

Reluctant: Taking Sides

Jonah 4:1-4

Small Group Discussion

Opening question (this question is designed to get everyone involved in discussion)

- When is the last time that you or someone that you know had an over reaction to something?
- What kinds of factors can produce a disproportionate reaction to a small offense?

Read Jonah 3:10-4:4, then discuss the following.

- What seemed wrong to Jonah (v. 1)? Why did it seem so wrong?
- What do you think about Jonah's reaction to God's mercy on Nineveh? Is it justified? Why or why not?
- About Jonah's reaction, Tim Keller writes in *Prodigal Prophet*, "Of course, anyone who cared for his own country would have been anxious about Assyria's survival. It was a terrorist state. Jonah, however, did not turn to God with his anxiety, trusting in him as so many of the psalm writers had done. If he had to choose between the security of Israel and loyalty to God, well, he was ready to push God away. That is not just concern and love for one's country; that is a kind of deification of it."
 - Do you agree that Jonah's love for Israel has become a sort of deification of his nation? Why or why not?
 - What is the difference between healthy patriotism and ardent nationalism?
 - What do you think healthy patriotism looks like in our time and culture?
- Back in chapter 2, Jonah was praying from inside the fish, when he said, "Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them. But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you" (vv. 8-9). At the time, Jonah was speaking of people like the Ninevites, who literally worshipped idols. In view of today's look at ch. 4, how did Jonah need to heed his own words? What idol was wielding control of his own life?
- In v. 3, Jonah expresses a desire to die. What does this fact reveal about his meaning in life?
- Jonah is quoting a famous passage of Scripture in his rant, in v. 2. What is that passage, and what is significant about the way that Jonah references it? (Exodus 34:5-7).
- What is significant about the question that God asks Jonah, in v. 4?

Application

- Do you think that a disproportionate reaction (like Jonah's) says something about what's going on in your heart?
- When God patiently probes Jonah with a question (v. 4), it seems that he wants Jonah to diagnose the idolatry in his heart. Based on what you heard Sunday, and what we've seen today, how might you use this kind of experience to diagnose the potential idolatry in your own heart?
- How does the love that Jesus showed you at the cross enable you to replace the idols and break their power?

Share and Pray

- If you are comfortable being real with your group, spend some time confessing the things that you would tend to turn into idols.
- Share your needs with one another and pray for them specifically.