

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY



JONAH 4: 1-10

WAVES OF REVIVAL

THE BOOK OF JONAH

by Lenya Heitzig

MEMORY VERSE

“When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. “Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God’s love for them. But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, ‘Salvation comes from the Lord.’”

—*Jonah 2: 7-9*

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DAY ONE: WHEN GOD DOES GOOD THINGS TO BAD PEOPLE

Devastated by his sons crippling disease and untimely death, Rabbi Harold Kushner wrote the best-selling book, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. He hoped that others would find comfort in the things he learned on the road of suffering.

He based much of his advice from the book of Job, a man who “was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil” according to Scripture (Job 1:1). After multiple disasters including grave illness, Job lay naked and desperate. Eventually, God confronted Job to teach him a lesson on His sovereignty. At last, he surrendered his will to God’s will. “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.” In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing” (Job 1:21-22). After Job’s suffering, God rewarded Job with health, wealth, and children.

Kushner encourages his readers to accept suffering as a common denominator that comes to us all. However, in partnership with God and their religious community, they can rally the strength to get up and rebuild a life of love and meaning.

Last week, we saw how God relented from doing bad things to bad people. This week, we’ll see the Lord do bad things to His prophet Job to teach Him a very important lesson. As Christians we can take encouragement that “all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

REFLECTION

READ THE VERSES BELOW AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

“But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. So he prayed to the LORD, and said, ‘Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!’” (Jonah 4:1-3).



PRACTICAL OBSERVATION:

1. Look back at the homework for Jonah 3, then explain what displeased Jonah?
2. Describe Jonah’s emotional state.
3. What did Jonah do next?
4. Describe how Jonah recaps the past.
5. List the five traits Jonah attributes to God.
6. How does Jonah conclude his prayer.

Not Fair *Job struggled with God doing good things to bad people. It went against his sense of justice. But God balances His justice with His mercy and so should we. James warned, “because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!” (James 2:13).*

God’s Attributes *are multifaceted ranging from anger to lovingkindness. Sadly, some see the Lord in only one dimension leaving them short-sighted. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9).*

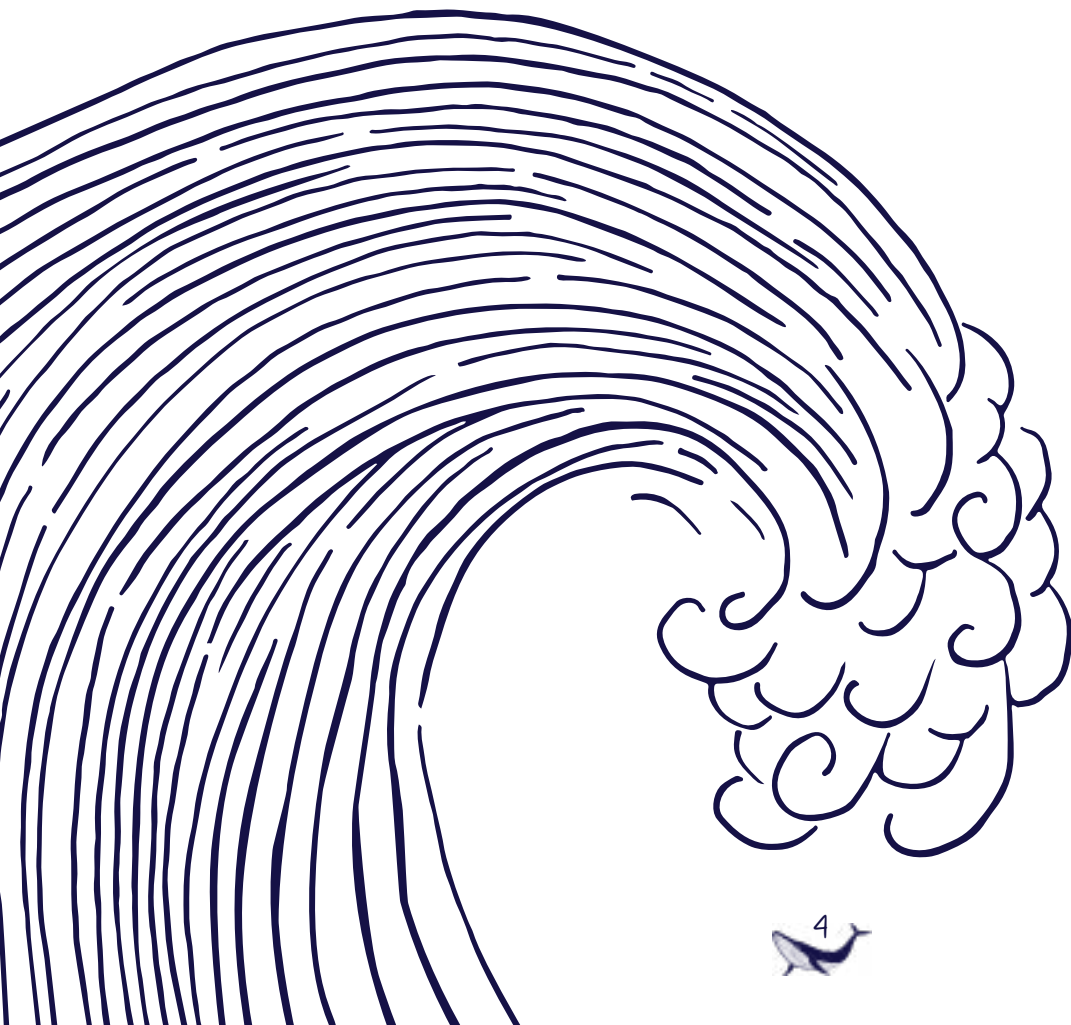
PERSONAL APPLICATION:

