

The Invitation of Comforts & Callouses

Jonah 4:5–9, Dave Geldart, July 20, 2025, Tru Community Church

[1] INTRODUCTION: MISPLACED ATTACHMENTS

Have you ever gotten *way too attached* to something small?
Sometimes you don't really realize it until they're threatened or taken away.

Maybe it was your favorite restaurant closing down – for me this was Happy Valley Chinese restaurant.

Or your car that finally gave up.

Or a favorite hoodie that fell apart.

Or that brand new smartphone that got a scratch on the screen way too quickly? – my new iPhone 13 max pro that was sweet at the time, got screen scratches within the first month!

Or maybe it's something more serious: like a body image, or a job, a relationship, a status, a source of comfort or pleasure that also is used to cope with life: like sex or alcohol. Or achievements on the checklist or at work to give you a sense of value and worth.

These things aren't wrong to enjoy. But sometimes, our deep emotional attachment to *creature comforts* exposes something in us.

And sometimes, **God uses small things to show us big truths.**

[2] Today we're in Jonah 4:5-9, looking at the Invitation of Comforts and Callouses

Jonah, the messy prophet's world turns upside down because of...a plant.

And in this strange little story—a shady plant, a hungry worm, and a harsh wind—God teaches Jonah a crucial lesson:

➔ ***What we love most reveals the condition of our hearts.***

[3] Read Jonah 4:5-9 (Mya)

⁵ Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. ⁶ Then the LORD God provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant. ⁷ But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered.

[4] ⁸ When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live."

⁹ But God said to Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?”

“It is,” he said. “And I’m so angry I wish I were dead.”

→ PRAY (Me)

[5] JONAH’S WATCH PARTY (v.5)

Last Sunday we were able to get away to Estes Park CO on family vacation. So thankful to our teaching team approach here at our church!

Dilan did a great job preaching on the beginning of this chapter where Jonah finally had obeyed and preached to the Ninevehites and they repented and God spared them from his judgement and wrath.

And Jonah finally makes explicit what we’d been seeing for the whole of his story so far: He didn’t want to obey God’s call to go preach to these people because HE KNEW THIS WOULD HAPPEN – he knew that they would repent and **that God was merciful and kind** and would spare them.

But Jonah wanted them to burn! In verses 1-4 of Ch 4, Jonah has the gall to rail at GOD for this, and **throws a giant pity party.**

And after his rant, **God asks him the poignant and piercing question:** Is it right for you to be angry?

Now we read what happened after his pity party—he kept the party going: Today is the After Party!

[6] “Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city.” (v.5)

Jonah has left Nineveh, not to celebrate their repentance and worship God, but to set up camp—hoping *maybe, just maybe*, God might still rain fire from heaven and kill them all.

He builds a shelter for himself—a man-made booth—because he’s planning to be there a while.

[7] Let’s be honest: he’s pouting with a purpose. He’s hoping God will change His mind and destroy the city after all.

He doesn’t like it when God changes his mind and gives ppl mercy that he doesn’t like. But he’s also HOPING he’ll change his mind and give them judgement.

What does pouting with a purpose look like??? (in your life)

- In my more embarrassing moments, looks like me pouting after a fight with Jenn, hoping she'll see and change her mind and say she's sorry.
- ➔ **A spouse who withdraws emotionally**, not to punish but to signal hurt and prompt reconciliation. Mixed bag.
- ➔ **The child who sulks in the corner** after being denied a toy or candy, hoping their visible sadness will sway the parent's decision.
- ➔ **Social media "silent treatment" posts**, where someone shares vague, moody updates to provoke concern or attention.

These aren't just immature emotional reactions—they're calculated expressions meant to influence others.

