



# Jonah

## Runaway Prophet



### Study 4: The Resentful Prophet

## Discussion Starter

What film or novel has had the greatest impact on you? What was it about that film or book that affected you so much?

## Worship God Together

We often fill our times of worship with words, today we are going to worship mainly in silence. Explain to the group that you are going to read a passage of scripture, and then you are going to take ten minutes in quiet to allow God to speak to you.

Pray, inviting God to visit each individual by his Holy Spirit, and to speak to you all. Then read Psalm 103 slowly, to help everyone to focus their minds onto the Lord. Then allow ten minutes of complete quiet, encouraging everyone to wait on God, and to allow Him to speak to them.

At the end of ten minutes allow anyone who wishes to share anything they feel that God has said to them.

## Focus on the Word

Read Jonah chapters 3 and 4 and discuss the following questions together:

There is a play on words in the Hebrew of this passage, which the English misses. The Hebrew word *ra'ah* is used for the evil ways of the Ninevites, the destruction that God had planned to visit upon them, and Jonah's response to God's compassion (it was great *ra'ah* to him). In effect we read that the Ninevites repented of their *ra'ah*, so God relented of His planned *ra'ah* and we are left to find out what Jonah did with his *ra'ah*. The Ninevites changed their minds, so God changed His mind, now what about Jonah...?

- Why do you think Jonah became so angry? What do you suppose he was hoping would happen?
- Think back to the first of these studies. What further light does chapter four throw on the reasons why Jonah ran away from God in the first place?
- The statement that Jonah makes about God's character is one that appears a number of times throughout the Old Testament. Read Exodus 34:6 for the first occasion of God using this form of words to describe himself. Why might this particular phrase, from that particular event in Israel's history have come into Jonah's mind at this moment?
- What point was God making through the episode with the plant? (Incidentally, 'discomfort' in verse 6 is *ra'ah* again.)

In this chapter God appoints a vine and a worm to carry out His purposes. If you have the time, it is interesting to look back through the various occasions in the book of Jonah where God is depicted as sovereign over nature. Do you think we see Him in the same terms today?

## Work it Through

---

In 1991 America was shocked by the discovery that Jeffrey Dahmer, a 31 year old man from Milwaukee, had raped, murdered and cannibalised seventeen men. For some Christians it was every bit as disturbing when, three years later, Dahmer declared that he had found salvation through Jesus and was baptised within the prison confines. Just six months later he was murdered by another inmate.

- How do you react to this story, and others like it, of the repentance and faith of some of the world's worst criminals?
- Could God really forgive, love and welcome into heaven someone who was guilty of such crimes? How does the idea make you feel?
- Jonah was offended by the idea of grace. He clearly believed that God's blessings could be hoarded, and resented the idea that God might extend them beyond his own people. Do you see anything of the attitude of Jonah in the church in this country? How can we try to make sure that our church embodies a different attitude?
- The borough of Tonbridge and Malling has a population of very close to a hundred and twenty thousand people (although possibly not as many cattle as Nineveh). Do you feel any sense of God's concern for those people?

Turn your thoughts and discussions into a time of prayer.