7. There's a huge difference between God's anger and Job's. Read Psalm 30:3-5, then answer the questions below.
 - a. Describe what David credits God for doing in verse 3.
 - b. How does David respond to God's deliverance in verse 4.
 - c. Compare and contrast God's anger and his favor. What do you learn about Him?
 - d. Journal about a situation where your anger got out of control. Would you want God to treat you the way you treat others in your anger. Write a prayer thanking Him for His great mercy and grace.

Deadly Anger *Job's anger led to a feeling that he no longer wanted to live. Anger unchecked is toxic. The Hebrew word for anger is "haron" which means "the kindling of anger," or "a boiling over." It's synonymous with rage. The psalmist wrote, "Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil" (Psalms 37:8).*

“If we take away any of the attributes of God, we do not weaken God but we weaken our concept of God.”

—A. W. Tozer



DAY TWO: TAKING YOUR BALL AND GOING HOME

The term “take my ball and go home” evokes the image of children playing a sport with a ball that is the sole property of one of the kid’s. When things don’t go the way the ball owner likes, they literally walk away with the ball to prevent the others from playing. It’s a selfish, pouty way of manipulation.

Grownups can do the same thing when they withdraw emotionally from others as a form of punishment or control. We’ve all had the friend that “withholds engagement” if someone hurts their feelings or disagrees with their point of view. These people get their feelings hurt easily and instead of hashing things out, they withdraw. When they’re asked, “What’s wrong?” The standard response is, “Nothing,” although the tone of voice and demeanor speak otherwise.

Maybe the adult doesn’t put on a frowny face, stamp their feet, or puff out pouty lips like a five-year-old, but it has the same effect as a tantrum. Withholding connection demonstrates unhappiness in a passive, frustrating way.

It’s not healthy. If you know someone like this it’s best to first call them out by acknowledging the elephant in the room. Often unmasked pouters will re-engage or at least back off. Second, if that doesn’t work you need to disengage not in a pouty way, but by respectfully refusing to participate in a dysfunctional melodrama. Pouting is a lousy way of telling the world one is unhappy, so don’t encourage it by taking the bait.

Today, we see Jonah in a full court press of pouting. He actually leaves God’s presence. He’s mad at God! He goes outside the city gates with his ball waiting to see if this tantrum will change God’s mind. Think it will work?

REFLECTION

READ THE VERSES BELOW AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

“Then the LORD said, ‘Is it right for you to be angry?’ So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city” (Jonah 4:4-5).



