

REPENTANCE

CORE PASSAGE: JONAH 3:4-10; 4:1-2,6-11

CONTEXT

Jonah, a contemporary of Amos and Hosea, was a prophet of Israel during the reign of King Jeroboam II, who did evil in the Lord's eyes. Yet the Lord spoke graciously to Israel through Jonah in order to help them (2 Kings 14:25-27). God also commanded Jonah to go and proclaim judgment against Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria. But Jonah fled in the opposite direction. Through a series of circumstances orchestrated by God, Jonah found himself in the belly of a large fish and then back on dry land. God gave Jonah a second chance, and this time Jonah obeyed, going to Nineveh to preach the message the Lord gave to him.

KEY CONCEPT

God is merciful to forgive when people repent, and He desires His people to be merciful as well.

As you examine Jonah 3:4-10; 4:1-2,6-11:

- Recognize that because the Ninevites fasted and repented, God relented in His judgment and spared the city.
- Contemplate Jonah's reason for fleeing from the Lord's mission—he knew the Lord is gracious and compassionate.



TIMELINE

Elijah Performs Miracles and Prophecies to Israel (1 Kings 17–2 Kings 2)

Elisha Performs Miracles and Prophecies to Israel (2 Kings 2–13)

SESSION STUDY:
Jonah Prophecies to Israel and Nineveh (2 Kings 14; Jonah 1–4)

Assyria Besieges and Conquers Israel, Deporting the People (2 Kings 17)

Israel's Kings Persist in Doing Evil in the Lord's Sight (2 Kings 14–17)

Daily Readings

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 1: Jonah 1–2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 4: Amos 3–6 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 2: Jonah 3–4 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 5: Amos 7–9 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 3: Amos 1–2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 6: Psalm 85 |



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

PERSONAL PREPARATION

JONAH 3:4-10

GOD RELENTS FROM ADMINISTERING JUDGMENT WHEN HE SEES REPENTANCE.

Circle every action (verb) the Ninevites and the king of Nineveh took in response to God's message.

4 Jonah set out on the first day of his walk in the city and proclaimed, "In forty days Nineveh will be demolished!" **5** Then the people of Nineveh believed God. They proclaimed a fast and dressed in sackcloth—from the greatest of them to the least. **6** When word reached the king of Nineveh, he got up from his throne, took off his royal robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. **7** Then he issued a decree in Nineveh: By order of the king and his nobles: No person or animal, herd or flock, is to taste anything at all. They must not eat or drink water. **8** Furthermore, both people and animals must be covered with sackcloth, and everyone must call out earnestly to God. Each must turn from his evil ways and from his wrongdoing. **9** Who knows? God may turn and relent; he may turn from his burning anger so that we will not perish. **10** God saw their actions—that they had turned from their evil ways—so God relented from the disaster he had threatened them with. And he did not do it.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

REPENTANCE: Repentance is a response to God's gracious call to salvation. It includes a genuine sorrow for one's sin (Luke 5:1-11), a turning away from one's sin toward Christ (Acts 26:15-20), and a life that reflects lasting change and transformation (Psalm 119:57-60). It is the human counterpart to God's work of regeneration; in other words, the human side of our conversion.



The city of Nineveh was an evil place. As the capital and most prominent city of Assyria, Nineveh was the center of anti-Israel fervor. The Assyrians were sworn enemies of God's people, and they historically dominated the entire Near East. After conquering a people, they often would stack their enemies' corpses and skulls in celebration. The Assyrians and Israelites hated one another.

Nineveh deserved God's judgment for their wicked ways. Having been given a second chance to obey God's call, Jonah walked around and throughout the densely populated city, taking three days to saturate the people with God's message. He declared, "In forty days Nineveh will be demolished!" (v. 4). God had planned a disaster in judgment of the wicked people.

What role might the announcement of judgment for sin play in the sharing of the gospel?

The Assyrians were a polytheistic people, believing in many gods, but when they heard Jonah's preaching on the first day of his walk in the city, they believed Jonah's God. They understood that they deserved God's judgment for their sins, so they took steps of repentance. Even the king declared a city-wide fast from

food and water and that all the people and animals should be covered in sackcloth. These outward signs were to accompany the people's inward repentance from evil. And finally, they were to call out earnestly to God in hopes that He would relent from His anger and judgment.

