

Jonah resents God's mercy.

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. ² 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. ³ Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." ⁴ And the LORD said, "Do you do well to be angry?" Jonah 4:1-4

- Jonah ran because he knew what God was like. (Exodus 34:6-7)

God exposes Jonah's heart.

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. ⁶ 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. ⁷ But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. ⁸ 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." 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." Jonah 4:5-9

- God's mercy is meant to make you merciful.

God reveals His heart.

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. ¹¹ 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?" Jonah 4:10-11

- God's compassion and mercy reach to people of every nation.

Receiving God's mercy should form us into people who reflect God's mercy to others.

- Move toward people others move away from. (Luke 5:12-13)
- Make room in your life for people who are far from God. (Luke 5:29-32)
- Give mercy even to the people who've hurt you. (Luke 6:27-28)

Let's Talk About It

Jonah wasn't surprised by God's mercy toward Nineveh—he was angry about it! He knew God was gracious, compassionate, and slow to anger, but he struggled to accept that God would show that same mercy to his enemies. Through a simple lesson involving a plant, God exposes Jonah's heart and reminds him just how deeply He cares about people. God's character never changes, and His compassion extends to people of every nation—even those we find difficult to love. As people who have received His mercy, we're called to reflect it by moving toward those others avoid, making room for people far from God, and showing mercy even to those who have hurt us.

Jonah 4:1-11; Exodus 34:6-7; Luke 5:12-13; Luke 5:29-32; Luke 6:27-28; Luke 23:34

Discussion questions:

- Which part of the message impacted or challenged you?
- Read Jonah 4:1-4. Jonah knew God was gracious, compassionate, and slow to anger, yet he was angry when God showed mercy to Nineveh. Why do you think Jonah struggled to accept God's mercy toward them? Why is it sometimes easier to receive God's mercy than to extend that same mercy to others?
- God's character never changes, but our circumstances and feelings do. How can remembering who God is help us when we don't understand or agree with what He's doing?
- Read Jonah 4:5-7. Jonah was more concerned about losing a plant than about the people of Nineveh. What are some things we can become so focused on that we lose sight of what matters to God?
- Read Jonah 4:9-11. God patiently reasoned with Jonah even while Jonah was angry and resistant. What does this reveal about God's mercy and compassion toward Jonah—and toward us?
- Who's your Nineveh? Who is someone you find difficult to love or show compassion toward?

Take a Step

Who is someone you find difficult to love or show compassion toward? What is one practical way you can reflect God's heart toward that person this week?

Here's My Prayer

Lord, thank You that You never change. You are always gracious, compassionate, and slow to anger. Help me see others through Your eyes, especially those I find difficult to love. Show me where my heart needs to change and teach me to extend the same mercy and compassion You've shown me. In Jesus' name, Amen.