

Title: Merciful
Text: Jonah 3-4:2
Main Point: God is merciful.
Date: 2/15/2026
Series: That's My God

INTRODUCTION

I hope learning about God is encouraging. Our series, "That's My God," intends to view many attributes of God so you can know Him better. Since God created us to "enjoy Him forever" (Westminster Shorter Catechism), it is important to know Him, and in so doing, we learn to know ourselves.

Our series began on January 4 with the love of God. Then we covered God's unchanging nature, His power, His knowledge, His holiness, and today, His mercy. From beginning to end, the Bible explains that God is merciful. Perhaps a few examples of people acting mercifully will help us think about what it means to be merciful.

Common Examples

A student who cheats should receive a one-day suspension. Instead, the teacher is merciful and offers a second chance to help the student grow.

A person is lied about harming her reputation. Many would seek revenge, but she chooses to forgive and seek peace, acting with mercy.

The landlord grants a rent payment extension, even though it is due, demonstrating mercy.

Justice demands that the law, the rule, and the offense receive their required penalties. Mercy, while not denying the requirements of justice, chooses not to impose the penalty due but withholds it.

GOD'S MERCY: JONAH 3-4:2

1. Jonah, a prophet from Gath-Hepher (2 Kings 14:25), lived in northern Israel near the Sea of Galilee. God instructs him to travel to Nineveh (modern-day Mosul, northern Iraq) and deliver a message of repentance.
 - 1.1. Jonah 3:1-5 describes God's justice: God will bring the consequences of sin to the city; "Nineveh shall be overthrown" (3:4). However, God's mercy provides 40 days for repentance. God does not "owe" Nineveh 40 days, but His mercy grants it.
 - 1.2. Jonah understands this when he says, "I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster" 4:2.
2. Both the Old and New Testaments explain that God is merciful.
 - 2.1. Exodus 34:6-7, "The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty.'"

- 2.2. Ephesians 2:4-6, “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”
3. Though closely related, grace and mercy are not the same.
 - 3.1. “Mercy and grace are closely related. While the terms have similar meanings, grace and mercy are not exactly the same. Mercy has to do with kindness and compassion; it is often spoken of in the context of God not punishing us as our sins deserve. Grace includes kindness and compassion, but also carries the idea of bestowing a gift or favor. It may help to view mercy as a subset of grace. In Scripture, mercy is often equated with a deliverance from judgment (e.g., Deuteronomy 4:30–31; 1 Timothy 1:13), and grace is always the extending of a blessing to the unworthy.” ([What is the difference between mercy and grace? | GotQuestions.org](#))
4. God’s mercy is not always consistent.
 - 4.1. Exodus 33:19, “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.”
 - 4.1.1. In Jeremiah 16:5, rather than mercy, God exercises justice. He takes away His peace and mercy from His people (also Joshua 11:20; 2 Samuel 12:10; Matthew 26:2).
 - 4.2. Sometimes He is merciful to the sinner, and sometimes He executes justice.
5. The wise seek God’s mercy in the way they live.
 - 5.1. Psalm 112:4, “Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous.”
 - 5.2. Psalm 97:11, “Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart.”
 - 5.3. Proverbs 3:3-4, “Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.”
6. To those who wish to seek God’s mercy, I offer some helpful guidance.
 - 6.1. You should consider where what you know about God is misaligned with what you know about God.
 - 6.2. Are you a faithful follower of Jesus? If you say “yes,” what evidence do you provide? I quote again what I offered last week: “Sanctification is a progressive setting apart of the Christian more and more to Christ and less and less to sin. . . . Anyone who does not want to be more clean and holy, like his heavenly Father, is not a true son of God (Matthew 5:8). If there is absolutely no progress in becoming sanctified, the [person] . . . either is doing the wrong things, and needs to change his endeavors, or he is not a believer after all.” (Jay E. Adams, Hebrews, James, I & II Peter, and Jude, The Christian Counselor’s Commentary (Cordova, TN: The Institute for Nouthetic Studies, 2020), 124–126.)