The Ninevites heard God's message and responded with repentance. God saw their repentance and relented from administering His judgment. God's merciful forgiveness is not constrained to one particular nation or ethnicity. He is compassionate to all who respond to Him in repentance.

How might you evaluate your own response of repentance to conviction from God's Word?



PERSONAL PREPARATION

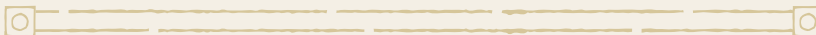
JONAH 4:1-2,6-11

GOD DESIRES THAT HIS PEOPLE SHOW MERCY AND FORGIVENESS TO OTHERS.

Underline Jonah's description of God and reflect on the characteristics he lists.

1 Jonah was greatly displeased and became furious. **2** He prayed to the LORD, "Please, LORD, isn't this what I said while I was still in my own country? That's why I fled toward Tarshish in the first place. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger, abounding in faithful love, and one who relents from sending disaster." . . . **6** Then the LORD God appointed a plant, and it grew over Jonah to provide shade for his head to rescue him from his trouble. Jonah was greatly pleased with the plant. **7** When dawn came the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, and it withered. **8** As the sun was rising, God appointed a scorching east wind. The sun beat down on Jonah's head so much that he almost fainted, and he wanted to die. He said, "It's better for me to die than to live." **9** Then God asked Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" "Yes, it's right!" he replied. "I'm angry enough to die!" **10** And the LORD said, "You cared about the plant, which you did not labor over and did not grow. It appeared in a night and perished in a night. **11** So may I not care about the great city of Nineveh, which has more than a hundred twenty thousand people who cannot distinguish between their right and their left, as well as many animals?"

Key Concept: God is merciful to forgive when people repent, and He desires His people to be merciful as well.



God mercifully relented from sending disaster upon the city of Nineveh in response to the people's repentance. But in response to the Lord's mercy, Jonah threw a tantrum. He complained to God about the turn of events and sought to justify his previous disobedience of running away from Nineveh based on God's character. The Lord is "a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger, abounding in faithful love, and one who relents from sending disaster" (v. 2). Jonah didn't want Nineveh rescued from God's wrath—he wanted them destroyed—so he initially opted to keep the Lord's message from them to help ensure they never repented. In his anger, Jonah demonstrated the misalignment between his own heart and God's.

What are some ways you find yourself at odds with God's character?

sinful anger toward the Ninevites and his resentment toward the Lord.

Jonah had such a wild range of emotions concerning the plant that lived for a day. God used this to patiently point out the hypocrisy of Jonah's love for the plant and his unwillingness to forgive the more than 120,000 people of Nineveh. God compassionately explained His heart of mercy to forgive the Ninevites and challenged Jonah to turn his care for a plant into care for people.

How are you showing others God's heart of care, mercy, and forgiveness?

Whatever Jonah's reason to be angry at God's mercy, the Lord wanted His prophet to grasp the bigger picture of His heart to save sinners. So every step God took over the next couple of days—addressing Jonah's anger directly, growing the plant, sending the worm to eat the plant, sending the scorching wind—was meant to prompt Jonah to repentance of his

GOSPEL CONNECTION

God is compassionate and will forgive when people repent. All who believe in Jesus Christ and repent of their sin will be saved.

TOO FAR GONE?

Read the passages and write down how God showed mercy and how the people responded.

THE NINEVITES' REPENTANCE
(JONAH 3:4-10)

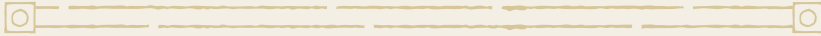
DAVID'S REPENTANCE
(2 SAMUEL 12:7-20)

THE SAMARITAN WOMAN'S MESSAGE
(JOHN 4:7-30,39-42)

**SAUL'S REPENTANCE AND
TRANSFORMATION** (ACTS 9:1-20)

Knowing that God desires for no one to perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9), how should this influence the way we interact with those around us?

Key Concept: God is merciful to forgive when people repent, and He desires His people to be merciful as well.



HEAD

What are some potential results of showing mercy to those who don't seem to deserve it?

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Read and pray through Psalm 85. Thank the Lord for His mercy and forgiveness of sins in Christ (vv. 1-3), and pray for a revival in your heart to show God's mercy to others so the Lord will be glorified (vv. 6-9).

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



HEART

What are some ways you struggle to reflect God's merciful heart, for which you need to repent?



HANDS

What are three ways you can show mercy or forgiveness to those around you in the coming week?

