

Some Possible Answers for Week 8 of the Jonah Study

Week 8: God's abounding love.

Day 1- Overview - Read Jonah 4:1-11

1. List some of the things God did in this chapter that demonstrate His abounding love for Jonah even though Jonah wasn't "in the mood for it":

- God listened to Jonah's complaints.
- God provided a vine for shade.
- God provided a worm to destroy the vine as an illustration for Jonah.
- God provided a scorching east wind to help in his illustration for Jonah.
- God questioned Jonah to help him see his error in thinking.
- God did not kill Jonah.
- God explained His actions regarding Jonah.
- God closes this book with a question.
- It's as though we have been an audience watching a play through the book of Jonah.
- Now as the play comes to this final moment, God turns to face the audience, that's us, with His arms outstretched, and poses this question to all of us, to demonstrate His love and concern for Nineveh, but beyond that to all lost souls!
- The question for us is, "What will our response be?" Will we be like Jonah, or like God wanted Jonah to be?

2. What are some experiences you have had where God demonstrated His abounding love for you even though you "weren't in the mood for it"?

- Answers will vary.

3. How do you see God's love expressed in His questions to Jonah? What questions did God ask in these verses: Genesis 3:8-13; Genesis 4:8-12; Isaiah 6:1-8; Luke 22:47-48.

- Answers will vary.
- **Genesis 3:8-13** - *"Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man, **"Where are you?** He answered, **"I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."** And he said, **"Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"** The man said, **"The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."** Then the LORD God said to the woman, **"What is this you have done?"** The woman said, **"The serpent deceived me, and I ate."**"*
- **Genesis 4:8-12** - *"Now Cain said to his brother Abel, **"Let's go out to the field."**"^[a] While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Then the LORD said to Cain, **"Where is your brother Abel?"** **"I don't know,"** he replied. **"Am I my brother's keeper?"** The LORD said, **"What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. ¹¹ Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹² When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."**"*
- **Isaiah 6:1-8** - *"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³ And they were calling to one another: **"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."** At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. **"Woe to me!"** I cried. **"I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean***

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*lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "**Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?**" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"*

- **Luke 22:47-48** - "*While he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, ⁴⁸ but Jesus asked him, "**Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?**"*"

4. God spoke direct to Jonah and He continues to speak to us through the scripture. God also directed Jonah through circumstances (providing the vine, the worm and the scorching east wind). In the same way, God sometimes directs our paths with events and circumstances. Can you share a time God directed you through events or circumstances?

- Answers will vary.

Day 2 – God abounding love is patient with Jonah’s anger. Read 4:1-4

1. How do you relate Jonah’s displeasure with that found in Luke 15:25-32?

- This encounter between God and His servant Jonah glaringly exposes the basis for Jonah's disobedience, which had expressed itself first in Jonah's flight, and then in the prayer from the belly of the fish.
- At the root of Jonah's problem is *self*: self-love, and self-pity.
- Twice Jonah is angry, angry enough to die, Jonah even asks for death, first because the Lord has been too gracious, gracious to the undeserving; Jonah here seems just like the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son (see below).
- It seems Jonah feels that God's grace is an insult to his deserving self!
- **Luke 15:25-32** - "*Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' 'The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!' "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"*
- Jonah is also angry because he is hurt in his self-esteem, where many of us are most easily hurt. Jonah says some "big things" he dares to throw God's grace back in God's face. Here we see the grace of God to Jonah as God "takes it" as Jonah continues with his fit.
- In contrast to Jonah's blast against the Lord, the Love of God is revealed in a wonderful way.

2. List the reasons for his displeasure (4:2)?

- He knew God was: gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in love, didn't want to send calamity.
- Jonah did not want his enemies to receive God's grace.
- It seems that in Jonah's mind, he has been forced by God to not only witness, but to actually take part in an event that would result in good things for Israel's enemy.

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- God's sparing of Nineveh would result in the captivity and eventual disbanding of his beloved people Israel.
- And while Jonah did act disobediently, he was not a wicked man.
- In love, Jonah was willing to sacrifice (*misguidedly of course*) himself to save his people.
- A lesson to be learned is that God moves in mysterious ways that are sometimes difficult to understand.
- Think of the times you have asked God for something in your life and it did not necessarily come to pass the way you wanted it to.
- A reason may be that God can foresee if something will be hurtful to you, and He will not give you that which will hurt you.
- Its not that God let you down any more than He let Jonah down.
- Rather, it's that He protected you from something.
- We've heard the old saying: "Be careful what you pray for because you just might get it!"
- God wants to bless us, but sometimes our ideas and requests are in conflict with what God desires for us.
- It is critical to our strengthening faith to submit to the fact that God sees the bigger picture and knows what's best for us in the long run.

3. What is Jonah doing in 4:3? Did God do the same thing? Explain.

- He is giving up!
- He is distraught and is ready for the Lord to take him home.
- God hasn't given up on Jonah though – what a patient Father we have!

4. How do you see God's love for Jonah in 4:4? Relate Jonah's situation with that in Matt. 20:1-15. What is the point Jesus was making?

- Answers will vary.
- The Matthew passage is a parable Jesus told to teach that the master has the right to pay the workers what they agree to regardless of any other conditions.
- This relates to Jonah in verse 4 in that Jonah agreed to proclaim God's prophecy to the Ninevites.
- That's where his responsibility ended.
- However, Jonah is angry because the Lord relented and saved the Ninevites.
- God sees his anger and asks Jonah if he had any right to be angry.
- It was not Jonah's duty to judge God's actions resulting from His prophecy, nor the actions of the people.
- God demonstrates His love for Jonah in that He is still trying to get Jonah to see the importance of what has just happened – 120,000 (plus women/children) and animals were saved from calamity!
- God's love is a part of His patience and long-suffering as He waits for Jonah (and us) to come around.