- ➔ It'd be like if I walked **into Radina's Bakehouse longing for a jalapeno ham and cheddar croissant**. And then when I order it, the employee apologizes but says they're out. Then, with dramatic sighs and slow, deliberate movements, I order nothing but a plain small coffee. **Then I sit by the counter where staff can see me—head in hands, forlorn expression, eyes occasionally darting to the empty pastry shelf.**

I'm not just disappointed. I'm staging a protest, hoping someone will say, "Actually we've got one more in the back!" or "Let me make one for you real quick".

Just like in Luke 15: which Dilan referenced last week – The prodigal son. **When the older son** is so insulted at the mercy of his father toward his disobedient younger brother. What did he do? He **sat outside and pouted**. Refused to go in – where everyone could see his pouting! He wanted to make a statement. **Trying to make his merciful father change his mind and give his brother judgement instead!** Sound familiar?

Pouting with a purpose: calculated expressions meant to influence others. Messy, mixed bag at best.

That's what Jonah's doing with God. Crazy right?

➔ **We'd never do that!** But remember: the entire book of Jonah is supposed to get us to say that about Jonah, and then realize that we're actually just like him. **Jonah is supposed to be a mirror** to show us aspects of ourselves that God is wanting to change.

APPLICATION: WHEN WE STALL OUTSIDE GOD'S MISSION

Jonah is literally and spiritually sitting outside God's mission. He tried running from the mission (and it went terribly, nearly—or actually—killing him). Now he's just going to sit down right where

he's at, and hope for the death of his enemies – his neighbors – the very people God has chosen to be merciful to!

- God has moved on—with mercy.
- Jonah is stuck—in bitterness.

And how many of us have done the same?

We **step out** of the mission, we **remove ourselves** from people we don't understand, those who make us uncomfortable, hurt, angry, we **withdraw** from neighbors or ministries or relationships—**because we're bitter**. Hurt. Angry. **Pouting with a purpose!**

Chewing on a root of bitterness.

We sulk, while God is saving.

But Jonah's not getting the picture, so God tries another tact: an object lesson:

[8] PART 2: The Invitation of Comforts (v.6)

"Then the Lord God provided a leafy plant and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant." (v.6)

This is the **first time** in the whole book that Jonah is described as *happy*.

- Not when he heard directly from the creator God of the universe
- Not when he was saved from drowning.
- Not when God gave him a second chance.
- Not when Nineveh repented and turned to the true God.

He's happy about **a plant**.

→ Why? Because it made him comfortable.

But God provides the plant in mercy—not just for shade, but as a setup.

This plant is about to become the object lesson of Jonah's life.

ILLUSTRATION: OBJECT LESSONS FROM SMALL THINGS

Jesus often used small, everyday things to teach big truths:

- A mustard seed, A fig tree, Coins, Fish, Some Bread

Likewise, this plant is God's *parable in real time*—tailored for Jonah.

And for us today who would be brave enough to see ourselves reflected in the mirror of his life.

Jonah is emotionally invested in a plant. But not in 120,000 human beings – people of incalculable worth, made in the image of the same God who made him -- people who just turned to God.

And that's the contrast God is trying to expose. He cares more about a plant that brings him a little comfort – **ultimately cares more about himself – than others.**

[9] God can use our comforts and pleasures and provisions to invite us to see deeper truths about ourselves. If we're willing to listen and learn, **this is the simplest and least painful level for us!** But Jonah's not catching it still, so God has to go another layer deeper.

[10] PART 3: THE INVITATION OF DISCOMFORT (vv.7–8)

“But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint.”

The word **“provided”** appears again—just like in chapter 1 with the fish, and again here with the plant, the worm, and the wind. PROVIDED (a mercy from God, a grace, even though it certainly didn't feel like it at the moment).

God is still orchestrating every moment of Jonah's story—still pursuing him, still shaping him. Calling him forward. Working on his heard heart. Mercy in the midst of his mess.

But this time, it's *discomfort* God uses. The removal of comforts he'd provided before.

[11] Likewise we often welcome the shade but resist the worm and wind.

→ Yet often they all come from God—with a purpose.