PRACTICAL OBSERVATION:

1. Describe how God answered Jonah’s prayers?

2. Read Ephesians 4:26-27, then answer the following questions:
 - a. What is the first thing Paul tells the Ephesians to do with anger and how is it possible?

 - b. What is the second thing the apostles teaches about anger?

 - c. Explain the consequences of unchecked anger.

3. Describe how Jonah responds to God’s question.

4. When Jonah reaches his destination what does he do and why?

Questions are one of the ways God challenges or changes the way we think. When Job challenged the Almighty’s knowledge and ability God arrived in a storm and blasted Job with 77 unanswerable questions about the universe. It was meant to remind Job that he was finite and God was infinite.

Foothold is a position usable as a base for further advance. The enemy takes advantage of things in the believer’s life to gain leverage. Among them are bitterness, anger, lust, and jealousy. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

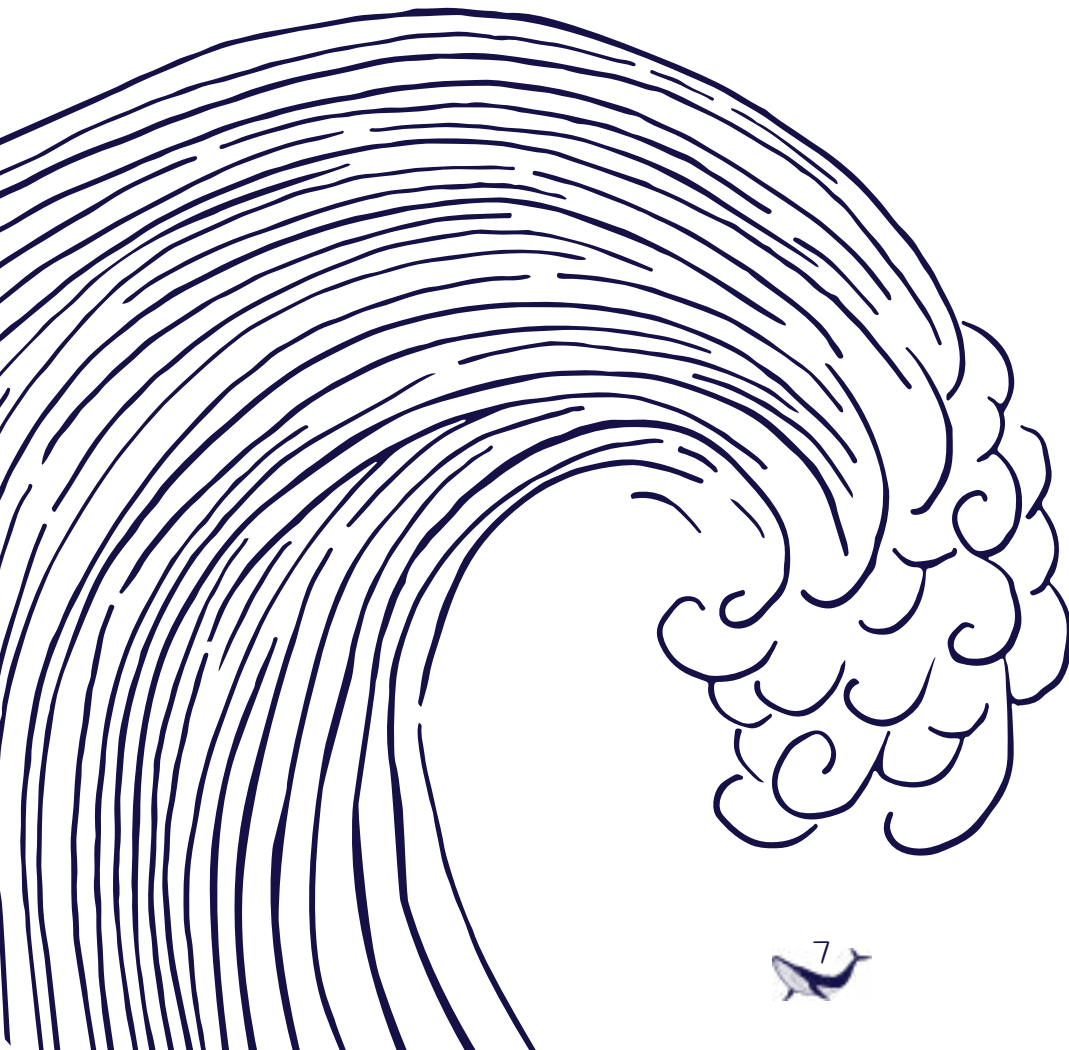
PERSONAL APPLICATION:

