

# JONAH

LIFE ON THE RUN  
Small Group Curriculum

## INTRODUCTION

Heroes of the faith abound in the pages of scripture. In the rank of the prophets especially, we find men – and a few women – whose trust and obedience towards God inspire us to similar heights of faith. However in Jonah, whose example to us is one of disobedience, distrust, and rebellion we find very little to which to aspire. But the book of Jonah is not centered on its namesake. Instead, what we will find in this ancient prophetic narrative is an enduring story of the riches of God’s unstoppable mercy and grace. We will see a God who pursues people who flee from him and disbelieve him with sometimes radical means. In the pages of Jonah, prophet, sailor and Ninevite will all see the relentless pursuing love of the eternal saving God.

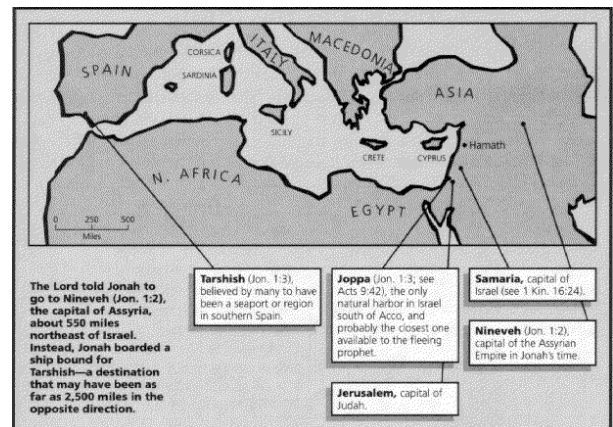
### Jonah, son of Amittai

Little is known of Jonah, the son of Amittai, apart from the book that bears his name and one other reference in 2 Kings 14:25. What we do know is that Jonah was a prophet of Israel from the city of Gath-hepher in the territory of Zebulun near what would later be called the region of Galilee. Most prominently active during the reign of King Jereboam II (793-753B.C.), and prophesying in the midst of a period of Israelite prosperity, Jonah’s message to this king conveyed encouragement as he foretold the resotation of lands previously lost.

### Nineveh and the Assyrians<sup>1</sup>

The ancient city of Nineveh is located in the Northern reaches of modern day Iraq. Laying on the eastern edge of the Tigris it sits across the river from the city center of Mosul, and has been largely absorbed into Mosul’s suburban area. Sixty years before the time of Jonah, Assyria had expanded into Israel and the king of Israel was paying tribute. In the time of Jonah however, the Israelites had re-expanded northward, possibly indicating a slight decline in the Assyrian Empire’s power.

Although not the capital of the Empire at the time of Jonah, Nineveh would remain an important cult center (largely focused on the fertility goddess Ishtar of Nineveh) for many years. The city itself is situated on sparse land and lacks many natural resources. As a result of its limited resources, a good part of the



The Geography of Jonah

<sup>1</sup> Diagram courtesy of Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1996). *Nelson's complete book of Bible maps & charts: Old and New Testaments* (Rev. and updated ed.). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

Assyrians' early history is spent in subservience to others, until eventually equality, trade and relations with neighboring city-states grows. As time passes, around 1000 B.C., the Assyrian nation grows and opts for an ideology of conquest and terror as a means to gain resources, and grow the economy through pillage and plunder. Under this philosophy of expansion and conquest Nineveh ascends to prominence and truly becomes one of the greatest and most powerful cities in the world.

It is also during this time that the ancient Assyrians become associated with terror and cruelty. In order to maintain control the rulers adopt grisly methods to keep conquered nations in fear and capitulation to their rule. Along with forced deportations, impalings, the removal of tongues, blindings, and beheadings were all commonly employed to control and stop possible aggressors. This reputation for bloodshed and violence would be well known by the Israelites, including the prophet Jonah.

### **Major Themes**

God's love and concern for the Gentiles is the dominant theme of the book of Jonah. Although Jewish nationalism blinds the prophet to the importance of the city of Nineveh, God will accomplish his purposes to rescue and redeem the people he loves regardless of background or nationality. As a true account, Jonah presents for the reader a dramatic example of God's intentions to bless the whole world through his chosen people (cf. Genesis 12:3), even if it means using its disobedient members.

