

Compassion of God

CAN YOU THINK OF A TIME WHEN YOUR PERSONAL DESIRE CONFLICTED WITH WHAT GOD DESIRED?

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

Jonah 3 showed us we must see people as God sees them. Yet in this chapter, Jonah is still in the midst of learning that lesson. He reacts to the Ninevites' repentance with intense anger (literally, "it was a great evil to Jonah"). His anger and lack of compassion are contrasted with God's love and compassion for the 120,000 people of Nineveh. People were behind God's commission (1:1,2 and 3:1,2) just as people are at the heart of the Great Commission we operate under today.

When Jonah witnesses Nineveh's repentance, he knows God will relent though the forty days and judgment will not pass. In the recitation of the Exodus 34:6,7 statement of God's character, the author applies the Lord's covenant love to the Ninevites. This clear message would make the Hebrew reader's blood boil just as Jonah was hot at God.

Jonah exits the city to watch—to see if he can learn anything of God's ways. While doing so, he enjoys the comfort resulting from God's provision. But when he loses his shade, he responds more angrily than when Nineveh repented. God asks the key question of the chapter, "What right do you have to be angry?" The Lord has Jonah right where he wants him for this object lesson—outraged at the loss of a living thing. His argument is simple: If it was not right for the plant to be struck down, how can it be right to strike down Nineveh? God hereby contrasts His own compassion for Nineveh with Jonah's self-interest.

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

VERSE 2:

Jonah's motive must have stemmed from what Nineveh meant in Israel's past and what he expected it to be in the future. He employs a confessional expression of God's character from Exodus 34:6-7. Jonah manifests none of these qualities toward Nineveh, wanting to express them only to Israel.

VINE:

Some kind of shade plant, possibly the gourd, castor oil plant, or vine. The Greek translation of the Old Testament uses the term *bottle gourd* which was often planted on the shores of the Tigris River.

SCORCHING EAST WIND:

Known as the scirocco; constant hot wind which eliminated all moisture from the air causing the skin to draw tight. It could affect neurotransmitters in the brain resulting in exhaustion, depression, and bizarre behavior.

PROVIDED:

Earlier God sovereignly provided the fish to swallow Jonah (1:17). Now He provides a vine, a worm and a scorching wind.

...THEIR RIGHT HAND AND THEIR LEFT:

Probably an expression for the complete moral guilt and lawlessness of the people of Nineveh.

MANY CATTLE:

The destruction of livestock would be a waste in comparison to the value of Jonah's shade plant.

BIG IDEA

GOD WOULD RATHER YOU BE COMPASSIONATE THAN COMFORTABLE

It's natural to enjoy the pleasures of life. However, our culture encourages a self-absorbed lifestyle which conflicts with God's heart for caring about a spiritually dead world. The American Dream is not necessarily God's dream for redeeming His people. He desires us to get a hold of His compassion for the spiritual condition of people.

DESIRED LIFE CHANGE

The student will identify comforts which he/she values more than compassion for the lost.

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 4:1-11

1. **ASK:** Can you think of a time when your personal desire conflicted with what God desired? *Follow-up:* Describe what it was like.
2. **STATE:** “Last time we saw God’s compassion for Nineveh caused Him to spare them when they repented. This week we see the Lord teaching Jonah about his compassion for people.”
3. **ASK:** Answers for the overview section.
4. **ASK:** What stood out as significant to you as you observed the passage?
5. **ASK:** What questions do you have about the passage?
respond to questions as a group
6. **ASK:** What titles do you have for each section?
7. **ASK:** What would be a good title for this chapter?
God brings Jonah to repentance
8. **STATE:** Let’s explore further the contrast between God’s compassion and Jonah’s compassion.
9. **ASK:** What does God do? *relents; provides vine; provides worm and wind*
10. **ASK:** What is Jonah’s attitude? *very angry, very happy, very angry* *Follow-up:* Why?

OVERVIEW		7 JONAH 4:1-11: <i>Jonah's compassion object lesson</i>	
3 WHO are the characters? God Jonah WHEN do the events happen? <i>after the repentance of Nineveh</i> WHERE do the events take place? <i>outside the city of Nineveh</i> WHY do these events occur? <i>because God relented from the calamity He had pronounced on Nineveh; to teach Jonah compassion for people</i> WHAT is the point of this story? <i>Jonah needs God's compassion for people more than he needs comfort</i> GOD DESIRES OUR COMPASSION MORE THAN OUR COMFORT.	4 1 But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry. 2 He prayed . . . <i>What Jonah prayed:</i> <i>this is why I fled; I knew you would relent; take my life</i> 3 4 But the Lord replied . . . <i>What the Lord asked:</i> <i>Have you any right to be angry?</i> 5 Jonah . . . <i>What Jonah did:</i> <i>went outside the city; made a shelter for shade; waited to see what would happen</i> 6 Then the Lord God . . . <i>What God did:</i> <i>provided a vine; made it grow over Jonah</i> And Jonah . . . <i>His response:</i> <i>was very happy about the vine</i> 7 But at dawn the next day . . . <i>What God did:</i> <i>provided a worm that chewed up the vine; provided a scorching wind</i> 8 He wanted to die, and said . . . <i>What Jonah said:</i> <i>it would be better for me to die than to live</i> 9 But God said to Jonah . . . <i>What God said:</i> <i>Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?</i> Jonah's reply: <i>I do. I am angry enough to die.</i> 10 But the Lord said . . . <i>What the Lord said:</i> 11 <i>You have been concerned about the vine; I am concerned about the people of Nineveh</i>	6	Jonah prays in anger
			God angers Jonah with discomfort
			God teaches Jonah about compassion



9 What does God do? 3:10	10 What is Jonah's attitude? 4:1-3	11 How does Jonah answer? 4:6	11 What is Jonah's desire? 4:6
12 WHAT was the object of JONAH's concern?	13 WHAT was the object of GOD'S concern?	20	
14 WHY was Jonah concerned about it?	15 WHY was God concerned about it?	17 HOW was God related to it?	
16 HOW was Jonah related to it?	SELF PORTRAIT		
18 JONAH'S THEOLOGY: What did Jonah believe about God (verse 2)?	How do you recognize someone who values personal comfort too highly? What might be the root cause?		
19 JONAH'S PROBLEM: What was at the heart of Jonah's problem?	How do you recognize someone who has compassion for others? What might be the root cause? To whom can I demonstrate compassion this week? What will I do?		

11. **ASK:** God asks: Do you have a right to be angry? How does Jonah answer and what is Jonah’s desire? *leaves and watches; yes; wants to die;*
2. **ASK:** What was the object of Jonah’s concern. *vine*
3. **ASK:** What was the object of God’s concern? *people of Nineveh*
14. **ASK:** Why was Jonah concerned about it? *comfort*
15. **ASK:** Why was God concerned about it? *compassion*
16. **ASK:** How was Jonah related to it? *not at all*
17. **ASK:** How was God related to it? *their creator and Savior* *Follow-up:* What do we learn from comparing Jonah’s compassion to God’s compassion? *God is concerned about people. We tend to be more concerned about ourselves.*
18. **ASK:** What did Jonah believe about God? *He was gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in love.*
19. **ASK:** What was the heart of Jonah’s problem? *He desired God's character for himself but not for others.*
20. **DISCUSS:** Give group members a few minutes to answer these questions individually then discuss.