5. We've learned that sometimes God asks His children questions for the purpose of correcting their thinking. Write a list of some of the questions God has asked you. How did they impact your heart.
6. Pouting isn't pretty. Using the word POUT as an acrostic describe some of the ways you have pouted in the past. Then write use the following verse as a prayer to grow up: "speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ" (Ephesians 4:15).

Pouting is a sulking kind of gesture to express your annoyance or displeasure that involves body language over words. In every situation you have a choice to pout or praise. You can turn your disappointment into His appointment by changing just one letter. Even it life hurts or doubt looms you can trust in God.

“Coveting, pouting, or tearing others down does not elevate your standing, nor does demeaning someone else improve your self-image.”

—Jeffrey R. Holland



DAY THREE: HERE TODAY, GONE TOMORROW

Here today, gone tomorrow is an idiom that teaches us that some things just don't last very long. It's a way of recognizing that stuff like technology, news, or fashion can be fleeting or soon to be outdated.

Generation Z was born between 1996 and 2010, and have lots of traits to admire. Paying it forward is important to them. Their buying decisions follow the idea of giving back, being sustainable, or made by fair trade. They sincerely care about saving the planet from farming organically to recycling.

For all the advancements, there are some things that they will never understand. As a Baby Boomer, I can't help but be nostalgic. But that is true of any generation because so many things are here today and gone tomorrow. From carrying around an old transistor radio, to making calls from a rotary phone, to enjoying a Charlies Brown comic. Let's list some things Gen Zer's will probably never understand:

- Cassette tapes, 8-track tapes, or CD's
- Floppy discs or laser discs
- Slide or overhead projectors
- A rolodex, address book, or phone book
- Blockbuster Video or Borders Bookstore

Nothing lasts forever. Today, we'll see Jonah learn this lesson from nature as a plant springs up quickly and then withers in no time at all. God uses this "here today and gone tomorrow" moment to teach the prophet an important lesson. People are of much more value than plants.

Jesus taught a similar lesson, "Look at the lilies and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for flowers that are here today and gone tomorrow, won't he more surely care for you? You have so little faith! (Matthew 6:28-30, NLT).

REFLECTION

READ THE VERSES BELOW AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

“And the LORD God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant. But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered” (Jonah 4:6-7).



PRACTICAL OBSERVATION:

1. What does God do next?
2. Explain God's motives for His actions.
3. Explains how Jonah's mood changes and why.
4. What did God do the next morning and describe the results.

Gardener *All throughout Scripture, God is seen as a Gardener. He planted a garden in Eden for Adam and Eve to enjoy. God planted the nation of Israel, “The vineyard of the LORD Almighty is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the garden of his delight” (Isaiah 5:7). And in the millennial kingdom will God return us to the garden according to Revelations 22.*

Happiness *is short lived and is contingent upon our circumstance. When life is good we feel good. When times are bad so is our attitude. But joy rises above circumstances and focuses on God's character. “The joy of the LORD is your strength” (Nehemiah8:10)*

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

5. God provided the shade of a plant to deliver Jonah from his misery. Journal about a time that God provided something that you needed during a time of suffering.

6. As Christian we're called to something better than happiness—joy. Look up the following passages. In the space provided, list the source of the believer's joy.

