

The Angry Evangelist

From the series, *Jonah: The Great Adventure*

Jonah 4

By Dr. David H. McKinley

Several days ago, my wife, Connie, sent me a curious little piece about anger. She didn't think I was mad—I don't think—but she sent it because it was really quite an interesting insight. It listed generational lingo used to describe anger in our lives:

Boomers (1946-1964)	Ticked Off!
Gen X (1965-1980)	Bent Out of Shape!
Millennials (1981-1996)	Triggered!
Gen Z (1997-2012)	Mad, Mad!
Gen Alpha (2013-2024)	Malding!

I'm a boomer. I don't get the term, *malding*, at all, but I do get being *ticked off*! It doesn't really matter what we use to describe anger, but it is one of the most challenging and yet one of the most pressing emotionally realities we all deal with in life—those things that become irritating and agitating, and cause the temperature to rise on the inside.

What is it that irritates you? Is it ...

- when someone in a store cuts in line in front of you, or someone cuts you off in a lane?
- when someone around you is having a loud phone conversation, and you can hear it everywhere?
- a lack of sleep? You're not getting enough sleep, and you get irritable?
- slow people walking in front of you or hoarding the path and you can't get around them?
- someone who lets their kids get out of control?
- someone in your life that leaves the lights on?... doesn't close doors?
- someone who takes up two parking spaces when you're trying to get into a shop?
- someone with a big truck and a long trailer hitch that sticks out and you can't get through the lane?
- someone who makes a sound that irritates you?
- someone who doesn't pick up after their pets in your yard?
- someone who puts you on hold or you can't reach somebody to talk to you?... you keep pushing the buttons, but nothing happens?
- someone at the table in a restaurant and you are starving, and this person doesn't know what to order?... and you just want to order for him/her?

It's a long list, and as you can see, it's my list. I'm just being honest—public confession! (They confess privately in the Catholic Church, but we do it publicly in the Baptist Church!) These things irritate me, and sadly, I do some of these things as well. There are many things in our lives that are just minor irritations, but they set us off in one fashion or another.

Then there are other things that are *not* minor irritations, but situations that cause us to get mad: awareness of abuse to children; substance addiction in the life of someone you know or love; pet neglect and those who really don't take care of their pets; miscarriage of justice; theological deception. There are some big issues and places in life where we truly get set off... and we get mad!

Have you ever known a preacher who saw someone come to faith in the Lord and turn their life around and the preacher got mad because this person got saved? I'm going to introduce you to a preacher like that today. His name was Jonah.

If you've been with us in this study, you know Jonah ran away and tried to get away from God, and he ran to the place where, ultimately, God put him in the belly of a fish and brought him back. God told Jonah, *I want you to do what I told you to do in the first place—preach in Nineveh*. So Jonah went to Nineveh, walked across the city, and preached the message God told him to preach. And as Jonah began to preach, the people responded.

Not only did the people turn to the Lord, humble themselves, and repent, but in Jonah 3:10 it says that when God saw what they did—how they turned from their evil way—God relented of the disaster He had said He would do to them, and He did not do it. We studied three chapters that took us everywhere to get to the end result of what God intended in the first place.

I wish the book of Jonah had ended with Jonah 3:10. If it had, we then could write, *and they lived happily ever after*, right? God got His preacher to go where He wanted him to go, Jonah turned his life around and preached in Nineveh, the people of Nineveh got right with God, there was a great revival, and God didn't judge the people or destroy the city. It's a happy ending! But the story doesn't end with chapter 3. There's one more chapter:

"But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. And he prayed to the Lord and said, 'O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.' And the Lord said, 'Do you do well to be angry?'" (Jonah 4:1-4).

This may be a question God is asking some of you today: “Do you do well to be angry?” (Jonah 4:4). You’re here, you’re mad, you’re ticked off, you’re triggered, you’re MALDING! In other words, God may be asking, *Do you do well to keep malding?*

“Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city. Now the Lord God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant. But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. When the sun rose, God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. And he asked that he might die and said, ‘It is better for me to die than to live.’ But God said to Jonah, ‘Do you do well to be angry for the plant?’ And he said, ‘Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die.’ And the Lord said, ‘You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?’” (Jonah 4:5-11).

... *The End*. What? No resolution?

This prophet is still mad and rebellious, and God is still gracious. Yet, this whole story unfolds in such a strange and unusual way. Let’s walk back through what we’ve just read.

1. Jonah’s Resentment Toward God (Jonah 4:4)

Jonah is seething—really mad—and God keeps saying to Jonah, *Do you do well to be angry?*

Have you ever seen a mad preacher? —mad in the sense of a preacher who was angry, preaching with red skin and veins popping out of his neck, sweat pouring off of his head, and eyes that were looking at you as if he was going to somehow burn you if he could?

