

# JONAH 4:5-11

## CELLULOSE COMPASSION

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Do you remember how Romeo and Juliet ended? The book of Jonah is not far off. It is a biblical tragedy. It ends with a question from God...full stop. Jonah offers no reply and we envision him still under the scorching sun and wind of ancient Assyria, arms folded, waiting for his idea of justice.

Jonah has remained a relatively flat character for us in this historical book. He had a problem with God in the beginning and he retains it in the end. Early on in this book Jonah resembled the younger son in **Luke 15:11ff** and now he resembles his older brother. Can you see it?

**4:5**—Why would Jonah leave, prepare for a wait and then watch “to see what would happen in the city”? Does Jonah’s post “east of it” help us?

**4:6**—There are four things God has “appointed” in Jonah, three of them are in this passage: a great fish (**1:17**); a plant (**4:6**); a worm (**4:7**); a scorching east wind (**4:8**). The point is simple: God is in complete control.

**Jonah 4:6** is perhaps the most important verse in the book. Here, all of the wordplays and foci of the prophecy come together. First, the full name “LORD God” is significant and emphatic. The plant grew up over Jonah’s “head” which is symbolically significant. This plant “delivered” Jonah from his “discomfort.” The verb *deliver* is often used of salvation from sin in the OT (**Psalms 79:9; 39:9; 51:6**; etc.). Finally, *discomfort* is the word for *wickedness/calamity* used throughout **Jonah: 1:2; 1:7; 1:8; 3:7; 3:8; 3:10; 4:2**—especially linked to Jonah’s express anger in **4:2**.

**4:7-8**—Here is where God’s object lesson begins. In a beautifully gracious and wise move, God decides to highlight Jonah’s “compassion/pity” on a plant. With the worm, God highlights Jonah’s distaste for “judgment.” Jonah’s eventual and unthinkable plea is a word-for-word repetition of **4:3**.

**4:9**—God’s question is also a word-for-word repetition of **4:4**, “Is it good for you to be angry?” Here, as there, God expects a negative response. Jonah’s response is borderline scary, insolent, repugnant and brash. He flat out disagrees with God and says, “YES, I am right...and even more so!”

**4:10-11**—God’s object lesson gets final clarification. He says, “No Jonah, you are wrong. You just proved it.” It is an argument from lesser to greater. God says if a simple plant was the focus of your compassion, then it is right for me to have compassion on the people I have created.



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# APPLICATION

Here we are at the end. I continue to pray that our study of Jonah has had a tremendous impact on your personal and spiritual life. As we wrap up the series today, spend some time reading back through the entire book this week. Perhaps you can do this several times.

As you read, try to recall the points and purposes we've discussed in the series. Ask yourself hard questions. Recall the points of personal application that we have highlighted. Continue to pray that God uses you in the life of the one person He has laid on your heart.

How does your life and relationship with God resemble that of Jonah?

What specific convictions have God laid on your heart during this study?

Do you love other people like Jonah did?

(Do you care more about your personal comfort than the spiritual wellbeing of others—even *many* others?)

Does your sense of being “right” distance you from God? From others?

Take time to read and meditate on **Psalm 32** this week.

## Special Application:

For the last two weeks we have asked you to submit the first name of one person that you are praying for. This person does not yet have a relationship with Jesus and you have committed to be willing to be used by God in their life. We have compiled those first names and are already praying over them.

There is a list available for you as well. At the information desk in the foyer, please pick up both a commitment sheet and a list of names.

- **Pray** for those individuals written on the list— that they would come to know the life and joy of salvation in Christ.
- **Pray** also for the individual who wrote the name—that God would use them in the life of these that God dearly loves.
- **Share** with each other (and especially with us!) the God stories that come out of this prayer experiment.

