

## Dave Cover | Jonah 4 Sermon Discussion Participants Guide

**Purpose of Discussion:** To reveal where our hearts are more like Jonah's and less like Jesus'.

**Icebreaker:** Share about a memorable surprise in your life.

**Discussion:**

**Transition:** The story of Jonah is filled with twists and turns, and the end is no different. After God changes the hearts of the Ninevites Jonah leaves the city in a temper tantrum. The story is zoomed in on Jonah, his heart, and God's actions. This last chapter might leave us asking "is there more to this story." God's answer is yes.

**Read:**

[Jonah 4:1-3](#)

"But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. <sup>2</sup>He prayed to the Lord, "Isn't this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. <sup>3</sup>Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."

We learn a little bit more about Jonah's heart in these early passages.

1. Why is Jonah upset? What is revealed about Jonah's heart as he leaves Nineveh?

God's relenting of the evil (ra'ah) that Jonah thought would accompany his visit to Nineveh has set Jonah off. At this point in the story Jonah is angry (ra'ah) and wants to die.

2. Who in the end does Jonah have a problem with? Why would Jonah want to die?

3. What is God's response to Jonah's anger?

Jonah continues to be angry as he leaves the city. He sits upon a hill watching the city hoping that his temper tantrum will change God's mind. While he sits in his makeshift shelter God begins to dig a little deeper in Jonah's life.

**Read:**

[Jonah 4:5-8](#)

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. <sup>6</sup> Then the Lord God provided a leafy plant<sup>[a]</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. <sup>8</sup> 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."

4. What is God trying to show through the story of the plant?

**Read:**

[Jonah 4:9](#)

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."

This is the last that we hear from Jonah. His story ends with him being angry, confused, sitting on a hill in the scorching heat. God's repeated words to Jonah are like an arrow shot towards Jonah, and as Dave pointed out in the sermon as the arrow passes by Jonah we realize that it's actually pointed at us. God has intended for the story of Jonah to be primarily a story of his unconditional grace and how that reveals certain aspects of our hearts.

**Read:**

[Jonah 4:10-11](#)

But the Lord said, "You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. <sup>11</sup> And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?"

5. Who are we tempted not to show mercy too?
6. Why is it hard for us to show mercy, grace, love, and hope to these sets of people?

The other side of grace is not a popular cultural belief. Our world wants us to be more like Jonah and less like Jesus. It's tempting for us to copy culture, to love narrowly and judge widely. Yet God calls us to imitate him in the way that we show compassion to the other. This is challenging and also counter cultural. Left to our own devices we will never be able to muster enough energy, strength, or good will to offer this.

**Read:**

[Titus 3:1-7](#)

<sup>1</sup> Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, <sup>2</sup> to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. <sup>3</sup> For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. <sup>4</sup> But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

7. What does Paul attribute our new way of living too?
8. Jesus frees us to live compassionately. What are some examples of what this heart change might look like?

The end of Jonah challenges us to ask the question 'do we *actually* get the gospel?' The gospel reminds us that King Jesus is on His throne. Ruling in an upside down way. Showing compassion when our anger cries out for destruction. Forgiving sin when our selfishness wants judgement.

9. How does this message encourage you to consider the invitation of the gospel as it relates to other people?

# THE **crossing** **small groups**

## Sharing and Prayer:

First, pray as a group that God would continue to show his mercy and grace towards us as we seek to understand the implications and invitation of the gospel in our lives.

Then, offer prayers for the working power of the gospel to go forward in our community and culture. Consider naming some specific people, groups of people, that God has placed on your hearts. Confess the ways that this sermon series has challenged you to love more like Jesus and less like Jonah.