A second major theme of the book is the extent and power of a sovereign God. Using Jonah's rebellion, a storm, sailors, and a great fish God positions his prophet in the precise location he wants him as the book begins. Even before the city-wide revival at Nineveh, God will lead his disobedient prophet to cross paths with pagan sailors who will hear and believe also. His sovereign care of sinners, nature and the created world is vividly on display throughout the book of Jonah. Clearly God is in control of all of life's event, both remote and near, small and sizeable.

### Lesson 1: THE FLIGHT OF A PROPHET

<sup>1</sup> Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, <sup>2</sup> "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me." <sup>3</sup> But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD. <sup>4</sup> But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. <sup>5</sup> Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. <sup>6</sup> So the captain came and said to him, "What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish."

#### Read and Meditate on Jonah 1:1-6

- Pray for insight and understanding into the text (Psalm 119:18)
- Take the time to highlight key phrases from the text. Look for repeated wording, contrasts, similarities and things that are emphasized.
- Highlight key words or actions in which you see the characters engaged.
- In one clear sentence summarize the passage, and write your sentence below.

#### MY SUMMARY:

#### Discussion Questions

1. Many other prophetic books begin as Jonah does. Compare Jonah 1:1 with Joel 1:1, Micah 1:1, and Jeremiah 1:4.
  - a. What do you notice that's unique about Jonah's calling?
  - b. How does "the word of the LORD" come to us today?
2. God's instructions to Jonah consist of only one verse describing the wickedness of a distant city in a foreign land.
  - a. What does this tell us about the nature of God's concern (compare Psalm 24:1; Proverbs 15:3)?

3. In verse 2, God gives three commands to Jonah. What are they? Circle all three in the text above.
  - a. Compare the commands to Jonah with Matthew 28:18-20, describe the similarities and differences between the two.
4. Instead of heading toward Nineveh (to the east of Israel), Jonah willfully boards a ship heading to Tarshish—the westernmost location in the ancient Near East.
  - a. What phrase is repeated twice in verse 3?
  - b. What do you think Jonah was trying to accomplish?
5. Jonah’s action contrasts with the prophets’ typical responses to God’s call. Read Isaiah 6:8 and Hosea 1:2–3.
  - a. How did these prophets answer God’s call?
  - b. Think of a time you felt God’s call to act. How did you respond?
6. Read ahead in Jonah 4:1-2.
  - a. According to Jonah, why did he flee?
  - b. What did he think would happen if he went to Nineveh, and why is this so upsetting to him?
7. What does Jonah’s response to God’s calling tell us about Jonah’s understanding of God? What does it tell us about Jonah’s view of himself?
8. Why is it significant that the story of Jonah does not end at verse 3? What does this tell you about the character of God?
9. In verse 4, the Lord sends powerful storm Jonah’s way.
  - a. Do you feel that this is God’s punishment of Jonah, or something else?
  - b. How do you think Jonah viewed it?
10. Compare Jonah in verse 5 with Jesus in Matthew 26:36-45.
  - a. Which of the two is more peaceful?
  - b. Which of the two are following the will of God?
  - c. How would you answer someone who said to you that they knew they were making a right decision about something because they had “a lot of peace” about it?
11. Why do you think that Jonah fell asleep in the boat?
  - a. Do you think this was a spiritual battle?
  - b. Have you ever wanted to sleep instead of working for Christ? Explain.

**Personal Study and Reflection**

1. Read 2 Kings 14:25.
  - a. Where was Jonah from?
  
  - b. What else does this verse tell us about Jonah?
  
2. Using the following references, describe what the ancient city of Nineveh was like at points in its history:
  - a. Zephaniah 2:13
  
  - b. Nahum 3:1
  
  - c. 2 Kings 19:36-37
  
3. Using 1:2, 3:2, 3:4, and 3:8, piece together the basic content of God's message to the Ninevites.
  
4. Read Luke 11:30. What is so significant about the fact that in the New Testament Jesus referenced Jonah's story?

### Lesson 2: GOD IN PURSUIT

<sup>7</sup> And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. <sup>8</sup> Then they said to him, "Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?" <sup>9</sup> And he said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." <sup>10</sup> Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, "What is this that you have done!" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. <sup>11</sup> Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?" For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. <sup>12</sup> He said to them, "Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you." <sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. <sup>14</sup> Therefore they called out to the LORD, "O LORD, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O LORD, have done as it pleased you." <sup>15</sup> So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. <sup>16</sup> Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows. <sup>17</sup> And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

#### Read and Meditate on Jonah 1:7-17

- Pray for insight and understanding into the text (Psalm 119:18)
- Take the time to highlight key phrases from the text. Look for repeated wording, contrasts, similarities and things that are emphasized.
- Highlight key words or actions in which you see the characters engaged.
- In one clear sentence summarize the passage, and write your sentence below.

