

NOT YOUR AVERAGE JOES

A study of the lives of Joseph, Jonah, and Job

Jonah - Chapter 4

Lesson 4

In many ways, the book of Jonah opens with Jonah being portrayed as similar to the prodigal son, physically rebelling against God. The book closes with Jonah being portrayed as similar to the prodigal's older brother, mentally rebelling against God. If the book of Jonah would have closed with chapter 3, Jonah would have been portrayed as a reluctant, but obedient prophet, having preached a message that motivated thousands of people to repentance. But God chose to include chapter 4, reminding us that our heart attitude is of His greatest concern.

OBSERVATION: Read Jonah 4

1. Read through this week's verses using both your Observation Worksheet (the last page of this homework) and another Bible translation or paraphrase. After reading through these verses, what would you say to someone if they asked you what they are about?
2. Key words help us to better understand the verses. We have listed below key words. Mark each one in a distinctive way (either with a symbol, highlighting, or some form of boxing, circling, or underlining). Mark each of the key words each time they are used in the text. Remember to mark any personal pronouns that refer to *God* or *Jonah*.
Key Words: *God (LORD), Jonah, Nineveh (city), and angry*
3. Underline the words in verse 2 that describe Jonah's acknowledgement of the character of God.
4. The contrasting word *but* is used three times in this chapter. Mark the word. Choose one instance of its use and record what is being contrasted.
5. The term of conclusion, *therefore*, is used two times in this chapter. Mark the word. In both instances, the words that follow reveal Jonah's attempt to justify his actions. Record the two conclusions Jonah arrived at.

JONAH'S EMOTIONAL REACTION: Read Jonah 4:1-3, (8)

1. The fourth chapter of Jonah begins with the contrasting word *but*. Read the last verse of Jonah 3 and explain what Jonah was reacting to.
 - a. What was Jonah's emotional reaction? Jonah 4:1
 - b. Jonah was *displeased* with what God had done – to the point of *anger*. List some synonyms for the word *displeased*.
 - 1.) Jonah's *displeasure* was a result of him disagreeing with God's *relenting* of punishing Nineveh for their sins. What are some other reasons that God's people experience *displeasure* of God's actions?
 - 2.) Using the following verses, counter the idea that we have reason to be *displeased* with what God does.

Genesis 18:25

Deuteronomy 32:4

Revelation 15:3
2. Jonah was *displeased exceedingly*. How do you think the people of Nineveh reacted when God *relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them*?
 - a. Contrast the times you are tempted to be displeased with God with the joy of receiving His forgiveness.
3. According to Jonah 4:2, Jonah *prayed to the LORD*. Record the first two phrases (stop at *for I know*) and record what Jonah prayed.
 - a. Here we see Jonah admitting the reason he *fled previously to Tarshish*. He knew God would *relent of the disaster* he proclaimed against Nineveh. Why are we sometimes *displeased* when God does not make others pay for what they have done?

b. Using the last phrases of verse 2, list and define the five attributes Jonah knew about God.

1.) What is the promise of God in Jeremiah 18:8?

c. Many have a very different viewpoint of God. What contrasting viewpoint have you had at times about Him (before you became a believer or even as a believer)?

4. Jonah's anger had fallen into to such despair that he penned the words of Jonah 4:3. What had Jonah concluded? (Notice, Jonah made the same proclamation in verse 8.)

a. In what ways can *anger* lead to despair?

1.) How do you think Jonah went from *displeasure* of God's actions to thinking *it is better for me to die than to live*?

a.) Why is this kind of thinking ALWAYS in error?

GOD'S RESPONSE TO JONAH'S ANGER: Read Jonah 4:4

1. What question did God ask Jonah?

a. Put yourself in Jonah's position. How might you have answered?

2. Jonah was not the only man whom God challenged with a question. Read the questions in the following verses. How would you answer these questions?

Micah 6:3 "O My people, what have I done to you? And how have I wearied you? Testify against Me.

Matthew 20:15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?

3. Consider the description of God in Jonah 4:2. What words would you use to describe the character of Jonah as he has been portrayed in this book?

JONAH'S PHYSICAL REACTION: Read Jonah 4:5

1. We have no record that Jonah answered God's question. However, Jonah **did** react. What did he do?

- a. Apparently Jonah was still hoping for some sort of retribution to come against Nineveh as he *sat on the east side of the city...till he might see what would become of the city*. He was possibly hoping that their repentance would be short lived. If so, comment on the condition of a heart that would think like this.

- 1.) What might Jonah have been forgetting?

2. What are some ways you have reacted when you felt like God didn't do things the way you thought He should?

- a. What have you learned?

3. Read the words of Job to God in Job 42:3. How did Job's attitude differ from Jonah's?

GOD'S REACTION TO JONAH: Read Jonah 4:6-8

1. Using your own words, describe the events of verses 6-8.
 - a. Why did God *prepare a plant to come up over Jonah*?
 - 1.) There are times when our physical condition (i.e. hunger, lack of sleep, cold, or heat) affects the way we think. How is this a warning to you to take care of those things when you are distressed?
 - b. How does this speak to you about God's care of your physical condition?
Challenge: Use Scripture to support the fact that our physical condition matters to God.
2. What was the result of God withdrawing the protection of the plant?
 - a. Define the word *faint*.
 - b. What have you noticed about yourself when you are *faint*?
3. Notice Jonah's last words of verse 8. Jonah retreated to his previous thinking as expressed in verse 3. Why is God's care for us sometimes of no effect?

GOD'S CHALLENGE: Read Jonah 4:9-11

1. God again asked Jonah if it was *right for him to be angry*. What was Jonah angry about this time?
 - a. What do you think it was that he was *angry about the plant*?
2. What was Jonah's response?
 - a. As readers of the story, we see how ridiculous Jonah was being. However, most of us have been in a similar state. Share your observation of Jonah's response (or maybe even your own).

3. Verse 10 begins with the contrasting word *but*, because God has a contrasting statement to make. What do you think was the point God had for Jonah?
 - a. What is the general lesson we can learn here?

4. God declared His *pity* (concern) for the people and even the *livestock* of Nineveh. What did He understand about them?
 - a. Remember, the people of Nineveh were not Jews; they were not God's people. They were not privileged to have His word. Yet, they were still subject to God's judgment for their evil deeds and they still had access to His mercy. According to Romans 1:19-21, why are they still *without excuse*?

REVIEW: Read Jonah 4

1. In what ways have you been challenged by this lesson to:
consider your reaction to God's actions

have mercy towards those who have done evil

rejoice in the true character of God

*You who tear yourself in anger, shall the earth be forsaken for you?
Or shall the rock be removed from its place?*

- Job 18:4

Observation Worksheet

Jonah 4:1-11

¹ But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. ² So he prayed to the LORD, and said, "Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. ³ Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!" ⁴ Then the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" ⁵ So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city. ⁶ And the LORD God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant. ⁷ But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered. ⁸ And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, "It is better for me to die than to live." ⁹ Then God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" And he said, "It is right for me to be angry, even to death!" ¹⁰ But the LORD said, "You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. ¹¹ And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left--and much livestock?"