Day 3 – God's love is consistent, but His teaching methods vary. Read 4:5-6

1. Seems Jonah went to a good vantage point to overlook the city. Why do you think he did that?

- Maybe he thought the Ninevites changes wouldn't last out the 40 days.
- Maybe he thought God would bring relent again and overturn Nineveh.
- Answers will vary.

2. Do you think you have to love all people before you can share the gospel message with them? Explain.

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- Answers will vary.
3. This vine was *provided* (4:6) by God in the same way the great fish was *provided* (1:17). What does this tell you about God?
- Answers will vary.
4. How do you see God's love through His *providing* the vine for Jonah? Do you think Jonah credits God with *providing* the vine?
- A better translation in verse 6 is "*to ease his grief*" rather than "*to ease his discomfort*"
 - It was more *grief* than *selfish anger* which Jonah seemed to be feeling.
 - God knows that often external comforts can turn the mind away from its sorrowful or angry bent.
 - This is God's love in action, to provide some comfort during a difficult time in Jonah's situation.
 - Answers will vary on part 2.
5. Do you think Jonah became dependent on the vine and the shade it *provided*? Why? Has it changed his attitude any?
- Answers will vary.

Day 4 – God, in His love for Jonah, brings hardship in hopes of softening Jonah's heart. Read 4:7-9

1. Here again God *provided* a worm for what purpose? Why do you think He did this?
- 4:7 "*But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the vine so that it withered.*"
 - One of the characteristics of the Book of Jonah is its use of the verb *manah* ("to appoint," "to provide," "to prepare").
 - It is used of the fish (1:17), the vine (4:6), the worm (4:7), and the wind (4:8).
 - This is not due to lack of stylistic ability but it is intended to stress the *divine initiative* and *sovereignty* of God.
 - The point is that God was demonstrating to Jonah, that He could use both the great fish and/or an insignificant worm equally well as instruments for His purpose.
 - Again He was stressing His divine nature and sovereign character to Jonah.
2. So God removed the creature comfort Jonah enjoyed. The vine was gone, but *who* did Jonah still have even though it appears he didn't appreciate it? What comfort does that give you?
- So it doesn't take much to cause our creature comforts to wither and disappear.
 - It should silence our discontent to remember, that when our *vine* is gone, our God is not gone.
 - Jonah still had God by his side.
 - God, in His abounding love, was attempting have Jonah's focus move to Him.
 - Answers will vary.
3. Then God *provided* a scorching east wind (see Isa. 40:7) and blazing sun, note, *on Jonah's head!* Why?
- Isaiah 40:7 – "*The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass.*"
 - This completes the four things Divinely prepared by God in the book of Jonah:
 - The Fish, the Gourd, the Worm, and the Hot Wind;
 - The number four in Biblical numerics denotes creation, the world, and the earth. (**i.e.:** The 4 compass points, 4 seasons, 4 great variations of the lunar phases, the 4th Commandment is the first to refer to the earth, the 4th clause in the Lord's Prayer is the first that mentions the earth .)

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- God is still working on getting Jonah's attention by removing his creature comforts and causing him distress, it seems, because of his stubbornness.
- Answers will vary.

4. What do you learn about God and hardships as you studied this chapter? Are hardships always bad? Explain.

- Answers will vary.

5. Why do you think God questioned Jonah again? What was He trying to get Jonah to understand?

- This is the third time Jonah has mentioned his death (1:12, 4:3, and now 4:8), but there will be one more time (4:9) making Jonah's mention of death four times (see notes on question 3).
- Do you see God's teaching?
- Jonah was upset for the loss of the vine.
- It seems he was very concerned that the vine had perished, but he was fully willing to allow the 120,000 children of God to perish in Nineveh.

Day 5 – God expresses His abounding love for the lost in these closing verses. Read 4:10-11

1. Jonah's focus is on the loss of a plant which was *provided* by the Lord and required no effort on his part. Yet in this same passage, we see God concerned about the thousands of people *and animals* in Nineveh. What is the message you get from this?

- Answers will vary.

2. Compare Jonah's concern to that of Abraham in Genesis 18:20-33:

- Genesis 18:20-33 – *"Then the LORD said, 'The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous²¹ that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.' ²² The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD. ²³ Then Abraham approached him and said: 'Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? ²⁴ What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? ²⁵ Far be it from you to do such a thing--to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?'" ²⁶ The LORD said, "If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake." ²⁷ Then Abraham spoke up again: "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes, ²⁸ what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city because of five people?" "If I find forty-five there," he said, "I will not destroy it." ²⁹ Once again he spoke to him, "What if only forty are found there?" He said, "For the sake of forty, I will not do it." ³⁰ Then he said, "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?" He answered, "I will not do it if I find thirty there." ³¹ Abraham said, "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, what if only twenty can be found there?" He said, "For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it." ³² Then he said, "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?" He answered, "For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it." ³³ When the LORD had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home."*

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- What a difference in God's chosen men.
 - Jonah has no concern for all the souls that might have been lost in Nineveh.
 - While in the Genesis account, Abraham stands before God in hopes of having Him relent concern His destruction Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - God sees Abraham's sincerity and *"For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it."*
 - Quite a contrast between these two men of God.
3. The book ends with a question that may be for the readers to answer: Was God right? Was Jonah wrong? How would you explain God's patience, mercy, and love with respect to this story of Jonah?
- Answers will vary.
4. What is the greatest lesson you have learned from studying Jonah?
- Answers will vary.