

JONAH: LIFE. LESSONS.

THE DANGERS OF BITTERNESS AND RESENTMENT - JONAH 4:1-5



SERMON NOTES:

1. Bitterness and Resentment _____ our peace (vv.1-2)
2. Bitterness and Resentment _____ our purpose (vv.1-4)
3. Bitterness and Resentment _____ our productiveness (v.5)

NEXT STEPS:

1. Today, I'm acknowledging the truth that while anger will not change my past, it will certainly affect my future.
2. Today, I'm repenting of the sin of bitterness and unforgiveness and I am giving _____ and those feelings over to God.
3. Today, I'm making the choice to move past my past by recommitting myself to Christ and by choosing to spend time daily with God in prayer, worship, and Bible study.
4. This week, I will email pastor@tbclife.net to talk with a TBC staff member about my struggles in moving past my past.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Open your group in prayer, and remember that this is only a guide. Feel free to discuss each of the provided questions and Next Steps above, or simply dive deeper into just one. Before you close with prayer, take a few minutes to look over the three essential questions at the end before the toolbox and digging deeper section.

ICE BREAKER:

What are some sources of anger? (see Digging Deeper)

OBSERVE | *What Do I See?*

1. Circle every repeated word within this passage
2. Highlight any word that demonstrates the emotions of characters within this passage.

INTERPRET | *What Does It Mean?*

3. What factors could possibly explain Jonah's extreme response to God's compassion towards the Ninevites? In other words, why was he so angry at God? (see Digging Deeper)
4. What do these scripture verses say about anger? James 1:19-20; Proverbs 15:1, 18, 19:19, 22:24, 29:11, 22; Psalm 4:4; Ecclesiastes 7:9
5. Is it a sin for a person to be angry? Ephesians 4:26-27
6. What did God's response to Jonah in verse 5 reveal about God and about Jonah's anger?

APPLY | *How Does It Work?*

7. Would you say right now that you are more obsessed with God or with self? How can you move to a life of God-obsession over self-obsession?

8. Do you lack compassion and/or remain distant from the following groups?

Those that have wronged you

Those that are different than you (i.e. ethnically, politically, economically, etc.)

Those that are geographically distant from you

Those that don't know Jesus

If so, why is this the case? And what steps this week could you take to see these groups as God sees them?

Who can you move towards in compassion and love? What steps will you take this week?

Create a personal application statement that expresses how you will apply this truth in your life:

THREE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

If you have more time, the following questions are intended to be open-ended and encourage members to consider how they felt and what they, or the group, can do as a result of hearing the message!

1. **What do you think?** How did this message challenge, change, or affirm your thinking? What point in this message was most impactful for you?
2. **What will you do?** How will you or your group put into practice what you've learned today?
3. **How can you help others in your group?** How can you encourage, affirm, pray for, and keep accountable the commitments they put into practice?

TOOLBOX:

Review the tools to help us engage with others. | See Appendix.

Spend some time discussing your group's experience in learning and practicing these tools.

DIGGING DEEPER:

What are the Sources of Anger?

Hurt - Your heart is wounded. Everyone has a God-given inner need for unconditional love. When you experience rejection or emotional pain of any kind, anger can become a protective wall that keeps people and pain away.

Injustice - Your right is violated. Everyone has an inner moral code that produces a sense of right and wrong, fair and unfair, just and unjust. When you perceive that an injustice has occurred against you or others (especially those whom you love), you may feel angry. If you hold on to the offense, the unresolved anger can begin to make a home in your heart.

Fear - Your future is threatened. Everyone is created with a God-given inner need for security. When you begin to worry, feel threatened, or get angry because of a change in circumstances, you may be responding to fear. A fearful heart reveals a lack of trust in God's perfect plan for your life.

Frustration - Your effort is unsuccessful. Everyone has a God-given need for significance. When your efforts are thwarted or do not meet your own personal expectations, your sense of significance can be threatened. Frustration over unmet expectations of yourself or of others is a major source of anger.

(June Hunt, Counseling Through Your Bible Handbook [Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2008])

Jonah's Anger

If in Chapter 1 Jonah is like the Prodigal Son, insisting on doing his own thing and going his own way (Luke 15:11-32); then in Chapter 4, he's like the Prodigal's elder brother—critical, selfish, sullen, angry, and unhappy with what was going on. It isn't enough for God's servants simply to do their Master's will; they must do "the will of God from the heart" (Eph. 6:6). The heart of every problem is the problem in the heart, and that's where Jonah's problems were to be found...

