



A Guide for Spiritual Formation

Text for the Week: Jonah 3:3-5 & Jonah 4

Message for the Week: Undeserved Grace

Sunday, February 9

Opening:

What is one low (a bad thing) and one high (a good thing) that happened to you this past week? Write them down and take turns sharing them with the others in your group.

Where have you seen the work of the Holy Spirit in your life this past week?

What did you get angry about this week? Why did it make you angry?

Preparation:

Spend 1-2 minutes in silence with God to center and prepare yourself for your time with God today.

Read:

Read / Have two people in your group read [Jonah 3:3-5; Jonah 4](#) out loud.

(Clicking the link will bring you to multiple translations.)

As you read and/or listen to the text being read, circle, highlight, or underline what words, phrases, or ideas grabbed your attention and heart in these verses?

Write them down below and/or share them with those who are with you.

Respond / Reflect:

In Jonah 3:5 we read that Nineveh repented. What does it mean to repent?

Why do you think Jonah was so angry that Nineveh repented?

What are you angry about? What makes you angry? What does our anger reveal?

What adjectives would you use to describe Jonah? Why?

What adjectives would you use to describe God? Why?

What is Jonah's problem? How are we like Jonah?

What is the ending of Jonah 4 inviting us to do? Compare Jonah's concern to God's concern.

Take Away:

What is a main point or key message that you learned, understood, observed, or experienced that you are taking away with you from your group's reflections on the bible passage or your group's conversations today?

Prayer:

Spend time in prayer with/for the other people who are with you. Who in your group needs prayer today? Who in your group will you pray for?

Pray this prayer together:

Father, forgive our willfully stubborn hearts that have made life about us and not about you. Remove from our hard hearts the very things that get in the way of abundantly sharing your grace. Forgive us our anger toward those who don't deserve your grace, yet have received it in abundance. AMEN

"Try It" - Putting our Faith into Action:

This week, when you are doing your errands, practice seeing and noticing the people around you as you think Jesus would see them.

This week, pay attention to when you get angry. Reflect on the cause of your anger. What do you notice about the things that are causing you to be angry?

Jonah 3:3-5 and Jonah 4 - New International Version

3³ Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city; it took three days to go through it. ⁴ Jonah began by going a day's journey into the city, proclaiming, "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown." ⁵ The Ninevites believed God. A fast was proclaimed, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

4 But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. ² He prayed to the Lord, "Isn't this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. ³ Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."

⁴ But the Lord replied, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

⁵ Jonah had gone out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city. ⁶ Then the Lord God provided a leafy plant^[a] and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the plant. ⁷ But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the plant so that it withered. ⁸ When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live."

⁹ But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?"

"It is," he said. "And I'm so angry I wish I were dead."

¹⁰ But the Lord said, "You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. ¹¹ And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?"

Footnotes

a. [Jonah 4:6](#) The precise identification of this plant is uncertain; also in verses 7, 9 and 10.

Jonah 3:3-5 and Jonah 4 – The Message

³ This time Jonah started off straight for Nineveh, obeying God's orders to the letter.

Nineveh was a big city, very big—it took three days to walk across it.

⁴ Jonah entered the city, went one day's walk and preached, "In forty days Nineveh will be smashed."

⁵ The people of Nineveh listened, and trusted God. They proclaimed a citywide fast and dressed in burlap to show their repentance. Everyone did it—rich and poor, famous and obscure, leaders and followers.

⁴ ¹⁻² Jonah was furious. He lost his temper. He yelled at God, "God! I knew it—when I was back home, I knew this was going to happen! That's why I ran off to Tarshish! I knew you were sheer grace and mercy, not easily angered, rich in love, and ready at the drop of a hat to turn your plans of punishment into a program of forgiveness!

³ "So, God, if you won't kill them, kill *me*! I'm better off dead!"

⁴ God said, "What do you have to be angry about?"

⁵ But Jonah just left. He went out of the city to the east and sat down in a sulk. He put together a makeshift shelter of leafy branches and sat there in the shade to see what would happen to the city.

⁶ God arranged for a broad-leafed tree to spring up. It grew over Jonah to cool him off and get him out of his angry sulk. Jonah was pleased and enjoyed the shade. Life was looking up.

⁷⁻⁸ But then God sent a worm. By dawn of the next day, the worm had bored into the shade tree and it withered away. The sun came up and God sent a hot, blistering wind from the east. The sun beat down on Jonah's head and he started to faint. He prayed to die: "I'm better off dead!"

⁹ Then God said to Jonah, "What right do you have to get angry about this shade tree?"

Jonah said, "Plenty of right. It's made me angry enough to die!"

¹⁰⁻¹¹ God said, "What's this? How is it that you can change your feelings from pleasure to anger overnight about a mere shade tree that you did nothing to get? You neither planted nor watered it. It grew up one night and died the next night. So, why can't I likewise change what I feel about Nineveh from anger to pleasure, this big city of more than 120,000 childlike people who don't yet know right from wrong, to say nothing of all the innocent animals?"