



# WOODLAND HEIGHTS CHRISTIAN CHURCH

## Castaway: God's Relentless Pursuit of Redemption Part #4 – Learning the Lesson of God's Love

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### Small Group Discussion Guide on Jonah 4:1-11

#### Woodland Heights Christian Church Core Value Connection

This sermon on Jonah 4:1-11 aligns with the core value of **Outreach** at Woodland Heights Christian Church. We believe that the Great Commission is at the heart of God's work and each of us as followers of Christ are called to take the message of the Gospel and share it with the world around us.

Friends, picture a weary traveler, trudging through a desert, his heart heavy with resentment. He's been wronged, and the sting of injustice burns hotter than the sun overhead. He sits under a lone tree, seeking shade, but his anger only grows. Then, a gentle breeze carries a whisper—a reminder of a love greater than his pain. This is the picture of Jonah in chapter 4, sulking outside Nineveh, wrestling with bitterness while God patiently teaches him a lesson about His boundless love. Have you ever been there? Holding onto grudges, struggling to forgive. God's Word shows us a better way of living—showing us a love that transforms our hearts and redirects our purpose. Let's dive into Jonah 4 and let God's truth reshape us.

#### Section #1 – ENCOUNTER

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##### "Observing God's Word"

**Quote** – "God's mercy is not ours to ration; it's His to our out on all who turn to Him." – **D.L. Moody**

Let's start by opening our hearts to Scripture. Read Jonah 4:1-11 (ESV) aloud as a group, slowly, picturing Jonah's anger and God's gentle response. Jot down what grabs you.

##### Core Questions

- What do you notice about Jonah's attitude and actions in this story? Why is this relevant?
- What are key words, phrases, or themes that grab your attention in this text?
- What is the main lesson or lessons that you learn about the character of God from Jonah 4?
- What does the quote from D.L. Moody mean in your own words?

## Section #2 – EXPLORE

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### “Understanding the Passage and Sermon”

Let’s unpack Jonah journey with questions that connect the sermon’s insights to our lives. Discuss these as a group or reflect on them as an individual.

**Quote** – “God’s love redirects our hearts from self to others, from comfort to compassion.” – **A.W. Tozer**

- What does the quote from A.W. Tozer teach us today? Why is this an important lesson?

#### ***The Danger of Bitterness (Jonah 4:1-3)***

Jonah prays, “O LORD... I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful... That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish” (Jonah 4:2).

- Why is Jonah so angry about God’s mercy to Nineveh? What does this reveal about his heart?

Proverbs 4:23 says, “Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life.”

- How does Jonah’s bitterness warn us about the danger of a hardened heart?

#### ***The Lesson of Perspective (Jonah 4:4-8)***

God asks Jonah, “Do you do well to be angry?” (Jonah 4:4).

- How does God use the plant, worm, and wind to teach Jonah about priorities?

The sermon states: “God’s Mercy Redirects Your Heart to Value What He Values.” Reflect on the story of William Borden, who wrote “No Reserves, No Retreats, No Regrets.”

- How can we shift our focus from personal comfort to God’s mission?
- Have you ever been more upset about a minor inconvenience (like Jonah’s plant) than the eternal needs of others?

#### ***The Challenge of Compassion (Jonah 4:9-11)***

God’s final question is piercing: “Should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons...?” (Jonah 4:11).

- Why does God care so deeply for Nineveh?

The sermon’s closing story of Chaplain George Smithson, comforting a dying soldier, illustrates God’s call to love others.

- How does this challenge you to show compassion to someone difficult in your life?
- How does Romans 5:8, “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”—inspire you to love others?

## Section #3 – EMBRACE

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### “Applying God’s Word”

Now, let’s move from hearing to doing. Jonah’s story calls us to live out God’s love in real ways. Discuss these questions and pick one step to take this week.

#### ***Guarding Against Bitterness***

- The sermon’s memory verse, 1 John 4:11, says: *“Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”* How can you guard your heart against bitterness this week, perhaps by praying for someone who’s hurt you?
- What’s one practical step you can take to forgive someone, as Mary did with Shea?

#### ***Aligning with God’s Priorities***

- The sermon challenges us: *“God’s Love Moves His People to Share His Compassion for All People.”*
- Share a time when God redirected your perspective to care for what He values. How can you lean into that lesson today?

#### ***Sharing God’s Love***

- The story of Chaplain George Smithson shows love in action. How can you “crawl through the mud” to show God’s love to someone hurting or lost?
- As part of Woodland Heights’ mission to “Reach, Teach, and Serve,” brainstorm one way your group can share God’s compassion (e.g., inviting someone to church, helping a neighbor).

### Closing Challenge

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As a group, pray for one another to hear and respond to God’s call. Encourage each member to take at least one of the action steps above and follow up next week to share how God worked through their obedience. Consider participating in a Sunday School class or inviting someone new to join your small group to continue growing in faith together.

#### ***Prayer Close by praying together:***

- Thank God for His boundless love, as Romans 5:8 declares: *“While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*
- Ask for strength to forgive, to align with His priorities, and to share His compassion.
- Pray for those in your life who need God’s mercy, that they may encounter His love through you.