#### MY SUMMARY:

### Discussion Questions

1. Jonah attempts to get “away from the presence of the LORD” in Jonah 1:3. But as we've seen, this is completely impossible (1:4).
  - a. Read Psalm 139:1–12. How does this psalm describe God’s knowledge of our actions and attitudes?
  - b. Do you find that comforting or intimidating, and why?
2. Jonah speaks for the first time in the book as he answers the sailors’ questions. He describes himself and his God: “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord” (Jonah 1:9).
  - a. In the Old Testament, fearing the Lord was often an expression of loyalty, reverence and obedience. Compare Deuteronomy 5:29; Joshua 24:14–15; Psalm 25:12–13.
  - b. Has Jonah shown any evidence of “fearing” God with his actions?
  - c. How do our actions back up your beliefs?
3. Jonah’s description of God—“the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land” (Jonah 1:9)—makes his attempt to flee seem foolish.
  - a. How could Jonah expect to escape God when He is everywhere?
  - b. Think back to a situation where you acted in a way that now seems foolish—why did you act the way you did? How can you respond differently to similar situations you face today?
4. In verse 12, Jonah tells the sailors, “Pick me up and hurl me into the sea.”
  - a. Do you see this as a sacrifice by Jonah to preserve the sailors, or do you think that Jonah is still stubbornly refusing to obey God’s call to Nineveh?
5. Do you see authentic repentance by Jonah in verse 12? If so, what are the elements that make it authentic? If not, what would you have liked to have seen instead?
6. In verse 13, the sailors refuse to throw Jonah overboard, and instead try to row out the storm.
  - a. When this fails, verse 14 tells us their next step. What was it they feared most at this point in the ordeal?
7. Verses 15 and 16 give us the next actions by the sailors. How were their actions different from Jonah’s? Do you think that they were genuinely saved?
8. Consider the story if it happened differently and Jonah had obeyed and gone to Nineveh right away.
  - a. Where would that have left the sailors?
  - b. Can you think of a time in your life when God used your disobedience to advance his plans in your life or the lives of others around you?

9. Read 1 Corinthians 1:26–31.
  - a. Why does God use the foolish and weak of the world?
  - b. Why do you think we are so often tempted to see the limitations of ourselves in the face of obeying the command to “make disciples” (Matthew 28:19)?
10. What do you think Jonah thinks will happen to him once he’s thrown overboard? What purpose does the fish serve in the story?

### Personal Study and Reflection

1. Read Matthew’s account of Jesus’ calming of the storm in Matthew 8:24-27. How is this story similar to Jonah 1? In what ways are they different?
2. In Matthew 12:39-41, Jesus foretells of his coming death and burial with the language of Jonah. Examining these verses, what do you think he means by, “the sign of Jonah”?
3. Consider these words by Tullian Tchividjian in his book, *Surprised by Grace*, where he notes the similarities between Jonah and Jesus:

Of all the world’s religions, only in Christianity does God become one of his creatures. *God becoming human?* That’s massive, deafening – anything but subtle. Jesus is really God’s “great wind,” his “mighty tempest” in response to human running and rebellion. *Jesus is the storm.* Jesus is God’s gracious intervention for those who are enslaved to themselves. He comes loudly, not subtly, with an aggressive affection to pursue fugitives like you and me.<sup>2</sup>

How does this help you understand the storm in Jonah 1 as an act of mercy rather than judgment?  
How have you seen God spare no expense in his pursuit of you?

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<sup>2</sup> Tchividjian, Tullian. (2010). *Surprised by Grace* (p. 52). Wheaton, IL: Crossway.



