

Life Application Notes: Jonah Week 6 – John Groves

“Lost in Anger” – Jonah 4:1-11

Introduction

Kick off by discussing – what things wind you up you the most? Do you feel justified in your anger/frustration? (Think of pet peeves/habits/humorous things – try to not dwell on this part too long and be sensitive to each other!)

Digging In

Read Jonah Chapter 4 together.

In the whole story of Jonah so far, Jonah is the only one who is reluctant to obey God (dice, fish, sailors, Ninevites). In Chapter 4 we see Jonah angry at God for having mercy on the Ninevites. Jonah preached an 8 word sermon to the Ninevites and they repented – you may have thought that this would make Jonah happy, that he had succeeded – but in chapter 4 we see Jonah angry.

1. Arguing with God

What examples can you think of in the bible of people who argued with God?

Jonah is not the only biblical figure to argue with God. When we read through the bible we see people like Abraham, Job, Moses, Gideon, Elijah and more – who work out their anger/frustration with God. We see this in the conversations that these figures have with God – through prayer!

Do you find that it is easier to pray when you are presented with frustrating or confusing circumstances?

Do you find that it is easier or harder to pray when you are angry or frustrated with God?

Jonah says Verse 2 that he **knows** that God is gracious and compassionate.

These declarations are repeated by others throughout scripture, with many of these statements in the psalms – declaring truths of who God is. (Look at Psalm 86:15, 103:8, 145:8 for reference)

Jonah is aware of these truths about God but his feelings towards the Ninevites are a barrier to him sharing God’s view of the Ninevites. God responds to Jonah with wisdom, using questions to work out what is in Jonah’s heart.

What aspects of Jonah’s character are exposed by God’s use of the plant/use of questions? (Prejudice, pride, narrow-mindedness, self-centredness)

What methods does God use to question us? (Scripture, other people)

2. Awkward Fact

In verses 2-3 Jonah uses the Hebrew word ‘Yahweh’ to refer to God. Jonah speaks to God from his identity as an Israelite. For Jonah the Ninevites were separate, not deserving of God’s mercy.

The awkward fact for Jonah is that God is unchanging in his character. His holy response to sin is the same for all people!

What aspects of God’s character are shown through this passage in Jonah? (Mercy, grace, compassion)

God uses the lesson of the plant to expose the prejudice and anger in Jonah’s heart. Whilst Jonah saw his identity as an Israelite, he was no different to the Ninevites in God’s eyes when it came to the sin in his heart. As ‘Christians’ our identity is in Christ (it’s in the name!) – regardless of our race or upbringing we were all once separated from God.

3. Amazing Grace

We all start from a place of separation from God. But unlike other religions our redemption and salvation is not tied to what we can achieve in our own strength. Christianity is all about GRACE. As John put it in his talk: *“Grace is something for nothing for those who don’t deserve anything!”*.

How does this affect our view on why we serve and why we evangelise?

The word ‘pity’ (sometimes ‘concern’) used in this passage can be translated as ‘to grieve’ or to be ‘broken-hearted’.

How does Jonah’s ‘pity’ compare to God’s ‘pity’ for the Ninevites?

Read John 3:16-18 - God’s heart is broken by those who are still lost and unreached. ***Is there anything that jumps out to you from reading those verses in the context of where we are in the story of Jonah? (God of the WHOLE world, ‘whoever believes’)***

Who are you broken-hearted for? (if comfortable please share specific groups/friends/individuals, and pray for them either at this point or at the end)

Rounding Off

Refreshing our knowledge of God’s character and our identity helps us to keep the right perspective when we are angry or frustrated with God because of our circumstances or the circumstances around us. When we are angry or frustrated the best thing that we can do is pray and worship to refocus us on God and his character!

Pray together:

- ***For humility in knowing where we stand with God, acknowledging when we may have held anger or resentment towards God or others.***
- ***For our family, friends, and those in our city who are lost and do not know the love and grace of Jesus.***