

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

# JONAH

### OPENING UP



Anyone who is a Christian is a person who's been forgiven of sins. Have you ever encountered a story where someone was forgiven of something you couldn't possibly comprehend?

### TEXT



#### Too Compassionate? | Jonah 3:10–4:11 (ESV)

**3:10** When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

**4:1** But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. **2** And he prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. **3** Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." **4** And the LORD said, "Do you do well to be angry?"

**5** Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city. **6** Now the LORD God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant. **7** But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. **8** When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, "It is better for me to die than to live." **9** But God said to Jonah, "Do you do well to be angry for the plant?" And he said, "Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die." **10** And the LORD said, "You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. **11** And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?"

### MESSAGE OUTLINE



**BIG IDEA:** The LORD's Compassion Exceeds Our Logic.

**KEY QUESTION:** How do we respond to God's compassion?

1. Are you angry with God's compassion? (vv. 1-4)
2. Have you accepted your equal need of God's grace? (vv. 5-11)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



- Read Jonah 1:1–2 and 3:1–4. What was God's charge against Nineveh? And what could they expect if they did not repent? Do you think God was too compassionate against a country that permitted so much evil in their midst?
- The Gospel tells us that we are (like the Ninevites) *all sinners who deserve God's wrath*, even if there are some sins that have greater levels of earthly punishment than others. Where have you found it difficult to comprehend that *your sin* is as equally corrupt as the sins of those you find deplorable?
- Our world likes to believe that we are good standing before God—that he should accept the way we live. But what does the gospel say about our need for God's grace?
- Have you ever seen some receive mercy and found the very sight of it caused you to boil with anger? What does this say about your vision of God's mercy towards others and your own sense for your own need for mercy?
- There are many who believe that they are well-outside the possibility of God's mercy. How might Jonah's story aid us in sharing with others just how merciful God is?

## LIFE CHALLENGE



Sin is great; God's grace is greater. The Christian carries this message in themselves—in their story—and is called to share this message with others, too. Many people around us carry on their own shoulders the unbearable weight of sin, a dirty conscience, and consequences they cannot overcome. Even Christians who forget the gospel can carry this weight. But Christ's grace sets us free. Pray that God might give you the opportunity to share the good news of the Jonah story with others—so that they might experience grace that is greater than all their sin.

## CLOSING PRAYER



Oh Lord, your mercy is so great—but our vision of it is so limited. Grant that we might see ourselves as needy people who have received mercy. And help us to be messengers of that mercy, even when we encounter situations that seem beyond even your ability to heal and give care. Give us your eyes to see a world that *can be redeemed by your love*. Amen.