

IS IT RIGHT FOR YOU TO BE ANGRY?

Jonah 4:1-11

At a church we attended some time ago, there was a bit of dead time between Sunday school and the worship service, so we suggested having a coffee and fellowship time. *No, no, no!* The idea was met with a stormy outburst of negativity. Apparently there were unresolved sore feelings in that church over coffee hours of the past. We dropped the subject, but we never got any explanation.

People get mad for strange reasons. Or more accurately, people get mad for perfectly good reasons that only they understand. We may find their anger bizarre, but if we could see inside their minds and hearts, we would comprehend why they react as they do.

Group Discussion. What feels bad about anger? What feels good about it?

Personal Reflection. When have you felt most justified at being angry?

Nineveh was the capital of the ancient Assyrian empire. Today its ruins are across the Tigris River from the city of Mosul in Iraq. About sixty years before the time of Jonah, Assyria humiliated Israel; an Assyrian stone obelisk depicts King Jehu's disgrace. By Jonah's time Assyria's power had waned somewhat. Assyria would regain strength and eventually conquer Israel in 722 BC (2 Kings 18:9-12).

The Lord called Jonah to "go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it." Instead, Jonah fled to the Mediterranean port of Joppa and boarded a ship bound for Tarshish (Jonah 1:1-3). Tarshish was possibly in modern Spain near Gibraltar, but wherever it was, we can assume it was as far away from Nineveh as possible. The Lord intervened, and

Jonah went to Nineveh after all, where his preaching led to repentance. Instead of taking pleasure in his success, the prophet got mad. *Read Jonah 4:1-11.*

1. How do verses 1-3 shed light on Jonah's attempted escape from the Lord's call to go to Nineveh?
2. How did Jonah answer (or not answer) the Lord's question in verse 4?
3. Putting aside for now whether Jonah was justified in being angry, why was he angry and at whom?
4. Jonah sat down to observe the city (v. 5). What might he have been waiting and watching for?
5. Whose sin has made you angry? If you are willing, please share your answer with the group.

6. What do you think makes the difference, if there is one, between justified and unjustified anger?
7. As Jonah waited, the Lord caused several things to happen (vv. 6-8). What were their effects on Jonah?
8. Several times Jonah was even at the point of asking God to take his life (vv. 3, 8). If he was so miserable being angry, why do you think he still held on to his anger?
9. Sometimes we want God to be merciful to people who have done wrong; other times we want them to get what they deserve. What makes us feel one way or the other?
10. In verse 9 the Lord asked Jonah a more specific form of his original question in verse 4. This time Jonah answered directly. Do you think his answer is an improvement on his previous nonanswer or not? Why?

11. How did the Lord explain his mercy toward Nineveh (vv. 10-11)?

12. The book of Jonah ends abruptly with the Lord asking another question (v. 11). How do you react to this unusual conclusion to the book?

13. What steps will you take to let go of unjustified anger in a specific area (or toward a specific person) and be merciful as the Lord is merciful? If you are comfortable, share your response with the group.



Thank God for the person or people who first brought the gospel to you. Consider how your life would be different if they had fled in the opposite direction instead.

NOW OR LATER

Meditate on these Scriptures concerning anger, and write your responses to them:

- Proverbs 22:24-25
- 1 Corinthians 13:4-7
- Ephesians 4:25-27
- James 1:19-21