This one stings more! Jonah goes from very happy to very angry again. And once again, he says:

“It would be better for me to die than to live.” (v.8)

→ All because a plant died. A plant that hadn't even been there yesterday. But had been giving him some shade for a few hours.

Again, let that sit with us: Jonah is more distraught over a *plant* than over people. Over HIS COMFORT threatened, than people whom God Himself loves.

GOD'S CUTTING QUESTION:

[12] “But God said to Jonah, ‘Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?’ ‘It is,’ he said. ‘And I’m so angry I wish I were dead.’” (v.9)

God’s question is again gentle but surgical:

“Jonah, is this really the hill you want to die on? A plant? A little bit of shade?”

And Jonah doubles down. He defends his anger. He clings to his offense.

APPLICATION: WHEN GOD TOUCHES WHAT WE LOVE

Let’s pause here.

We often talk about God asking for us to let go of our sin. Wanting to take away the bad things that are hurting ourselves and others. And he does!

But sometimes, He asks us to let go of something we *love*—something inherently good that has become an **idol: Something we’re looking to for our comfort and security over God Himself.**

Jonah didn’t build the plant. He didn’t water it. He didn’t make it grow.

It was a gift of grace and mercy. But when it was gone, he acted like he’d been robbed. Treated unfairly. **Deprived BY GOD of his rights.**

We’d never do that, would we?

Remember, Jonah is a mirror. For us. We react to discomfort just like Jonah.

[13] So, What’s your plant?

- Comfort?, A position?, A relationship?, A dream? For the way you expect your life to go.
- Your reputation?, Your ideology? Perhaps political?, Your bank account?, Your health?

In the discomfort, the removal of the plant,

[14] God is not trying to punish Jonah. He’s trying to reveal his heart.

Jonah grieves the loss of a plant, but not the loss of souls.

This is about misplaced compassion. Misaligned values. A heart out of sync with God and his purposes.

Remember, Jonah is a mirror. For us to gaze into. And find mission. Mess. And mercy ourselves.

What do you grieve, rage, fret over, more than the spiritual emergency of your lost neighbors around you?

Me → A heart that struggles to FEEL compassion for my neighbors.

→ COMPASSION – WITH-SUFFERING (Much less my enemies: those who've hurt, rejected me.)

[15] A calloused heart. Often revealed by areas of my life where I'm dissatisfied.

How do we develop a calloused heart?

- pain, fear, etc.

- **things that make us pull inward, just a bit, to try to protect ourselves from getting hurt again.**

-- **It's extremely natural! We get callouses on our hands** and feet where they get rubbed and scuffed. Over and over again. And the skin hardens up as a protection mechanism.

- **And also makes us numb. Duller. Not quite as sensitive to pain – OR ANY OTHER FEELING!**

- but we're called to something SUPER NATURAL..... to maintain hearts of flesh in the midst of life on mission.

We're called to maintain a heart tough enough to withstand the rigours of real life and ministry, yet tender enough to be moved by compassion toward neighbors and enemies who are lost and headed for destruction.

Tough and tender. Not calloused. Self protective. Numbing. Bitter.

Only God can do this in us.

EZEKIEL written almost 200 yrs later, under another foreign oppression: this time the Babylonians.

Israelites, God's people STILL avoiding God's call to them to be a light and blessing to the nations.

→ Failed. Resistant. Hard-hearted. Calloused.

→ Instead become reclusive, pietistic, adversarial, and called the nations their enemies. **And in the process, began worshiping idols from those nations themselves! Mess.**

Listen to what God says to these wayward and calloused hearted people:

[16] Ez 26: ²³ **I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I am proved holy through you before their eyes.**

²⁴ **“For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. ²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be**

[17] clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

This prophecy cannot be fulfilled by human effort. Even our best attempts fall short, filthy rags. **The only way we can avoid calloused hearts, to fulfill our mission and purpose to be a light and blessing to the nations is through the work of Jesus Christ. His spirit now living inside each of us who believe in HIS MISSION.**

Resurrecting our stony hearts so prone to worship idols, so prone to chew on roots of bitterness when our comforts are removed. So prone to build up callouses on our hearts as we go through pain and fear. So naturally grow cold toward our neighbors.

