

CHARACTER OF GOD

WHAT IS GOD LIKE? PART II: MERCIFUL

Reading Assignment

Have students read Jonah 4.

Intro Discussion:

According to Exodus 34:6-7, God is “merciful.” Other translations render this Hebrew word (OT was written in Hebrew) “compassionate.”

What does merciful or compassionate mean?

What does it mean when you are merciful towards someone?

Content:

The Hebrew word for “merciful” comes from the word “womb.” This is an emotionally charged word, like the feelings a mother has for her newborn baby.

If someone has mercy on me it means that I do NOT get a punishment or consequence I rightfully deserve. When God is merciful, he refrains from bringing judgement on someone that deserves it.

Read Jonah 4:1-2 together.

Who can summarize what has happened up to this point in the book?

- God called Jonah to preach to the Ninevites, who were a wicked and evil people.
- Jonah ran from God. Ends up getting swallowed by a giant fish.
- Jonah repents, and is vomited onto dry ground.
- God again calls Jonah to preach in Nineveh. He does so, and they repent.
- Jonah climbs a hill to see what happens, and is greatly dispersed that God has forgiven them (Ninevites were considered an enemy to Israel, and Jonah did not want them to be spared from God’s wrath).

Jonah knew God’s character, that he was “merciful.” God has strong affections not only for Israel, but for all people, even sinful and wicked Ninevites. Ninevah was known for violent, vile and gruesome acts. However, God did not give them the punishment they deserved. He was MERCIFUL!

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What does it mean for you and your life that God is merciful?

- Even though we rightly deserve death, for that is the natural consequence of sin (Romans 6:23), we instead receive deliverance through Jesus.
- Read Romans 5:8 together. Even while we were sinners, Christ chose to die FOR US!
- This is a powerful display of God's mercy and grace (which is next week's conversation).

Is this how you normally think of God?

Challenge:

In what ways has God been merciful to you in your life? Before we meet next, write down concrete ways that God has shown you mercy. Spend time thanking God for His mercy as you worship.

For next week, read Esther 2.