Jonah was partly concerned about his reputation, not only before the Ninevites, but also before the Jews back home. His Jewish friends would want to see all of the Assyrians destroyed, not just the people of Nineveh. When Jonah's friends found out that he had been the means of saving Nineveh from God's wrath, they could have considered him a traitor to official Jewish foreign policy.

When reputation is more important than character, and pleasing ourselves and our friends is more important than pleasing God, then we're in danger of becoming like Jonah and living to defend our prejudices instead of fulfilling our spiritual responsibilities. Jonah certainly had good theology, but it stayed in his head and never got to his heart, and he was so distraught that he wanted to die! God's tender response was to ask Jonah to examine his heart and see why he really was angry.

(Warren W. Wiersbe, Be Amazed, OT Commentary Minor Prophets [Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook Publishers, 1996])

APPENDIX:

INTEREST CREATING STORY - HOW TO START A SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION

The parables that Jesus told created an interest in His Kingdom- the characteristics, the hopes, and the realities of the gospel. Sometimes, Jesus wouldn't even mention that He was Messiah; sometimes He did pointedly. Jesus made the gospel accessible to those who would hear and didn't apologize for who He was.

Sadly, we have become conditioned to put on a filter and not speak of Jesus - because we imagine that it is awkward, pushy, or politically incorrect. We need to take off this filter and grow in boldness and love as we share stories about who He is and what He is about. There was no doubt that He was marking himself as special, as a spiritual being, and often, much more than that!

Likewise, "marking ourselves as spiritual" can help us gauge whether others are interested in God and His message. Some people will "lean in" as you speak about such topics, asking additional questions, sharing their own beliefs, telling about their own journey. Some will not; they will "lean back" and change the topic, become silent, or shut down altogether. Allow the Holy Spirit to prompt you as you initiate and let Him do the work of speaking to a person's soul.

Practice talking with your spouse, children, or friend about two or three of the following "interest creating" topics:

Recently, God/Jesus has been teaching me that...

I am realizing more and more that God has blessed me by...

I used to struggle with (insert fear, stronghold, idolatry) but now I see God wants me to believe...

I decided to follow Jesus because...

Think of common topics that come up as you meet people - for example: career, living situation, family history, educational background. Pick one of these and tell how God changed your path in the past, or how He is guiding you in the present.

As you practice talking about these things, try to end with a learning question such as, "Have you ever considered God in this way before?" OR "Do you think God is teaching/blessing/asking you to believe anything right now?" Your questions are to gauge a response and to allow space for them to interact with your story. Now, be prayerful and alert as to who God wants you to share with this week!

Prayer Stories

Another way to create interest is prayer stories. Most people in today's world still value prayer. Think of someone in your Live, Work, and Play network who has expressed a need, struggle, or an unmet desire. Can you do one of the following this week?

Share how God has answered a prayer in your life, something specific and real and transforming.

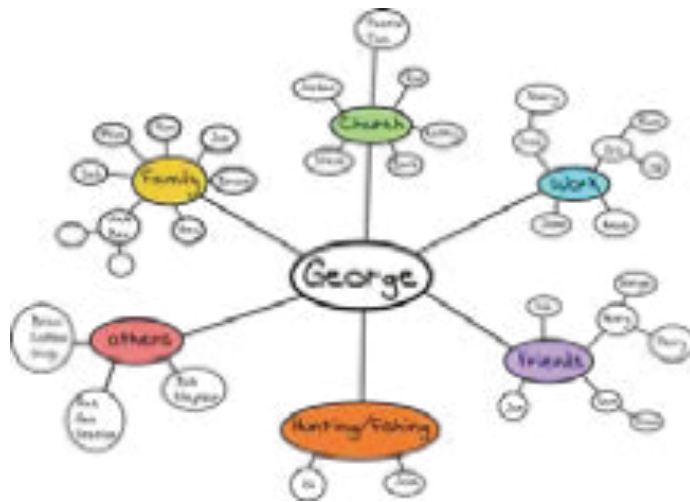
EVERY NEIGHBOR PRAYER At the heart of Every Neighbor, there is a desire to be observant, expectant, and involved in who God is putting into our paths where we Live, Work, and Play. He wants us to pray - that many will know Him as Father and as Savior, as He draws them to Himself and His Kingdom (John 6:44). As well, Jesus modeled prayer for those who were like “sheep without a shepherd (Mark 6:32- 34).” Jesus’s own ministry of compassion (Matthew 14:14, 15:32) to those who were on the fringes of society, those who had no status or reputation, was a beautiful example of who we are to be praying for and seeking to include in our daily lives- those who are outside our comfort zones, but fully loved and wanted by our God.