**Lesson 3: THE PROPHET PRAYS**

Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, <sup>2</sup>saying, “I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. <sup>3</sup>For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me. <sup>4</sup>Then I said, ‘I am driven away from your sight; yet I shall again look upon your holy temple.’ <sup>5</sup>The waters closed in over me to take my life; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head <sup>6</sup> at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the pit, O LORD my God. <sup>7</sup>When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. <sup>8</sup>Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love. <sup>9</sup>But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Salvation belongs to the LORD!” <sup>10</sup>And the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah out upon the dry land.

**Read and Meditate on Jonah 2:1-10**

- Pray for insight and understanding in the text (Psalm 119:18)
- Take the time to highlight key phrases from the text. Look for repeated wordings, contrasts, similarities and things that are emphasized.
- Highlight key words or actions in which you see the characters engaged.
- In one clear sentence summarize the passage, and write your sentence below

**MY SUMMARY:**

**Discussion Questions**

1. After reading over Jonah’s prayer, do you think he has experienced a change of heart between chapter 1 and chapter 2?
2. What evidences do you see in this prayer that Jonah is repentant? What evidences do you see that he remains self-righteousness?
3. Consider the weight of verse 1. What does God’s willingness to hear and answer Jonah’s prayer after his overt disobedience tell you about God’s character?

4. In moments of distress, is your first inclination to pray? Why or why not? What about when your distress is the result of personal sin and disobedience?
5. Jonah's mention of "vain idols" in verse 8 is likely a reference to the pagan gods of the mariners (see 1:5). What vain idols might Jonah have been regarding when he chose to disobey God's command and run from Him?
6. Jonah's rescue reminds him of the steadfast love of the Lord which cannot be received from vain idols. What does it mean to "pay regard" to vain idols?
7. In verse 9, Jonah expresses thanksgiving to God for saving him while he was drowning in "the heart of the seas" (verse 3). As believers in Jesus Christ, we have been saved from sin and death. Does your life demonstrate thankfulness to God for your salvation? Take a moment to thank God for saving you.
8. Whether drowning in the sea or imprisoned in the belly of the fish, Jonah was completely incapable of saving himself or compensating for his disobedience. How do his circumstances compare with our previous state as unbelievers (see Ephesians 2:1-3)?
9. In verses 6b and 9b, Jonah identifies that his salvation was work of God alone. Compare this with Ephesians 2:4-9 and Romans 5:8.
  - a. Do you understand your salvation to be entirely God's work?
  - b. How might you be tempted to think that you contribute your own salvation?
10. Compare 2:10 with 1:17. What do these verses reveal about God's sovereignty over Jonah's circumstances?

### Personal Study and Reflection

1. Jonah's prayer contains many of the phrases in David's psalms of lament and deliverance.
  - a. Read Psalm 5, 31, and 69. How do David's circumstances differ from Jonah's?
  - b. In what ways are Jonah and David's prayers similar and dissimilar?
2. Consider that Jonah cries out God in the midst of his sin, while drowning in the sea, and within the belly of the fish.
  - a. Have you ever found yourself in a place where you thought God was unable or unwilling to hear your prayer?
  - b. Read 1 John 1:9 and 1 John 5:14-15. What do these verses promise?
3. In what ways does paying regard to idols leads us to forsake our hope of steadfast love (verse 8)? What vain idols are you "paying regard" to and how might these be hindering you from enjoying God's steadfast love?

**LESSON 4: THE PROPHET OBEYS**

<sup>1</sup> Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, <sup>2</sup> “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.” <sup>3</sup> So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth. <sup>4</sup> Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he called out, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” <sup>5</sup> And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

**Read and Meditate on Jonah 3:1-5**

- Pray for insight and understanding in the text (Psalm 119:18)
- Take the time to highlight key phrases from the text. Look for repeated wordings, contrasts, similarities and things that are emphasized.
- Highlight key words or actions in which you see the characters engaged.
- In one clear sentence summarize the passage, and write your sentence below.

