

Anger vs. Compassion



01. READ



¹ Jonah was greatly displeased and became furious. ² He prayed to the Lord, "Please, Lord, isn't this what I said while I was still in my own country? That's why I fled toward Tarshish in the first place. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger, abounding in faithful love, and one who relents from sending disaster. ³ And now, Lord, take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live."

02. REFLECT

Have you ever been angry...like real angry? Not just a frown-face emoji but the smoke coming out of nostrils emoji or head exploding emoji. Maybe for you it was a comment someone made online that was a savage blow to your ego. Maybe it was someone completely dismissing your opinion or outright suggesting that you lied when you know you didn't. Anger is an interesting thing because we don't always know if it's good or bad from the outside.

There is a lot of anger right now as people are responding to the injustice of racism. People on both sides are angry. Before we categorize all anger as bad, let's remember that Jesus, himself, was angry when he saw unrighteous

people taking advantage of others in God's temple. There seems to be a righteous anger when we are grieved that God's design for human flourishing is disregarded and people are pursuing injustice. It's less about our personal offense and more about God's design for life being ignored.

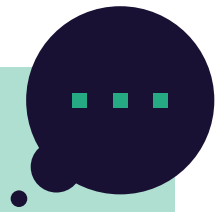
So let's think about Jonah. In chapter one he ran from God and God's mission and went the complete opposite direction. In his rebellion, he was thrown overboard and swallowed by a whale. In that terrible predicament, he called out to God, and God showed mercy. He then goes to Nineveh and announces God's judgment on these ruthless people. However, judgment never happens because they turned from their evil ways. How amazing is that?

You would have thought so, but Jonah had another thought. This whole idea was exceedingly evil to Jonah. That's literally what the text means. He was downright angry that God would show compassion to people whom he didn't think deserved it.

As Jonah reflects on God's character it is extremely evident that it contrasts his own character. Jonah was mad and angry that mercy came to unworthy people. God however is described as gracious, merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. This description of God is actually repeated in various forms nine different times in the Old Testament. Jonah's anger was less about righteous outrage over the Ninevites' sin but more about his frustration that God's mercy would extend to those whom he deemed unworthy of it.

This is where the story of Jonah can penetrate our hearts. Do we consistently celebrate the compassionate character of God? Anyone can celebrate God's compassion and mercy for their own life and for the people whom they love. Do we celebrate God's compassion to those whom we feel are unworthy of it? When we feel angry and frustrated we must come back to this truth: God is always right. My anger might mean that something is wrong with me. As one writer stated, "the Lord cannot be tamed on the leash of our expectations." It's good for us to check our hearts and peel back the layers of our anger. Are we angry over injustice toward's God design for human living or are we outraged over a personal offense?

Decide to courageously confront your heart and ask God to help you change what needs to be changed!



03. RESPOND

- ▶ *Have you ever been extremely angry only to later find out that you had a misread on the situation that was fueling that anger?*
- ▶ *Why can it be easy to express unrighteous anger over mild issues but difficult to express righteous anger over significant issues? Give some examples of each.*
- ▶ *Consider these qualities of God: gracious, merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Which do you need to celebrate more in your life and others' lives? In what circumstances do you have a hard time celebrating these characteristics of God?*

04. REMEMBER



God's mercy shows no favoritism. His compassion extends to all who receive it in faith.

