

# THE BOOK *of* JONAH

Good Shepherd  
Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Jonah 4:1-11 | May 24, 2026

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## I. Introduction to this Study

The book of Jonah ends with a question, not a conclusion. Jonah never answers God. He never repents. The ending is left unresolved. That unresolved ending turns the question toward us.

Jonah was grateful for God's mercy when he received it, but angry when God showed mercy to Nineveh. His anger reveals what he truly valued. He cared deeply about the plant that gave him comfort, but not about the people God wanted to spare.

In Jonah 4, God exposes Jonah's heart through a plant, a worm, and a scorching wind. He also exposes ours. Do we love God, or do we mainly love what we want God to do for us?

This week, we are invited to let Jonah's story become a mirror. Where are we using God? Where are we angry because God has not served our desires, our comfort, our group, our nation, or our preferred outcome? And where might God be lovingly disturbing us because He is too holy and too loving to leave us unchanged?

## II. Connecting with One Another

Have you ever been surprised by how strongly you reacted when something small did not go your way? What do you think was underneath that reaction?

## III. Study the Text

*Read Jonah 4:1-4*

- Jonah says he would rather die than see God show mercy to Nineveh. What does that reveal about his heart?
- God asks Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry?" Why do you think God responds with a question instead of a rebuke?
- How can anger sometimes reveal what we believe we are entitled to?

*Read Jonah 4:5-8*

- What do you think Jonah is hoping will happen to Nineveh?
- God provides a plant to give Jonah shade. How does Jonah respond to the plant?



- Then God provides a worm and a scorching east wind. What do these details reveal about God's purpose in the story?
- Jonah is "very happy" about the plant and then angry enough to die when it is gone. What does that emotional swing reveal about him?

*Read Jonah 4:9–11*

- God asks Jonah again, "Is it right for you to be angry?" What is God trying to help Jonah see?
- Why does God compare Jonah's concern for the plant with His own concern for Nineveh?
- What is the significance of God describing the people of Nineveh as those who "cannot tell their right hand from their left"?
- The book ends with God's question unanswered. Why do you think the story ends this way?

*Reflect and Respond*

- Jonah cared deeply about the plant because it gave him comfort. What are some "plants" in our lives that we may love because they serve us?
- Where are you most tempted to love God's gifts more than God Himself?
- How can disappointment, anger, or resentment reveal what has become too important to us?
- Jonah wanted God's mercy for himself but judgment for Nineveh. Are there people or groups you find it hard to imagine God loving with compassion?
- What is the difference between faithful gratitude for our nation and an idolatrous expectation that God must take our side?
- Where might God be asking you to grow in compassion for people you would rather avoid, dismiss, or judge?
- What would it look like this week to ask, "Do I love God, or do I mainly love what I want God to do?"

**IV. Prayer**

*Spend time in prayer together:*

- Thank God for being gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in love.
- Confess the places where comfort, control, politics, national identity, or personal preference have become too important.
- Ask God to reveal where anger or disappointment may be exposing a deeper idol.
- Pray for compassion toward people you find difficult to love.
- Ask God to make Good Shepherd a church that receives mercy humbly and extends mercy freely.

