

NOTE FOR LEADERS: Please use these notes as you feel suit your group – there is plenty of discussion to be had through this however there is also a real urgency in prayer. Please don't feel you need to get through all of the notes below – make sure to allow a large chunk of your meeting to pray together for our families/friends/neighbours/city. We should never underestimate the power prayer has to transform lives!

Life Application Notes: Jonah Week 8 – Nathan Guy

“Should I not pity Nineveh?” – Jonah 4:11

Introduction

A study in 2018 estimated the population of the city of Southampton and roughly determined what percentage of the population were in certain age brackets and which areas in the city were most/least populated.

Discussion: Can you guess how many people and how many dwellings (houses) there are in the city? (maybe play hot/cold to give clues to how close!)

Answer: In 2018, the resident population of the City of Southampton was estimated to be 256,459 and there were an estimated 106,237 dwellings. However the broader geographical (Solent metro) area is estimated to hold well over 1.5 million people.

Digging In

Read Jonah Chapter 4 together.

“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?” v11

Nathan illustrated on Sunday that reading the bible can be like looking into a mirror – we both catch a glimpse of God's face and character, and we also can see ourselves reflected back at us.

Three questions to consider are:

- **What does this passage tell us about who God is and what is he like?**
- **What does this passage tell us about who we are?**
- **What is our response?**

1. God's Character

What aspects of God's character are shown through this passage in Jonah? (Mercy, grace, compassion – try to think back to when we last looked at this passage.)

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

What does this tell us about God's feelings for the Ninevites? God cares for people. God cares for his creation.

2. Our Character

“...who cannot tell their right hand from their left...” – What does this phrase signify?

The Ninevites were lost in sin and needed redemption or would face the judgement of God (their destruction). They did not know God – they didn't know their true identity.

What does God's question to Jonah expose about Jonah's heart and motivations?

Reflect: What does this passage reflect back at us? What does this passage expose in our hearts? (*don't feel you have to share openly*)

How is it that we are redeemed from our sin? (worth pulling out the key elements of Jesus's death and resurrection – for help consider Ephesians 2:4-9 – always good to remind ourselves of this!)

What parallels can you think of between Jonah and his mission, and Jesus's mission shown in the New Testament?

Jesus's message of hope for redemption is good news! God cares for his people – for you and your neighbours, and for all of creation.

3. Our response - moved to action

God sent Jonah to Nineveh to deliver his message of redemption. God was moved by compassion and mercy and acted to ensure both justice and mercy. There are so many people in our communities and city who are still lost and do not know the love and grace of Jesus.

Consider the size of Nineveh and Southampton – how much more should we be moved by compassion for our city?

What steps can we practically take to share God's love and compassion to those who are lost?

How can we provide to those in need? (practically, spiritually, emotionally)

What do you feel moved to respond to?

Rounding Off

We live in a large city that God 'grieves' for. God wants everyone in our city to find redemption and grace through Jesus. Paul teaches in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 to 'pray continually' or in some translations 'never stop praying'. **We should never underestimate the power of prayer and the vastness of God's love and compassion!**

Pray together:

- *For those who are hurting (emotionally, financially, spiritually) in our city - particularly due to the effects of the global pandemic. Pray for a release of God's provision in healing and gifting.*
- *For our family, friends, and those in our city who do not know the love and grace of Jesus.*
- *For God's peace and light to shine into our communities.*