Running From God
A Study in the Book of Jonah

LESSON SIX
Jonah's Anger at God's Mercy
(Jonah 4:1-11)

Prayerfully read through Jonah 4:1-11.

1. We read in **Jonah 3:10, "Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it."** In **Jonah 4:1** we see Jonah's response to that. Record what Jonah's response was at God's mercy.

Wait! What? It appeared in chapter two that after sitting in the belly of the great fish, Jonah came to his senses and repented of his rebellion and was obedient to the Lord's call. What happened? How did Jonah go from that heart change to this attitude of displeasure with God? The verse says that not only was Jonah displeased, but he was "exceedingly" displeased and had become angry. The Hebrew word for angry used here is "charah," and it is a very strong word with definitions such as "blazing," "to burn hot," "to be incensed." This anger Jonah had was intense.

2. Looking at **verse 2,** Jonah gives God the reason for his intense anger. Record his reason below.

3. Jonah states that this was the reason he had fled from God's call in the first place. He **knew** God's character. He **knew** His mercy and compassion, and he did not want to be a party to Nineveh being shown God's grace.

Jonah was enraged that God would show mercy to those that Jonah didn't believe **deserved** His mercy. Have you ever been in that place where Jonah's heart was? How does this speak to your own heart?

4. Jonah, in fact, was so upset, what does he tell God in **verse 3?**

5. Jonah would **rather die** than to see God's mercy being poured out on Nineveh. Before we get too critical of Jonah, we need to check our own hearts. Are there any examples you can think of where we might fall into those same attitudes? Do you know someone who has been greatly wounded that falls into the heart attitude Jonah has? Do you have an experience to share?

6. In **verse 4,** God comes to Jonah in that gentle, still, small voice. He asks him a question. What is it?

7. Jonah doesn't answer God's question. I think he is back in the same mental and emotional state he was in in chapter one. He doesn't like what God is doing. He doesn't think it's fair. He thinks He should do things differently. He would rather sulk than look at the attitude of his heart and think on whether or not his anger is justified. Do we ever have a right to be angry with God? What would you say to someone with a wounded heart who asked you that question?

8. Nineveh had certainly done a lot of evil, and Jonah may very well have felt he had **every right** to be angry that they weren't getting the punishment they deserved. We find many descriptions of their evil in the book of Nahum, which is dedicated to the prophecy against the city and its evils. The thought that any mercy would be shown to them was so painful to Jonah that he no longer wanted to live if that were the case. What Jonah was forgetting was that God had every right to punish him and the nation of Israel over their own sin, and to pour out His wrath in abundance. Israel was not in a great spiritual state itself. Jonah might feel that his sin and the nation's sin were nothing compared to the sins of Nineveh, so, yes, his anger was a righteous anger. We can often justify and make light of the sins of our own heart. Sin always looks worse when someone else is wearing it. But the truth is that none of us deserve God's forgiveness. Record the truth of the following Scriptures.

   Psalm 103:10 -

   Psalm 103:11-12 -

Psalm 103::13-14 -

Psalm 103:15-16 -

Psalm 103:17 -

9. Having forgotten the mercy he himself has been shown, Jonah goes off to sulk. Looking at **Jonah 4:5,** record Jonah's actions.

10. It appears that maybe Jonah was holding out a little bit of hope that perhaps God might decide to go ahead and punish the city, and he wants to watch what's going to happen. Looking at **verse 6,** record what God does for His sulking, angry servant.

Jonah's anger and bitterness has turned his focus completely on himself and his feelings. That's what bitterness and anger does. Consumed with how he **felt** about what the mercy he assumed God would extend, he goes off to sulk. But as God undeservedly and graciously provides shade for Jonah, we see in the last part of verse 6 the very first time in this narrative that Jonah is actually happy about something. He's happy about his own relief from the hot sun, while still angry over the mercy he knows God will pour out on Nineveh. His own "creature comforts" are more important than the souls of this city. God used the provision of the plant to reveal the selfishness of Jonah's heart.

11. How often, like Jonah, do we put our own comforts before the needs of others? This is a battle of our flesh that we all must fight. Look up and record the exhortation given to us in **Philippians 2:3-4** below.

12. Along with this exhortation, Paul goes on to tell us that our attitude should be influenced by the example we see in Christ. Record **Philippians 2:5-8** below.

13. Dying to **self** is something the Lord requires of us, as His people, and something so hard for us to do. Not allowing how **we feel,** what **we want,** and our **own desires and motivations** to rule us is the daily, often moment-by- moment, spiritual battle we face as soldiers of Christ. We have choices we must make each day as to which we will allow to be our power of influence, the Spirit of God within us or our self-focused flesh. Record the following Scriptures that speak on this.

Luke 9:23 -

Romans 6:11-12 -

Romans 13:14 -

Galatians 5:16 -

1 Peter 1:14-15 -

1 Peter 2:11-12 -

14. As we move on to **Jonah 4:7**, we find that God, in His great love and faithfulness, often uses circumstances as a mirror to show us the condition of our hearts. Record the circumstances of **verses 7 & 8** below.

15. Once again, Jonah states that he wishes to die. The first time he made this statement in **verse 3** of our chapter, it was because of Nineveh's repentance, which he feared would result in God's mercy. Now, this second time he wishes for death is because the comfort of his shade has been removed. Jonah could not be displaying a more self-centered attitude in his response to both situations. Compare how very different his attitude is from that of Job's. Look up **Job 2:9 and Job 2:10.** Record those verses below.

Job 1:22 -

Job 2:9-10 -

16. Again, God reaches out to Jonah and asks a question in **Jonah 4:9**. This time Jonah answers the question. Record God's question and Jonah's answer in **verse 9.**

The Bible Knowledge Commentary states, **"God was wanting Jonah to see the contrast between His sparing Nineveh and His destroying the vine - the contrast between Jonah's lack of concern for the *spiritual* welfare of the Ninevites and his concern for his own *physical* welfare. Both Jonah's unconcern (for Nineveh) and concern (for himself) were selfish. Jonah replied that his anger over the withered plant was justified, and that he was so angry he wanted to die."**

17. Record God's final reply to Jonah in **verses 10 & 11.**

Referring once again to **The Bible Knowledge Commentary,** we read these very good insights. It says, **"As the book concludes, Jonah was angry, depressed, hot, and faint. And he was left to contemplate God's words about his <u>own lack</u> of compassion and <u>God's depth</u> of compassion. The Lord had made His points: (a) He is gracious toward all nations, toward Gentiles as well as Israelites; (b) He is sovereign; (c) He punishes rebellion; and (d) He wants His own people to obey Him, to be rid of religious sham, and to place no limits on His universal love and grace."**

18. What did God say to **Job** as he cried out for God to give him an answer to his suffering? Look up **Job 38:2-4** and record those verses below.

19. God goes on to ask Job more than 70 questions, none of which Job has an answer for. When God is finished asking Job questions, Job responds to Him in **Job 42:1-6.** Record Job's answer in those verses below.

Job learned what God was desiring Jonah to learn. The book of Jonah leaves us hanging, with no answer from Jonah and no assurance of whether or not he came to a true repentance. We can, however, have some confidence in a hope that Jonah, after reflecting back on his experience and all that God spoke to him, did most likely come to a true repentance, which resulted in him recording these events for us.

20. What was your greatest take-away from this last lesson in the Book of Jonah?

21. What are you taking away from this entire study? What lessons do you want to take deep root in your life? What are the things you don't want to forget?