

## Jonah – Jonah's Anger

Jonah has just witnessed an amazing act of God's grace. He has been used by God to bring a great, heathen city to repentance, so how does he react? He explodes with anger! "He yelled at GOD, "GOD! I knew it—when I was back home, I knew this was going to happen!"<sup>1</sup> This was the very reason he had run away to Tarshish. He knew the character of God. He knew that if God had sent him to preach against the violence and wickedness of Nineveh, then it was his intention to save and not destroy. When it came to Nineveh, Jonah did not want to be part of God's rescue plan. But God had got him into a corner and made him do what he did not want to do. Was he angry, you bet he was. Angry enough to die.

God responds to his prayer with a question, "Is it right for you to be angry?"<sup>2</sup> A question which Jonah won't or can't answer. Instead he goes off to a place outside the city, puts together a makeshift shelter and sits down to see if God will change his mind again. Somehow you feel that if Jonah could will destruction on Nineveh, he would. He sits like a sulky adolescent in his misery waiting for something to happen.

Just as in chapter 1 God provided a big fish to rescue Jonah, now he provides a plant to grow up rapidly, so that its broad leaves could shelter Jonah's head from the burning sun and ease his discomfort. His emotions do an about turn and he is deliriously happy about the plant. No doubt he went to sleep that night thinking that things were looking up, if God was good enough to provide him this welcome shelter then perhaps the next day would see Nineveh's destruction.

"But at dawn the next day God provided a worm" which chewed the plant so that it withered away. When the sun came up God also provided a scorching east wind, so Jonah sat in misery under the blazing sun growing increasingly faint and angry. Once again, all he wanted to do was die and said out loud, "I'm better off dead."<sup>3</sup> But the response from God was to repeat the question he had asked Jonah earlier "Is it right for you to be angry?" but this time adds, "about the plant?" There is no reticence now in Jonah, "It is," he said. "And I'm so angry I wish I were dead."<sup>4</sup>

"So" replied God, "you can get upset about a plant which you've not laboured over, nor done anything to make it grow, then why can't I get concerned about the great city, Nineveh, where there are over 120,000 people who do not know right from wrong, as well as many animals?"

The question is left hanging, no longer for Jonah to answer but the hearers of the story. For you and me to answer.

Open

- What makes you angry?

## Study

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1 Jonah 4:2a, The Message  
2 Jonah 4:4 TNIV  
3 Jonah 4:8 The Message  
4 Jonah 4:9 TNIV

## Jonah

Read together Jonah 4

1. Why was Jonah so angry? Where was his anger directed? (Jonah 4:1-2)
2. Was Jonah's understanding of the nature of God correct? If so what are the implications for us? (Jonah 4:2 cf Exodus 34:6, Psalm 86:15)

Commit Question

3. In prayer, Jonah ranted at God. In the Message translation "He yelled at God" How comfortable do you feel about someone yelling at God in prayer? To what extent do you think our Christian culture has taken the emotional honesty out of our praying?
4. Why do you think Jonah went and sat outside the city under his makeshift shelter? What was his mood and what was he hoping for? (Jonah 4:3-5)
5. What, in your view, was God's purpose in providing first a plant (vine), secondly a worm to destroy it and finally a scorching east wind? (Jonah 4:6-8)

## Jonah

### Commit Question

6. We have seen in this tale of Jonah that God “provided” or “appointed”: a “great wind”, “a great fish”, “a vine”, “a worm” and “a scorching east wind. None of these things of themselves were out of the ordinary, but they were used by God in an extraordinary way. Do you think God works today by doing extraordinary things with the ordinary? Can you think of examples in your experience.
  
7. God asked Jonah, “Do you have a right to be angry?” Why do you think God asked the same question twice? Why did Jonah not answer the first time but did the second? (Jonah 4:4, 9)
  
8. Do you think it strange, that Jonah could be more concerned about a plant that gave him pleasure for a short time than the lives of 120,000 people and animals? In what ways does our society show it is more concerned about its pleasures than the needs of people and animals? (Jonah 4:8-11)

### Commit Question

9. “Should I not be concerned about that great city?” How should we respond to that question? What are you going to do about it?