Psalms 16:7 _____

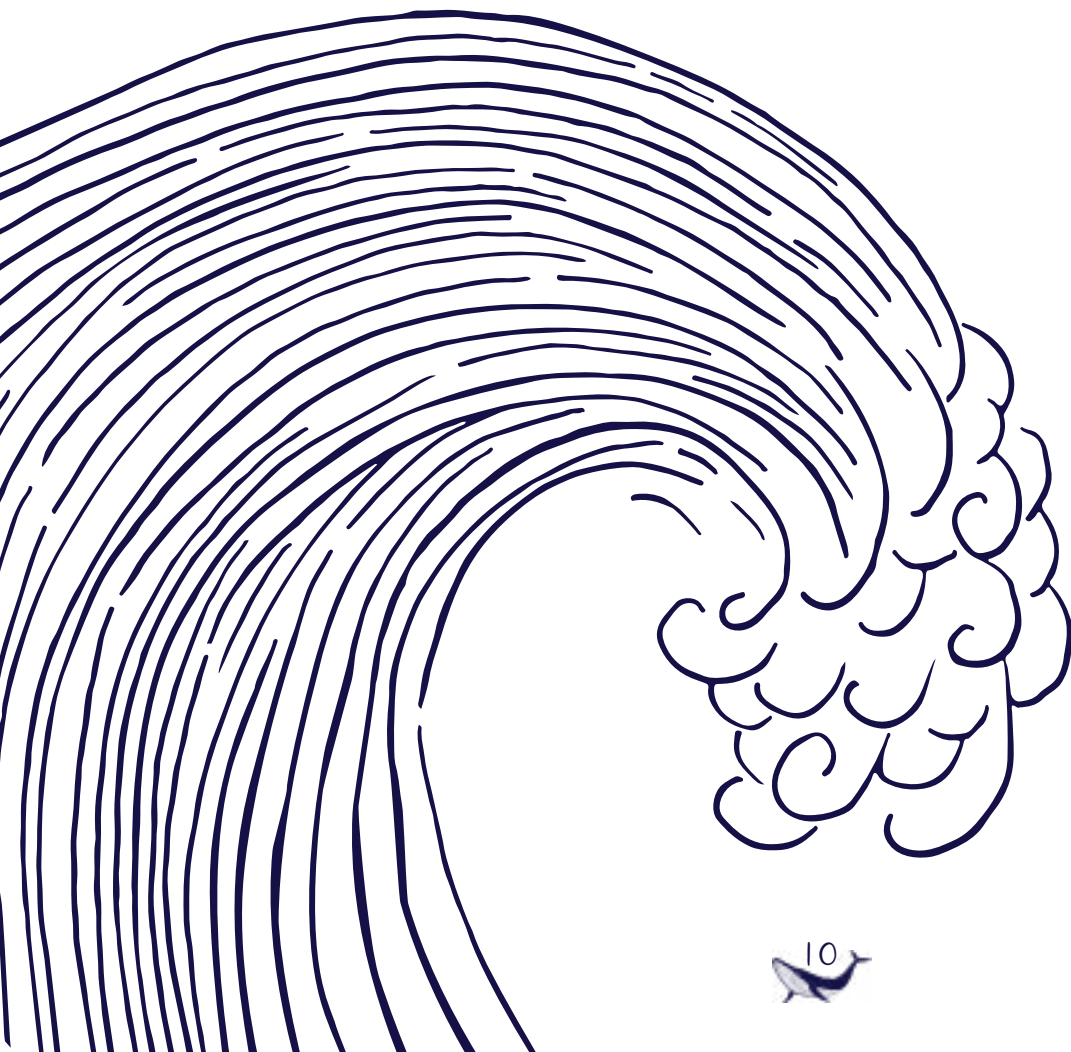
Psalms 19:8 _____

Psalms 28:7 _____

Misery *God delivered Jonah from his misery. Misery describes exceeding grief or a heavy hurt. God pitied the prophet and brought him tangible relief. Isn't it comforting to know that Jesus sympathizes with our weakness because he suffered, too?*

“If you have no joy, there’s a leak in your Christianity somewhere.”

— Billy Sunday



DAY FOUR: REAPING THE WIND

Hosea made this puzzling prophecy to Israel, “For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind” (Hosea 8:7). It was a warning to the nation that they would suffer dire consequences as the result of bad actions. It’s similar to the New Testament passage, “A man reaps what he sows” (Galatians 6:7).

