

Perspective of God

WHAT TYPE OF PEOPLE DO YOU PERCEIVE AS ANTAGONISTIC TO THE GOSPEL?

LEADER'S GUIDE

NOTE TO THE LEADER:

Do the front observation page for yourself.

Consult the leader's guide for added information on the passage.

Develop some specific questions about the passage that you found significant in the event group members do not offer many observations.

Plan the discussion on the second page using the leader's guide adding your own follow-up questions or personal examples.

B A C K G R O U N D

Something cataclysmic has occurred between Jonah 1 and Jonah 3. God got Jonah's attention through miraculous deliverance in the form of a fish. Thus far, Jonah has reclined a lot—in the hull of the ship (1:5) and in the belly of the fish (1:17). Originally, God commanded Jonah to "Arise, go" (1:2, NASB) to Nineveh. The captain commanded him to "Arise and call on your god" (1:6). Now he hears God reissue the commission to "Arise, go to Nineveh" (3:2). The commission had not changed despite Jonah's avoidance of it.

Preceding Jonah's entrance into Nineveh, two plagues swept across the city (in 765 and 759 B.C.) and a total eclipse of the sun occurred (763 B.C.). These unusual events probably were considered signs of divine anger and may explain the Ninevites' ready acceptance of Jonah's message when he arrived in 759 (*Bible Knowledge Commentary*, p. 1462).

Upon Jonah's pronouncement of impending judgment, the King of Nineveh leads his people in turning from their wickedness (1:8). He hopes that God will relent by turning from His fierce anger (1:9). In the end, God sees the Ninevites turn from their wickedness (1:10), so He answers their plea to be spared.

Dr. John Hanah summarizes the events well: "When God threatened punishment He provided a dark backdrop on which to etch most vividly His forgiving mercies" (*ibid*, p. 1470).

Group Member's Preparation The best interaction over the passage will occur if your group members prepare the front observation page before they come to the group. If this does not work with your group, allow the group at least 15 minutes to study the passage before proceeding through the lesson.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

SECOND TIME:

Compare to 1:1,2. The commission did not change.

KING OF NINEVEH:

Refers to the King of Assyria who probably resided in Nineveh.

DUST:

From the ash-heap for refuse, the greatest sign of abasement in that day.

BEASTS:

Included as part of the Persian custom for mourning; emphasizing the totality of repentance.

OVERTURNED:

The same word used for the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah due to their perversity (Genesis 19:25). God's hatred of Nineveh's wickedness was similar.

VERSE 5:

A common Hebrew narrative feature is to mention the outcome of an event before explaining the cause. So the repentance of the people most likely followed the king's decree which follows.

SACKCLOTH:

An Eastern sign of extreme remorse. It was a coarse cloth often made of goat's hair and also worn by the poor, prisoners and slaves.

RELENT:

Only used in the Old Testament with God as the subject. It is derived from a root which means to "breathe deeply" in a physical display of compassion.

BIG IDEA

SEEING PEOPLE AS GOD SEES THEM IS BELIEVING HE CAN REACH THEM

Think of one person you know who would never be interested in spiritual things. That was the way Jonah viewed the Ninevites. He considered them resistant to and unworthy of the opportunity to repent. He was wrong on the first count, correct on the second—but he needed to remember that God is an "equal opportunity" grace giver.

DESIRED LIFE CHANGE

The student will determine ways to get to know two or three people he/she has stereotyped.

AUDIENCE

This lesson is designed for students who are walking with the Lord and are aware of the Christian's mandate to be involved in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Jonah 3:1-10

- ASK:** What type of people do you perceive as antagonistic to the gospel? *Follow-up:* How would you describe your view of these people?
- STATE:** “Last time we saw Jonah repent and God deliver. This week we continue Jonah’s story as he encounters God’s commission to him a second time.”
- ASK:** Answers for the overview section.
- ASK:** What stood out as significant to you as you observed the passage?
- ASK:** What questions do you have about the passage?
respond to questions as a group
- ASK:** What titles do you have for each section?
- ASK:** What would be a good title for this chapter?
God brings Jonah to repentance
- STATE:** Jonah had some serious stereotypes and prejudices to overcome toward the people of Nineveh. Let’s explore further Jonah’s view of Nineveh in contrast to God’s view of Nineveh.

- ASK:** Answers for Jonah’s view of Nineveh. *pagan gentiles; barbaric; evil; wicked* *Follow-up:* How would you feel about them?

