



In the fish's belly, Jonah found grace to repent. His repentance and renewed faith expressed themselves in the classic words, "Salvation belongs to the LORD!" (Jonah 2:9). Repentance and faith also inspired renewed faithfulness, as chapter 3 records Jonah's obedience to God's commission to preach in wicked Nineveh. In an astonishing display of divine power, Jonah's preaching provoked one of the greatest mass expressions of repentance: "They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them" (Jonah 3:5).

Against this background, we might expect Jonah's story to conclude in triumph. But chapter 4 tells us otherwise. Jonah's story reminds us that few believers follow an unbroken ascent from unbelief upward into gloriously victorious faith. Instead, we tend to progress with steps and halts, advances and slips. R. T. Kendall speaks for many when he writes, "Jonah had such a marvelous revelation of God's mercy and grace to him that, humanly speaking, we might expect he would never have a serious problem again. For, after once seeing God in this extraordinary way in his own life, that should set him up for life." Instead, Jonah shows us that when it comes to growing in God's grace, none of us is set up for life; we all have need for continual and perpetual growth in the grace of God. So it is that Jonah's final chapter begins with a most distressing report: "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry" (Jonah 4:1).<sup>7</sup>

## ICEBREAKER

**What's your favorite movie or TV show that ended on a big cliffhanger?**

## READ IT

**Read Jonah 4:1-11**

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<sup>7</sup> Phillips, Richard D.. *Jonah & Micah (Reformed Expository Commentary)* (p. 114). P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.

## GET IT

1. Why was Jonah angry?
2. What questions did God ask Jonah?
3. What object lesson did God use to teach Jonah?
4. Why does God pity Nineveh?
5. How does Jonah finally respond to God's grace?

## LIVE IT

If the book of Jonah ended at chapter 3, we'd celebrate a story of repentance, revival, and redemption. But it doesn't end there. Chapter 4 opens with a "distressing report": Jonah's response to Nineveh's repentance and God's mercy is anything but fitting for a prophet. Yet here, the true heart of Jonah's reluctance is finally exposed. He knew exactly who God was, "gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love", and he wanted no part in seeing that grace extended to those outside Israel, least of all to Nineveh. At the root of Jonah's anger lies the tangled roots of pride: pride that presumed to know better than God, pride that was blind to his own need for grace, and pride that rejoiced in mercy for himself but refused it for others.

6. How does Jonah's response reveal his lack of understanding of God's character and grace?

**7. Jonah's response is rooted in spiritual pride. What are some examples of what spiritual pride looks like for believers?**

**8. What dangers are presented when we stoop to living in spiritual pride?**

If anyone in this story deserved judgment, it was Jonah. He had run from God, abdicated his calling, reluctantly obeyed when forced, and ultimately resented the outcome of his own preaching. Yet God, who had every right to destroy him, instead chose to display mercy once again. The remarkable thing is that Jonah didn't even recognize the grace being shown to him. He hadn't repented, yet God was gracious. He was indignant, yet God was patient.

Rather than striking Jonah down for his arrogance, God pursued him with a lesson in mercy. The plant, the worm, and the scorching wind weren't acts of divine cruelty but instruments of grace. They were God's way of exposing what was hidden in Jonah's heart and softening it. God sought to bring Jonah's heart into alignment with His own, to help him see people, not through the lens of pride and prejudice, but through the eyes of compassion.

**9. As you look back over the whole of Jonah's story, how have you seen God demonstrate grace and mercy toward Jonah?**

**10. How would you describe or characterize God's mercy?**

**11. Describe a season of your life where you are uniquely aware of how God was patient and gracious toward you.**

God's word marks the beginning and end of this short book. It's remarkable how much we can learn about who our God is not only from the things He says, the things He does in this story. If you've thought Jonah is the main character of this story – think again. Through every scene of this story we've been watching a portrait of God unfold. The book of Jonah isn't merely about a man who ran from God, but a God who runs after rebellious people, a God of second chances.

**12. As you think back over the whole book, what attributes of God have you seen on display? Where did you see His mercy, power, patience, or compassion most clearly?**

**13. Which of God's attributes have come alive for you in a new way through this study?**

The book of Jonah ends in a way that catches us off guard. There's no neat conclusion or final word about Jonah's response. It just ends with a question: "... and also much cattle?"

It feels abrupt, almost incomplete. But maybe that's the point.

What if God's question to Jonah lingers because it's meant to? What if it's an invitation for you as the reader to step into the story and respond for yourself? Maybe we aren't told how Jonah answered because we're supposed to. Will we share God's heart for those who don't know Him? Will we rejoice when His mercy reaches people we wouldn't expect, or maybe don't even want to see forgiven?

Jonah's silence leaves space for us to wrestle with our own hearts. Do we celebrate God's compassion when it's shown to others, or do we quietly wish He'd deal with them differently?

**14. What is one practical way you can live out the heart of the God we've encountered in this story?**