The idiom is gleaned from the agriculture process of sowing and reaping brings multiplication. A farmer may plant a kernel of corn that will bring forth a whole ear of corn. A grain of wheat brings forth a big head of wheat. “Sown the wind” carries the idea of planting something worthless or foolish. For Israel, the foolishness was the sin of worshipping empty idols that would bring on the consequence of being swept away in the future.

Today, we see Jonah had sown anger and blame and would literally reap a “vehement east wind” that zapped his energy. It’s a cautionary tale that our actions and attitudes can have severe consequences.



REFLECTION

READ THE VERSES BELOW AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

“And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah’s head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, ‘It is better for me to die than to live.’ Then God said to Jonah, ‘Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?’ And he said, ‘It is right for me to be angry, even to death!’” (Jonah 4:8-9).



PRACTICAL OBSERVATION:

1. Describe what God prepared for Jonah.
2. What was Jonah’s physical condition?
3. How did this situation make Jonah feel?
4. Describe Jonah’s prayer.
5. What does God see as Jonah’s core issue and why?
6. How far is Jonah willing to let his anger go?

Death Wish is the conscious or unconscious desire for the death of oneself or of another. Some call it a suicidal ideation which is very dangerous. It’s a precursor to attempting suicide. After ideation comes imagination on how to commit suicide. If someone you know moves from ideation to imagination they will likely make an actual attempt. Never ignore these warning signs.

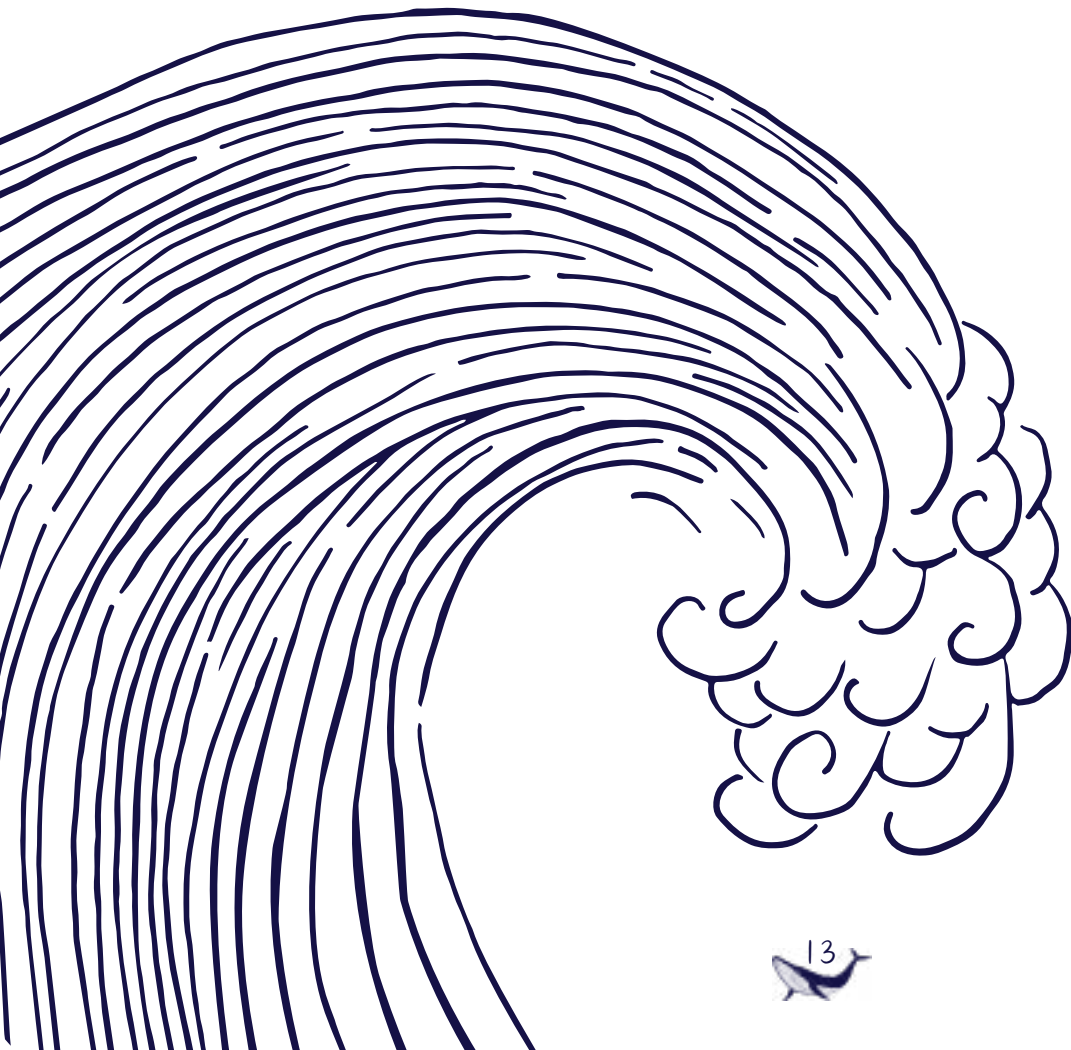
PERSONAL APPLICATION:

