

Compassionate God

Lesson 5

Jonah 4

August 15, 2021

God's Rebuking Compassion

Introduction

Throughout the book of Jonah, we see Jonah fighting God. Jonah is judgmental, angry, unmerciful, and critical of God and the people of Nineveh. He is unrepentant and would rather die than see God's mercy given. But God is undeterred in His love and mercy. Instead, He asks Jonah why—why is Jonah angry when 120,000 are saved, but a plant dies.

As we read Jonah, we are often amazed that Jonah is so cold-hearted. But what we should be seeing is how we mirror Jonah. Like Jonah, we become angry when what we want to happen doesn't or because someone succeeds when we think they shouldn't. But, when we are angry with God, all we really want is for God to change the outcome. We want God to bend to our will. But God is a God of mercy, love, forgiveness, and grace. He is using our moment of anger to teach us to be more merciful and compassionate.

Matthew 7:2 reminds us, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." If we learn nothing else from Jonah, we need to learn how to show God's compassion to those we don't feel deserve it.

Memory verse: "And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?" Jonah 4:11

Pray and read Jonah 4. What questions or observations do you have about this passage?

What does the passage say?

1. What did Jonah pray to God when he got angry? (Jonah 4:2)
2. What does Jonah know about God? (Jonah 4:2)
3. What did Jonah request God to do? (Jonah 4:3, 8)
4. What does God ask Jonah in response to Jonah's request to die? (Jonah 4:4, 9)
5. What did God provide for Jonah? (Jonah 4:6)
6. What did God do to the plant? (Jonah 4:7)
7. What did God send after the worm? (Jonah 4:8)
8. What was God's response to Jonah wishing he were dead? (Jonah 4:10-11)

What does the passage mean?

1. It's easy to judge Jonah for his character flaws, but his flaws are a reflection of our own. What can we learn about our own character flaws from Jonah's character flaws? (Proverbs 29:11; Romans 2:5; Ephesians 4:26-27; James 1:20)

2. What can we learn about God's character from Jonah? (Isaiah 30:18; Psalm 86:5; Jonah 4:2; Micah 7:18; John 3:16)

3. Jonah demands compassion for the plant but is ready for God to cast judgment on the Ninevites. For whom does God show mercy? (Jonah 4:10-11; Ephesians 1:7-8; 1 Timothy 1:13-14; Jude 20-21)

4. Read the following passages. What can we learn about how we should view others? (Romans 12:3; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:11)

5. Did Jonah have a right to be angry with God? Was he better than the Ninevites? How does God change our hearts? (Acts 15:11; Ephesians 2:1-7; Colossians 2:13; Titus 2:11)

Applying the passage

1. Like Jonah, are you angry at God? What do you care about so much that you become angry at God when it doesn't go how you think it should?

