



## CELL GUIDE

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**TOPIC** What Are You Concerned About?

**SPEAKER** Elder Low Kok Guan

**THEME** We Share Christ

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# MESSAGE SUMMARY

## WHAT ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT?

Many of us are weighed down by the concerns of the world, and our hearts may be heavy-laden by the worries that we have. But what of the concerns and worries of God's own heart?

Elder Low Kok Guan uses the book of Jonah to show us God's heart for the world and to teach us the importance of sharing Christ as we mature in Him. When reading the book of Jonah, many people focus on the Great Fish, but we should all know that, like every other book of the bible, the focus of the Book of Jonah should be on our Great God.

Jonah can be split into four parts – Running from God (chapter 1), Running to God (chapter 2), Running with God (chapter 3) and Running against God (chapter 4). It would have been great for the Book of Jonah to end at chapter 3: Jonah returns, Nineveh repents, God relents. It is a happy ending. The fact that there is a chapter 4 illustrates the importance of the message in this final chapter.

Three lessons can be garnered from this last chapter; we need to look broader, look further and look deeper so that we may make God's concern for the lost our concern.

## MAKE GOD'S CONCERN FOR THE LOST YOUR CONCERN

### 1) LOOK BROADER

Jonah was so fixated on his own identity and his own problems that he failed to see God's identity for him and God's concern for His people; he forgot that God created and loved the Ninevites too. He also failed to see the effectiveness of his own message. His message turned many back to God.

Similarly, have we been so focused on our own issues that we have failed to see more? Do we look at our lives, our purposes, our concerns through our own eyes or through heaven's eyes? Ask God to open our eyes to the needs of others, truly listen to what He calls us to do and answer His calling for us so that by looking broader, we can be effective for God in helping the lost.

## 2) LOOK FURTHER

As Christians, we know that our time is short. Hence, we need to look beyond the temporal into eternity. Jonah chapter 3 would have been the perfect chapter to end the book with as that was when Jonah ran with God. Despite that, it continued with chapter 4 as God wants us to learn something more from it. In chapter 4, Jonah sat down to see if Nineveh would sin again. God appointed a plant to shelter Jonah and save him from his discomfort. This pleased Jonah exceedingly. However, when God killed the plant and appointed a scorching wind and the sun to beat down on Jonah, Jonah asked to be killed (vv 6-9).

These verses demonstrate how Jonah cared only about his own comfort and not about the Ninevites. Although Nineveh was destroyed a century later for sinning again, Jonah failed to see that due to his message of repentance, two generations were saved before the city's eventual destruction. Likewise, we will never know when our loved ones will be saved if we stay in our own comfort zone and do not look further and persevere in sharing Christ with them.

## 3) LOOK DEEPER

The challenges we face sometimes come from our own choices rather than external factors. Jonah chapter 4 teaches us to look deeper into our hearts to face our issues so that we can then align ourselves with God in reaching out to others.

Jonah may have seemed compassionate as he was angry even over the death of a plant that did not belong to him. This, however, was not a righteous anger. He was angry for himself as the plant could no longer provide him with shelter from the sun. Furthermore, he felt that the Ninevites deserved to be punished for their evil. Jonah was not like *his* God who is "a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster" (v 2).

This was God's concern for Jonah which was why He used the plant to teach Jonah a lesson. We need to be like Jesus who obeyed God up to the cross. If we do not deal with the issues in our hearts, we will not become more Christ-like and reach out to the lost.

## CONCLUSION

The book of Jonah ends with a question from God which displays His compassion for the lost. He wants people to turn away from sin and come back to Him. To see as God sees, we need to look broader, look further and look deeper.

We need to look broader, beyond ourselves, to see the needs of others and help them effectively. We need to look further, beyond the temporal, into eternity and persevere in bringing others to Christ. We have to look deeper, beneath the surface, into our hearts so as to deal with our own issues of self-centredness, and become gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love like God.

Although not recorded in the bible, Jonah's alleged response to God's final question was, "May the world continue to be governed by the attribute of mercy, as it says, 'To the Lord our God belongs compassion and forgiveness.'" Is God's concern for the lost *our* concern as well? May we respond like how Jonah finally did.

# QUESTIONS

**1. Recall and reflect on the concerns you have had in your life thus far. What have you been concerned about? How has these concerns affected how you live for God?**

**2. From the message, what do the three points – look broader, look further and look deeper - mean? How do your current concerns fare in terms of these three metrics?**

**3. By understanding these points and seeing as God sees, what are some practical things you can do in your daily life to work with God on what He is concerned with?**