7. Read 1 Peter 1:6-8, then answer the following questions.
 - a. Describe what Peter thought should make Christians rejoice. Do these things bring you joy?
 - b. Explain the purpose of trials.
 - c. Write a prayer asking God to make your faith like pure gold.

Heat Wave *When God wanted to get the prodigal prophet's attention He turned up the heat. Difficult circumstances have a way of bringing out the worst or best in us. "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things" (Matthew 12:34-36).*

"Do not say, 'I cannot help having a bad temper.' Friend, you must help it. Pray to God to help you overcome it at once, for either you must kill it, or it will kill you. You cannot carry a bad temper into heaven."

—Charles Spurgeon



DAY FIVE: FOR PITY'S SAKE

Sadly, today most people use the idiom “for pity’s sake” as a way to vent their frustrations. An anxious mother is afraid the kids will be late for school, again. So, she yells, “Speed it up, for pity’s sake.” Or perhaps you want to emphasize something you’ve said. So you blurt, “Listen to me, for pity’s sake!”

Discovering where the phrase came from might blow your mind. Likely, the saying came from the Latin word, *misericordia* which means “mercy” or “compassion.”

In times past, it was synonyms with a plea for help of mercy. It could also mean the person is begging for the situation to end. “Oh, I hope her suffering ends, for pity’s sake,” one might say after a friend has endured a long illness.

God was trying to teach Jonah to have pity on the people of Nineveh. They suffered an evil and violent culture where crime was on the rise, rage ruled the day, and people took advantage of one another. “For pity’s sake,” the Ninevites need deliverance.

REFLECTION

READ THE VERSES BELOW AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

“But the LORD said, ‘You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?’”



PRACTICAL OBSERVATION:

1. What emotion did Jonah have toward the plant?
2. Describe Jonah’s commitment level for the plant.
3. Describe the lifespan of the plant.
4. Explain the difference between the pity of Jonah and the pity of God.
5. What was at stake if Nineveh had not repented?

But God is a common phrase in *Jonah 4*, used three times as either “but God,” or “but the Lord.” It shows how God interrupted the prophet. As Jonah proclaimed something foolish “but God” was a way to counter with the truth. God wanted to change Jonah’s heart from being mad to merciful.

Numbers The population of *Nineveh* was recorded as 120,000. Ancient *Jerusalem* like had less than 10,000 people. Villages in *Galilee* during *Jesus* day were small in size with less than 100 people. *Nineveh* was a very large city in comparison.

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

6. Today we learned the contrast between Jonah's passion and God's compassion. With that in mind, work through the following questions.
- List some of the people groups people are prejudiced toward.
 - Describe some of the ways these people groups are mistreated or the names they are called.
 - Journal a prayer asking God to expose any prejudice you may hold and ask Him to give you pity toward them.

Pity comes for the Biblical word for "mercy." Mercy is one of God's traits. It is an aspect of His love that moves him to help those who are miserable. They may be miserable because they broke God's commands or circumstance beyond their control. "The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him" (Daniel 9:9).

"The tears of Christ are the pity of God. The gentleness of Jesus is the long-suffering of God. The tenderness of Jesus is the love of God. He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

—Alexander MacLaren