Only Jesus Christ can take dead stony hearts and make them warm and tender again. Flesh and blood. Soft and Strong.

This is God's mission through Jonah.... AND TO JONAH.

And since Jonah's a mirror for us, the reader: The message is clear:

[18] God is inviting you to follow him deeper, down below the calloused parts of your heart.

The places you've walled out. Been hurt. Been disappointed. Where bitterness reigns. In those rooms deep inside that haven't been opened in years. For good reason!

And he wants to invite you in there, with him. To let him hold up the mirror – not to reject you – but to invite you into healing. Softening. Tenderizing. Hope. Joy. Love. Mercy. Mission. Even in the midst of the mess.

It's as King David wrote 3000 yrs ago in Psalm 23: **Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death – THAT'S WHAT THESE PLACES UNDERNEATH OUR CALLOUSES FEEL LIKE..... like death to go into --- I will fear no evil, for you are with me.**

That's God's call to you today. Not to be perfect before him without him, but to let him lead you into deep places of tenderizing and healing in our hearts.

Will you be brave enough to let him hold up the mirror to your loves. The little things you enjoy and crave. Things you're terrified to lose. Hopes and dreams you hold on to so tightly that you miss the mercy of God. I'd rather DIE than lose these things. Your functional idols.

Will you be brave enough to let him take you into the places that you've become calloused and bitter because of the things God's allowed to be taken away from you? Your discomforts. Pains. Fears. Rejections. Resentments.

God is inviting you to lay down your idols and your callouses and open your hands to him. Risk letting him care for you. Lead you. Remake you. Tenderize your heart.

It's a risk. Often involves some pain and fear. In letting go. In detoxing. In healing from your addictions. Your fears. Walking the pathway that looks like death at the start.

Trusting that the Savior who leads you by the hand there is actually leading you to the pathway to the life you've always wanted. The joy and peace. Pleasure. Purpose! Healing. Wholeness.

No longer pouting with a purpose.

Loving with a purpose. Mission.

Letting God use your mess as intersections of ministry to others.

Living out the theme of Jonah in your real life: Mission. Mess. Mercy.

And we know we can trust Jesus with our hearts, with this pruning process. In Luke 15, Jesus says HE IS THE VINE – and we are the branches. He is the true vine that provides and sustains us. That does good works of ministry through us. Produces fruit.

And he was willing to sacrifice himself for us. To save us from our sins. He was CUT OFF, says Isaiah. He was hung upon another dead plant: the cross.

Cut off for us. So that through his resurrection, we could be made new. Invited into something brand new that will never disappoint. Where no hot wind will blow, nor vine wither.

[19] How will you respond to him now?

You can harden your heart – increase your callousness even now to this call.

Or, your only other response is repentance. Changing your mind and choosing to place your trust in him rather than the idol, the other things you're looking to to make your life work.

To keep you safe. To give you pleasure, comfort. Purpose.

[20] Prayer of revelation: PS 139:23-24

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

[21] Prayer of Repentance: Psalm 51:

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

² Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

³ For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge.

¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

[22] Recommended Article: Cultivating a Tender Heart by Dennis McCallum

<https://www.dwellcc.org/essays/cultivating-tender-heart>

[23] → Pray

JONAH

MISSION. MESS. MERCY.