**MY SUMMARY:**

**Discussion Questions**

1. Have you ever given someone important instructions that they have entirely refused to follow? How did their actions influence your trust in them and your desire to work with them in future?
2. After Jonah's disobedience and failed escape attempt, God asked him a second time to take His message to Nineveh. Does this surprise you? What does God's willingness to use Jonah despite His initial failure to obey tell you about His character?
3. In 1:2 and 2:2 the Lord describes Nineveh as a “great city.” Why might he describe the city in this way (see 4:11)?
4. What was the message that Jonah was to bring to Nineveh?
5. Why is it significant that this message was told to Jonah by God and was not Jonah's own words?
6. In verse 3 we learn that it took three days to journey through Nineveh, yet Jonah only travelled a day's journey into the city (verse 4). In light of this, do you think Jonah was obedient to the Lord's command? Was he faithful to bring God's message to all of Nineveh, or were his efforts half-hearted?

7. Recall that Nineveh was a feared city, notorious for its evil and violent culture (3:8). How might Jonah feel in light of this while proclaiming a message of judgement among the public?
8. Are you surprised that God gave the Ninevites forty days to repent before being overthrown?
  - a. Read 2 Peter 2:3-9. Why does God delay in executing his righteous wrath?
9. Consider the immediacy with which the Ninevites repented and believed God after hearing His message from Jonah? How does their response compare to that of Jonah even after he was rescued from drowning in the sea?
10. What does the Ninevites response tell you about the power and sufficiency of God's word?

### Personal Study and Reflection

4. Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-21.
  - a. What does it mean to be ambassador for Christ?
  
  - b. What are you doing with the "message of reconciliation" that God has entrusted to you?
5. As Christians, we are called to make disciples by sharing the message of the gospel. Read John 20:19-21 and Matthew 28:18-20. How should the fact that it is God who sends influence your desire and willingness to share the gospel?
6. Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-6. In evangelism, it is not your responsibility to create a message but to share "the gospel of God" (Romans 1:1). How should this reality influence your obedience to share your faith?
7. Have you ever felt the Lord telling you to share the gospel with someone who might be hostile? How did you feel? How did you respond to the Lord's leading?
8. Read Matthew 28:18-20 again. What promises are in this passage that give you courage to share the gospel even in the face of opposition? How will you respond to these promises today?

### LESSON 5: A CITY REPENTS

<sup>6</sup>The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.<sup>7</sup> And he issued a proclamation and published through Nineveh, “By the decree of the king and his nobles: Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything. Let them not feed or drink water,<sup>8</sup> but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them call out mightily to God. Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.<sup>9</sup> Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.”<sup>10</sup> When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

#### Read and Meditate on Jonah 3:6-10

- Pray for insight and understanding in the text (Psalm 119:18)
- Take the time to highlight key phrases from the text. Look for repeated wordings, contrasts, similarities and things that are emphasized.
- Highlight key words or actions in which you see the characters engaged.
- In one clear sentence summarize the passage, and write your sentence below.

#### MY SUMMARY:

#### Discussion Questions

1. Can you think of a significant event by which the course of your life drastically changed? Was it for the better or the worse?
2. Think of someone in your life right now who could be described the same way the Bible describes Nineveh and its inhabitants (1:2, 3:8, 3:10). How would you feel if they repented and trusted Christ?
3. What word do you see repeated in this passage of Jonah?
4. Repentance can be described as “a godly grief over, and turning away from sin.” What evidence do you see of authentic repentance in the king of Nineveh in 3:6-10? Must all of these elements be present for someone to be truly repentant?

5. Observe the king's proclamation to the citizens of Nineveh in Jonah 3:7-9.
  - a. How does this differ from Jonah's message in verses 2-4?
  - b. Why do you think that he so was hopeful that God could relent?
6. Read 1 Kings 21:17-29, as well as Isaiah 37:1-20 and notice the effect of repentance in the face of coming judgment. What does this tell you about God's character?
7. What role, if any, does repentance play in your daily life? What practical steps can you take to increase your practice of it?
8. Read Jeremiah 18:7-8 and compare with 18:9-10. What are the two promises contained in these verses?
9. Notice that the king of Nineveh calls all of his subjects to repent of their sins in verses 7-8. Do you think that as individuals we bear a responsibility to do something similar, or do you think this was a unique situation? Compare this with Ezra 10:1-17.
10. Read 2 Corinthians 7:9-11.
  - a. What do you think is the difference between "worldly grief" and "godly grief" over sin?
  - b. Can you think of a time when your life demonstrated worldly grief only?
  - c. Is there sin in your life currently that you grieve over only at the worldly level? What can you do to change this?