OVERVIEW		JONAH 3:1-10: <i>God brings Nineveh to repentance</i>	
<p>3 WHO are the characters? <i>God Jonah the Ninevites the King of Nineveh</i></p> <p>WHEN do the events happen? <i>after Jonah repents in the belly of the fish; after the second commission (3:1)</i></p> <p>WHERE do the events take place? <i>the great city of Nineveh</i></p> <p>WHY do these events occur? <i>to show the results of Jonah’s obedience; to show that some of the most wicked people may repent</i></p> <p>WHAT is the point of this story? <i>Nineveh repents of their ways once Jonah obediently brings God’s message to them</i></p> <p>SEEING PEOPLE AS GOD SEES THEM IS BELIEVING HE CAN REACH THEM.</p>	<p>4 1 Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: <i>What the Lord commands: go to Nineveh; proclaim the message God gives</i></p> <p>2</p> <p>3 <i>How Jonah responds: obeyed; went to Nineveh</i></p> <p>4</p>	<p>6 <i>Jonah presents</i></p>	<p>5 The Ninevites . . . <i>How they responded: believed God; declared a fast</i></p> <p>6 When the news reached the king of Nineveh . . . <i>How the king responded: he rose from his throne; took off his robes; covered himself with sackcloth; sat down in the dust; issued a proclamation for repentance and fasting</i></p> <p>7 <i>What the king’s hope is: That God may relent and turn from His anger</i></p>
<p>5 Consider the words of Ashurbanibal II, King of Assyria (883-859 B.C.): <i>“I STORMED THE MOUNTAIN PEAKS AND TOOK THEM. IN THE MIDST OF THE MIGHTY MOUNTAIN I SLAUGHTERED THEM; WITH THEIR BLOOD I DYED THE MOUNTAIN RED LIKE WOOL...THE HEADS OF THEIR WARRIORS I CUT OFF, AND I FORMED THEM INTO A PILLAR OVER AGAINST THEIR CITY; THEIR YOUNG MEN AND THEIR MAIDENS I BURNED WITH FIRE.”</i></p>	<p>10 When God saw what they did . . . <i>How God responds: He had compassion; He did not destroy them</i></p>	<p>6 <i>Nineveh repents</i></p>	<p>9 <i>God relents</i></p>

- ASK:** How do you think he felt about them? *hate; fear; resentment; intimidation*
- ASK:** What may have caused Jonah to view them as he did?
Nineveh’s reputation; his fears
- ASK:** Answers for God’s view of Nineveh. *evil; wicked, but open to repentance*
- ASK:** How do you think he felt about them? *compassionate*
- ASK:** What may have caused God to view them as he did?
knowing the hearts of the Ninevites, His love *Follow-up:* What is God teaching us through His forgiveness of Nineveh?
- DISCUSS:** Identify two or three people you have been reluctant to reach out to. What have you assumed about them? Reconsider what may really be true about them. What steps can you take to find out?

POINT OF VIEW	MIKE’S PORTRAIT
<p>Jonah’s View of Nineveh</p> <p>1. If Jonah were asked to describe the people of Nineveh, what words or phrases would he use?</p> <p>2. How do you think he felt about them?</p> <p>3. What may have caused Jonah to view them as he did?</p>	<p>MIKE’S PORTRAIT</p> <p><i>Mike was a highly recruited track athlete.</i></p> <p>I considered him a prideful, partying freshman. Nevertheless, our freshman year on the track team was marked by a decent relationship even though we competed in different events and rarely trained together. My roommate David, a Christian and fellow pole vaulter with Mike, worked out with him daily.</p> <p>Dinnertime together frequently involved Mike attacking Christianity. Afterwards, I would hole up in my room with Josh McDowell books, trying to find answers to the issues raised. His freshman research paper argued, “Why the Noah’s Ark Story Must be a Myth.”</p> <p>I never felt like I made much progress in my arguments with Mike. He certainly never indicated he was persuaded. So I just wrote him off as too antagonistic. I heard stories about his lifestyle which validated that perception as well.</p> <p>By our junior year, our paths had parted somewhat. Yet, one day he excitedly approached me saying, “Gary, I’ve become a Christian!”</p> <p>My full-of-faith response was, “You’re kidding!” Yet after convincing me of his sincerity, I asked, “What changed? What happened to all your intellectual problems with Christianity?”</p> <p>Mike replied, “All those seemed unimportant after witnessing David’s life. I realized I couldn’t argue that away.”</p> <p>I stood there feeling a mixture of excitement and embarrassment. I was excited to see Mike as a new creature in Christ, but ashamed that I had written him off.</p>
<p>God’s View of Nineveh</p> <p>1. If God were asked to describe the people of Nineveh, what words or phrases would He use?</p> <p>2. How do you think He felt about them?</p> <p>3. What may have caused God to view them as He did?</p>	<p>SELF PORTRAIT</p> <p>Identify two or three people you have been reluctant to reach out to.</p> <p>What have you assumed about them?</p> <p>Reconsider what may really be true about them.</p> <p>What steps can you take to find out?</p>