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4:5-9

THE INVITATION OF COMFORTS & CALLOUSES

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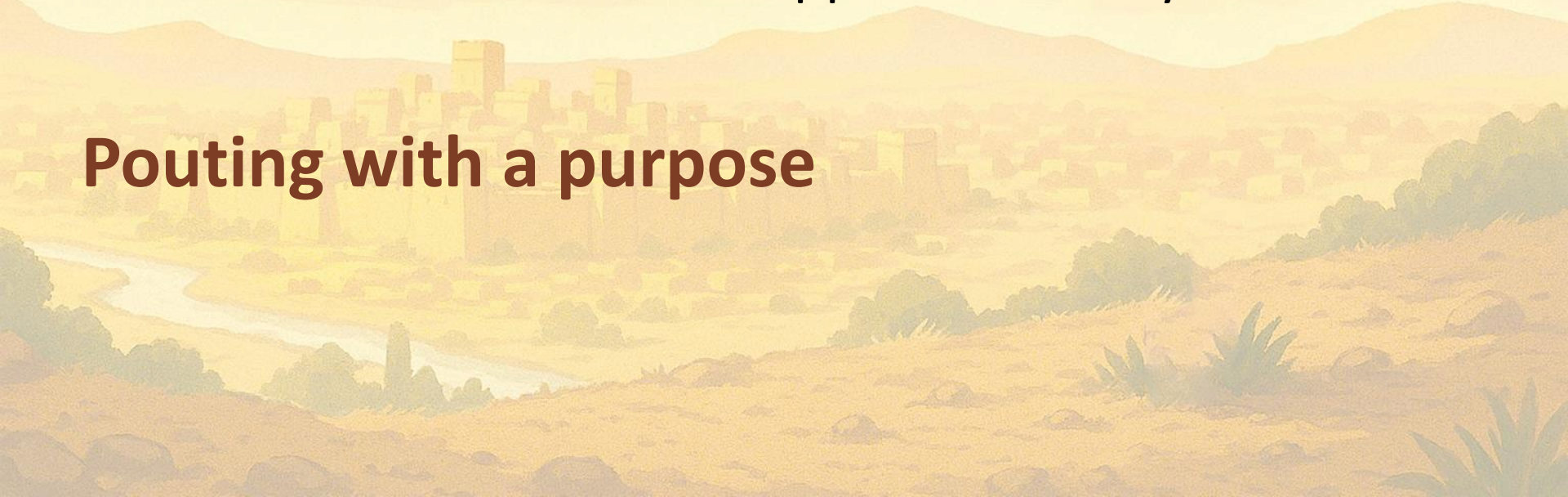
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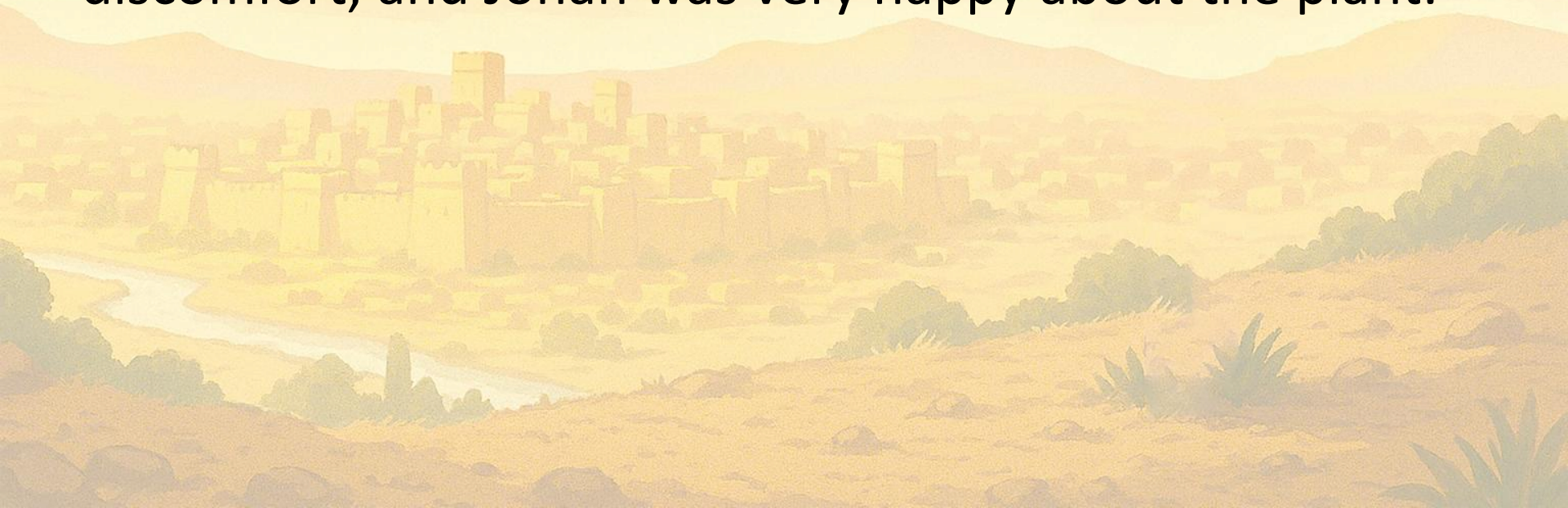
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Pouting with a purpose



