

## Reluctant: Cliff Hanger

Jonah 4:5-11

Small Group Discussion

**Opening question** (this question is designed to get everyone involved in discussion)

- Who is someone in your life, whose success or failure affects your emotional state?

**Read Jonah 4:5-11, then discuss the following.**

- What questions do you initially have after reading this passage?
- On Sunday, we looked at some key terms that are essential to understanding the meaning of this scene. Take some time to unpack those, as follows:
  - *Provided*. How many times do you see this term in today's story? How do you feel about the objects that God "provided?" What are we to see in the fact that God "provided" these things?
  - *Discomfort*. This word, in Hebrew, is the same word that we see in Jonah 1:2, 1:7, 1:8, 3:10, 4:1, 4:2, and 4:6, translated *wickedness, calamity, trouble, destruction, and wrong*. Review the fuller meaning of the word, which we have discussed previously.
    - What is the significance of God offering Jonah relief for his *discomfort*, the same way he offered Nineveh relief from theirs? What parallel is God drawing?
  - *Concern*. In vv. 10-11, God compares his concern for Nineveh with Jonah's concern for the plant. Remember, this word refers to *grieving over something or someone to which you have attached your affection*. What is the point of this object lesson?
- What does God mean when he describes Nineveh as having "more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?" (v. 11). (Leaders: the Ninevites cannot discern where their problems came from, or how to resolve them—they are in a "spiritual fog," as Tim Keller writes).
- On Sunday, Pastor Josh said that God wants us to see how he **sets his affection on people who see no way out**.
  - How does this observation strike you? Do you appreciate this aspect of God, or does it seem wrong to you?
- We also saw on Sunday that Jonah's life shows us **two different ways** of running from God. What are those two different ways, and how do we see Jonah doing both?
  - In what way is Jonah's self-righteous anger just as deadly as the Ninevites' outright sin?
  - In which way have you most tended to run from God in your life—or have you done both at different times?
  - In what way does Jonah's life foreshadow the two sons in Jesus' Parable of the Prodigal Son?
  - Both Jonah's story and Jesus' parable end with a cliff-hanger—God pleads with Jonah, and the father pleads with the older brother. What are we to gather about God's heart for people—even self-righteous, religious people—in this observation?
- In what way is Jesus a greater "Jonah?" How does the grace that God has shown us in Christ enable us to see people through eyes of mercy? (Leaders: Pastor Josh said, "In order for us to have our hearts softened, we must first see that God set his affection on us, in Christ.")
- Just for the fun of it, how do you think Jonah responded to God's probing after the end of the book? Why do you think that we are left hanging, without an answer?
- What has been one of your biggest takeaways from our look at the book of Jonah?

**Share and Pray**

- Share your needs with one another and pray for them specifically.
- Pray for the ability to respond to what you have gleaned from Jonah.