

## Jonah Discussion 4

# God Has Questions?

### GOD HAS QUESTIONS?

The book of Jonah is not a book of answers. It is a book of questions - in chapter 4 God asks two big questions. The first is asked twice and then the second is the end of the book! Perhaps rather than reading the Bible as a book of answers, we should pay attention to God's questions in it. The Bible is a book of God's questions for us - which will challenge our way of live and change us forever, if we pay attention!

Which of the following questions from God is your favourite:

- Genesis 3:9 "Where are you?"
- Genesis 16:8 "Where have you come from and where are you going??"
- Isaiah 6:8 "Who shall I send?"
- Job 38:4 "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?"
- 1 Kings 19:9 "What are you here for?"

### QUESTION #1. IS IT GOOD FOR YOU TO BE ANGRY?

Read and notice again the words 'anger/angry' in Jonah chapter 4. How many times do they occur? The word 'anger' in Hebrew means 'to burn'. Sometimes it's right to 'burn' with anger inside because some things are right to be angry about. But our anger also reveals our true self.

*God had compassion on Nineveh. But this was evil to Jonah and he became ANGRY. He prayed, "O Lord, isn't this what I said at home? I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to ANGER and abounding in love! Now Lord, take my life, I'd rather die than live." But the Lord replied, "Are you right to be ANGRY?" The sun blazed on Jonah's head and he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live." But God said to Jonah, "Are you right to be ANGRY about the vine?" "I am," he said. "I am ANGRY enough to die."*

Notice that God does not condemn Jonah for being angry - not at all.

God simply asks if it's good! Perhaps we sometimes need to ask - is this anger good for me?

- **When is anger good for us?**
- **When is anger not good for us?**

**ANGER AS A WINDOW:** Sometimes, anger is a window into your soul. It shows what's going on in there. It can show you what you really care about.

**ANGER AS A SMOKE SCREEN:** Some of us are burn about a particular issue. Is it just a smoke screen to avoid some inconvenient things about ourselves? Is there something the anger is hiding?

ANGER AS A MIRROR: Sometimes the things we are angriest at may be reflections of ourselves.

LEGITIMATE ANGER: Sometimes anger it reveals your personhood. Sometimes it shows your boundaries. Sometimes you need to be angry at the right thing. Sometimes anger can even show you the way forward.

- **Think through an anger you experienced recently. Which of the four might it be?**
- **What small things anger us? What big things anger us?**
- **Is it good for you to be angry?**

## **QUESTION #2. SHOULD GOD HAVE MERCY ON EVIL PEOPLE?**

***But the Lord said, "You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Shouldn't I be concerned about that great city?"***

Two books of the Bible end with a question. But Jonah is the only book to end with a question from God!

The entire book of Jonah is about this question God asks "should I have mercy on Nineveh?" It's the last sentence of the book. This book was written to ancient people who wanted their evil enemies destroyed. They complained to God that he had not smashed the Assyrians. But in this sentence God is really asking "Think carefully now... Who do you think I should be?"

Do you want me to judge sinners? Do you want me to send people to hell? Do you want me to damn those who don't meet my standard? Should I crush those who disobey? Be careful how you answer. Your answer may end up coming back to bite you. Jesus says,

*"Forgive and you will be forgiven" (Luke 6:37)*

*"Judge not and you will not be judged." (Matt 7:1)*

*"The way you measure others you will be measured." (Matt 7:2)*

Do you want God to smite the bad people? If you want God to have no mercy on your enemies. Then what are you asking for yourself. Until you can see them as people who God loves, you can't really know God's love.

- **Should God have mercy on evil people? Are there limits to this?**
- **How does Jesus complete, reveal, and answer this question God asks Jonah?**

## **JUST A NOTE ON SUICIDE:**

*Jonah wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live." But God said to Jonah, "Are you right to be ANGRY about the vine?" "I am," he said. "I am ANGRY enough to die."*

How many times does Jonah say he wants to die? This study cannot address all the issues around suicide but for more information try [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au) . We must not avoid talking about this.