew 22:34-40; John 13:34, 14:15, 15:9-13; Romans 2:11-13)

2. The people of Nineveh were lost—they had turned away from God. Jonah was lost—he had intentionally disobeyed God. How does God feel about people who are lost? (Psalm 36:5-7; Jonah 4:2; John 3:16; Romans 5:8; Ephesians 3:18-19)

3. How should we, as God's people, feel about and treat the lost? (Proverbs 24:17; Luke 6:31; Ephesians 4:32; 1 Timothy 2:1-3; 1 John 4:20-21)

4. By being called to go to Nineveh, Jonah was being called out of his comfort zone. What should we keep in mind when God calls us out of our comfort zone? (Joshua 1:9; John 15:16; Philippians 4:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:4; 2 Timothy 1:7)

5. Nineveh needed God's grace—they had become wicked. Jonah needed God's grace—he deliberately disobeyed God. What do we gain from God's grace? (Isaiah 43:25; Matthew 11:28-30; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 2:13)

Applying the passage

1. Have you ever “run away” from God—even if it was only for a short period? What happened? What brought you back?

2. Who are the Ninevites in your life? A difficult co-worker or neighbor? A group of people who think differently than you? What keeps you from sharing God's love with them?

3. Write a prayer asking God to help you show His love to those who don't know Him.