### Personal Study and Reflection

1. The book of Acts contains many references to repentance. Read Acts 2:37-41, 3:18-21, and 26:19-20.
  - a. What other actions are called for alongside repentance?
  - b. Why do you think repentance is so many times paired with other actions?
2. Read Esther 4:1, Jeremiah 6:26, and Daniel 9:3.
  - a. What is significant about the 'sackcloth' and 'ashes' mentioned in Jonah?
  - b. What could be a modern-day equivalent to this ancient practice?
3. Is repentance the same as remorse, or being sorry for sin? Why or why not?
4. Consider how seriously the Ninevites took their sin by stopping everything in their daily lives to focus exclusively on repenting and crying out for mercy. Do you take your sin and the process of repentance as seriously? Why or why not? Take some time at the end of this study to ask God to increase the seriousness of your sin.

**LESSON 6: GOD GETS THE LAST WORD**

<sup>1</sup>But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. <sup>2</sup>And he prayed to the LORD and said, “O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. <sup>3</sup>Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.” <sup>4</sup>And the LORD said, “Do you do well to be angry?” <sup>5</sup>Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city. <sup>6</sup>Now the LORD God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant. <sup>7</sup>But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. <sup>8</sup>When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, “It is better for me to die than to live.” <sup>9</sup>But God said to Jonah, “Do you do well to be angry for the plant?” And he said, “Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die.” <sup>10</sup>And the LORD said, “You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. <sup>11</sup>And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?”

**Read and Meditate on Jonah 4**

- Pray for insight and understanding in the text (Psalm 119:18)
- Take the time to highlight key phrases from the text. Look for repeated wordings, contrasts, similarities and things that are emphasized.
- Highlight key words or actions in which you see the characters engaged.
- In one clear sentence summarize the passage, and write your sentence below.

**MY SUMMARY:**

### Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever found yourself upset or even angry about something trivial?
  - a. How did you react? Was it right for you to be angry? Why or why not?
2. Read Jonah 3:10-4:2. What was it that “displeased Jonah exceedingly”?
3. In verse 2 Jonah explains why he disobeyed the Lord in the first place. Why didn’t he want to go to Nineveh? Does this surprise you?
4. Compare Jonah’s prayer after God showed him mercy by rescuing him from drowning (2:1-9) with his prayer after God showed the Ninevites mercy by relenting of his wrath (4:2-3). What is different about Jonah’s attitude and response?
5. Read Ephesians 2:1-4. In his anger toward God’s decision to show mercy to the Ninevites, what was Jonah forgetting about himself?
6. Notice that Jonah does not respond to the Lord’s question in verse 4. Why might this be?
7. Compare Jonah’s attitude in verse 1 and verse 6. What do these verses reveal about Jonah’s heart?
8. What phrase is repeated in verses 6-8? Compare this with 1:4, 1:17, and 2:10. What major theme is presented here and woven throughout the book of Jonah?
9. God’s continues to demonstrate grace to Jonah by appointing a plant to provide him with shade in the heat of the day. Why would God later appoint a worm to attack the plant? In what way might the worm still be an extension of God’s grace?
10. What does it mean that the Ninevites did not know their right hand from their left?

### Personal Study and Reflection

1. Think of last time you were angry about something. Reflect carefully on these questions:
  - a. Why were you angry?
  - b. Was it right for you to be angry?
  - c. In your anger, were you primarily focused on your own needs and desires or the good of others?



2. Read Ephesians 4:26.
  - a. Is anger always sinful?
  
  - b. How would you differentiate between righteous and unrighteous (sinful) anger?
  
  - c. Read Nehemiah 5:6 Mark 3:1-5, Matthew 21:12-13. How does the anger in these passages contrast that of Jonah?
3. Read verse 9. Is there anything in your life that you feel you could not live without? If so, in what ways might this reveal idolatry in your life?
4. Whereas Jonah viewed the Ninevites as depraved enemies of God deserving only His wrath, God saw them as his created beings who were ignorant and lost (verse 11).
  - a. How do you view the unbelievers in your family, your workplace, and your community?
  
  - b. Read John 8:34, 2 Corinthians 4:4, and Ephesians 2:1-4. How will you pray for the unbelievers in your life in light of these verses?