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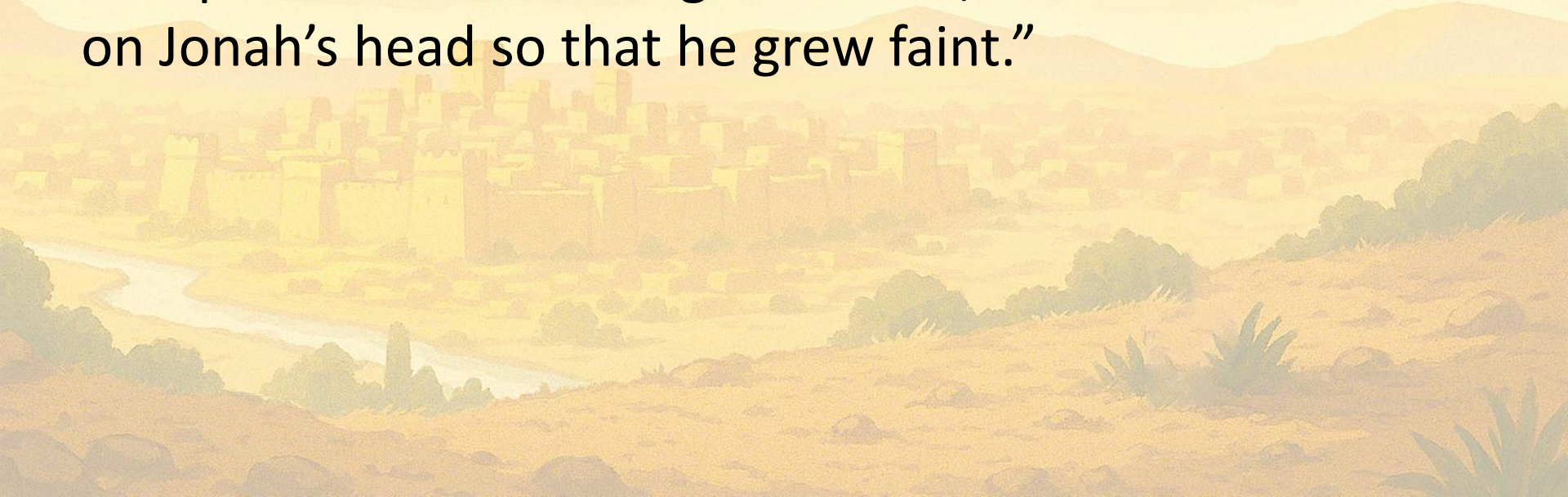
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We often welcome the shade but resist the worm and wind.

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EZEKIEL 26:23-27

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God is inviting you to follow him below the calloused parts of your heart.

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Prayer of Revelation: Psalm 139:23-24

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Prayer of Repentance: Psalm 51:1-4,10

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HOW WILL YOU RESPOND?

Recommended Reading:

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