

THE BOOK *of* JONAH

Good Shepherd
Sermon-Based Study Guide
Jonah 4: 1-4 | May 17, 2026

Prepared by Janae Barker

janae@gspc.org (562) 493-2553 x109

I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue in our Jonah series hearing the answer as to Why Jonah fled from God's call in the first place. After Nineveh repents and God relents from sending destruction, Jonah becomes angry. The very mercy that brought hope to Nineveh becomes a source of frustration for Jonah.

Jonah confesses that this is why he fled in the first place: he knew God was gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in love. Jonah wanted justice for Nineveh, not mercy. The passage exposes the tension between God's compassion and our desire to control who deserves grace.

In these verses, God responds to Jonah's anger with a question: "Is it right for you to be angry?" Rather than condemning Jonah immediately, God invites him to examine his heart. Ultimately, the passage points us to Jesus, who not only proclaimed mercy to enemies but willingly gave His life for them. Let's jump in together!

II. Connecting with One Another

When have you struggled to show grace to someone you felt did not deserve it?

Have you ever been frustrated when someone received forgiveness or a second chance? Why?

What is easier for you personally: receiving mercy or extending mercy?

III. Study the Text

Read Jonah 4:1-4

Jonah's Anger

- What surprises you most about Jonah's reaction to Nineveh's repentance?
- Why do you think Jonah viewed God's mercy as "wrong" or "evil" in verse 1?
- How can good things become upsetting to us when they challenge our sense of fairness or control?
- What does Jonah's anger reveal about the condition of his heart?



God's Character

- In verse 2, Jonah quotes language that describes God as gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in love. Why is it significant that Jonah already knew this about God?
- Why might Jonah celebrate these qualities of God for himself but resent them being shown to Nineveh?
- How does this passage challenge the idea that God's mercy should only belong to certain people?
- What does God's compassion toward Nineveh reveal about His heart for outsiders and enemies?

Jonah's Despair

- Why do you think Jonah would rather die than see Nineveh spared?
- How can anger and bitterness distort our perspective and emotions?
- What is the difference between grieving injustice and resenting mercy?
- Have you ever allowed disappointment or frustration to harden your heart toward others?

God's Question

- Instead of immediately rebuking Jonah, God asks a question in verse 4. Why might that matter?
- What does God's question invite Jonah to reflect on?
- How can God's questions expose deeper issues in our hearts?
- Why is self-righteous anger spiritually dangerous?

IV. Prayer

Spend time in prayer together:

- *Thank God for His compassion, patience, and mercy.*
- *Confess areas of resentment, bitterness, or self-righteousness.*
- *Ask God to soften your heart toward people you struggle to love.*
- *Pray for humility to rejoice when others experience God's grace.*
- *Thank Jesus for extending mercy even to His enemies and to us.*

VI. Digging Deeper

- Exodus 34:6–7 — Why is this description of God so foundational throughout Scripture?
- Luke 15:25–32 — How is Jonah similar to the older brother in the parable of the prodigal son?
- Matthew 5:43–48 — What does Jesus teach about loving enemies?
- Romans 2:1–4 — How can self-righteousness blind us to our own need for mercy?
- James 1:19–20 — Why does human anger fail to produce God's righteousness?
- Ephesians 4:31–32 — What does it look like to replace bitterness with forgiveness and compassion?