Each week, we gather to pray for these people. Who did God impress upon you when you drew out your Live, Work, and Play network? Who are the people who might be seeking His Kingdom, who are asking hard questions, who are far from Christ and need a better Hope? Using your Live, Work, and Play network, who do you need to purposively add to the Every Neighbor Prayer board? On this board, collect the names of those you are hoping to bless with the gospel through service, acts of love, conversation, and/or Bible study. Pray boldly for God to reveal Himself to them and open their eyes to His power and freedom.

You may meet someone new this week or renew an old relationship from the past. Is this someone God is asking you to put on the Every Neighbor Prayer board, to actively pray big for their salvation? Add them to the board. Each week, take time to update your group, and let’s see what God will do! Another tool that’s useful is www.blesseveryhome.com.

LIVE, WORK, PLAY MAP The word “oikos” is a Greek word that means family. In Jesus’s time, a family would include workers, extended family, and people residing in their home. Basically, this was their greatest circle of influence. For us, this can also include not only our family, but our friends, coworkers, and acquaintances. It can include the guy at the gas station that you see at each fill up, or the barista that serves you that mocha latte each morning. It is anyone that we commonly encounter on a regular basis, giving you the ability to have influence in their lives.

So what does this have to do with us, and how does it help us spread the gospel? “Oikos” is used around 120 times in the New Testament. Often when Jesus or His disciples found people that were open to the gospel, He would eventually share the message with the entire network, their oikos and their communities. Jesus met the woman at the well (John 4), and after revealing His message and who He was as Messiah, she was amazed and told her oikos, her whole town, AND many believed! We want to see the same happen. Every Day and Every Neighbor means that we are participants in a Greater Story of God’s plan of salvation and we can be ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5) wherever and with whomever we find ourselves.



Draw your own network: Think about the people in your spheres of influence. With whom do you live, work, and play? Be as exhaustive as possible and brainstorm away! Also, think about people who are just beyond your normal spheres. People who are that next step out - perhaps an acquaintance whom you don't know well, a neighbor who is different from you ethnically or social-economically, a community member whom the Holy Spirit has put in your path but is more a stranger than friend? Be creative and think outside the box on this one!

KIDS' DISCUSSION:

When God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and tell the people about God, Jonah ran away. God sent a big fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah asked God to forgive him for running away. God forgave Jonah and commanded the big fish to spit Jonah onto dry land. Then Jonah went to Nineveh and told the people about God. He told them they were not following God. He told them they had sinned, and they needed forgiveness. The people of Nineveh cried out to God and asked God to forgive them. Guess what God did. He forgave the people of Nineveh.

Do you think this made Jonah happy? No. It made Jonah angry. Jonah didn't like that the people of Nineveh had done bad things. He wanted God to punish the people and not forgive them. Jonah forgot that God had forgiven him when he ran away from God. God is quick to forgive us when we ask Him to forgive us. God wants us to forgive other people just like we have been forgiven. We should not hold on to bitterness and resentment. Because God forgives us, we can forgive others.

KIDS' ACTIVITY:

Have your child taste a bitter food: ginger, horseradish, lemon juice or lime juice. Have something sweet on hand for your children to eat to remove the bitter taste. Do you prefer a bitter or a sweet taste? How did you make the bad taste in your mouth go away? How can we make sure no bitter roots grow up in our family and among our friends?

Unforgiveness and holding grudges destroy our relationships. God helps us forgive. Bitterness happens easily. One person does wrong to another person (sometimes without realizing it), and then the person who feels wronged holds a grudge. Pretty soon everyone is so busy being bitter towards each other, they forget to love and to serve each other. Pastor David said in his sermon, "God can take even our hurts and disappointments and turn them around for our good and for His glory."

Holding grudges and not forgiving puts a bad taste in our relationships like the _____

(bitter tasting food). When we forgive others, it is like the _____ (sweet treat). When you ate

the _____, it helped take the bad taste out of your mouth. Just as the sweet taste took

away the bitter taste, God can remove unforgiveness from our hearts and replace it with love.