Many years ago when I was in high school, there was a well-known evangelist who was preaching. He’s still alive and ministering today, and God did a great work in his heart to sort of turn him around from his original persona. But I remember in the early days I heard that man preach a message on Jonah. He was behind the pulpit talking about God’s judgment, and as he said, “40 days... 40 days... 40 days...,” he got redder and redder in his neck with bulging veins. I thought, *Man, this guy’s really mad!*

I lived in the “ancient” generation when we didn’t have the technology we have today. You do realize that, right? I’m normally not this loud naturally. I’m speaking today on a wireless microphone. I have a pack that can create a signal with the sound booth so I can speak at a normal level, but one you can easily hear. However, I remember a time when the mic was stationary and mounted on the pulpit, so preachers tended to stay right behind the mic and not move.

Then I remember the day when preachers could finally take a microphone in their hand, but it had a cord—one they could whip around with their other hand. They could walk up and down and swap hands with the mic and cord.

Then there was the era when you didn’t have to hold a microphone, but they had this thing called a *lavalier mic*. It was long and attached to a cord around the neck and hung down in a jacket. Preachers could walk around and still do the same thing—whip the cord around and move while they spoke.

I heard about a preacher that got worked up as he was intensely preaching. He had a lavalier mic with a cord that whipped around him as he spoke. A little boy in the audience said, “Mama, Mama, what are we going to do if he gets loose?”

I say all this because *anger is a deceptive and destructive human emotion*. Jonah, this preacher, was mad at God because God did the miracle only God could do. God changed and transformed the lives of these people in Nineveh.

In the book of James, James said,

“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God” (James 1:19-20).

Just because we get mad, self-defend, and proclaim something “righteous,” it doesn’t mean God is going to use our anger to accomplish His purpose. Jonah was a man who was allowing his anger to be destructive in his life.

There may be some people here whose anger is both a deceptive and destructive emotion at work within you. If you don’t deal with your anger or allow yourself to address it, it’s going to bring greater consequence to you than you ever imagined.

"The heart is like a garden. It can grow compassion or fear, resentment or love. What seeds will you plant there?" —Jack Kornfield

Allow me to very quickly point out some things based on Jonah's experience and a quick checklist about how **resentment does many things in our lives**:

- **Robs Us of Peace**

When you harbor resentment within yourself, it's like you're having a constant conversation with yourself. You're mad at somebody else, and you just keep churning it and burning it and allowing it to go on and on and on! As a result, you no longer have peace. In Jonah 4, we see Jonah seething. He's not resting. And just like Jonah, it's very possible on the one hand to have an outward compliance of obedience to God, but on the other hand, to be carrying out your own inward rebellion.

- **Depletes Our Energy**

In our story, Jonah had been preaching, but now he sits outside the city. When we first met Jonah, he was running from God and on his way to Tarshish. Jonah was a runner, and now he's a squatter. Why? He didn't have any energy left. He's completely frustrated and burning up on the inside.

Have you ever thrown yourself into a chair and was just gone? If so, I don't know how you sounded when you did it, but it happens in our lives. It robs us of peace and depletes us of energy.

- **Fuels Depression**

Unresolved anger fuels depression. Look at Jonah. He's so mad, there's only one thing he sees as the resolution: *I want to die. I want to die. I don't want to live anymore.*

We see the same thing in the life of Elijah, another man used by God to bring about a national correction in the life of Israel. Just as God used Jonah to bring about a national correction in the life of the city of Nineveh and the Assyrian Empire, Elijah stood in confrontation with Ahab, Jezebel, and the Baal gods. (See 1 Kings 18 and 19). After this great victory, Elijah runs. He's worn out. He throws himself down, and in his concern he says, *God, I just need to die.* (See 1 Kings 19:4).

Two emotions that feed and fuel depression are *unrequited fear* and *unresolved anger*. I'm not giving you a technical diagnosis; there are other factors involved in depression. I'm also not trying to

minimize depression. I'm just pointing out that fear and anger often fuel depression, and it can be seen here in the life of Jonah.

- **Distorts Our Perspective**

When resentment is in you, it's difficult to see anything good or anything right because your perspective has been distorted.

Jonah was consumed with a plant rather than concern for people. It's amazing how Jonah could be so worked up over the fact he had this plant that provided him comfort, and then it was gone. (See Jonah 4:6-11).

"Almost every sinful action ever committed can be traced back to a selfish motive. It is a trait we hate in other people but justify in ourselves." —Stephen Kendrick

It's easy to justify resentment, anger, frustration, and "malding," right? The primary reason we do this is because we justify wrong actions, reactions and values embraced by the culture at large.

After this service, I invite you to join us for a time of dedication for our Hope Mobile Unit. I am so thankful for what this is going to do in our community. We are continuing the work we have done over the past few years in a bricks and mortar building in Grovetown and taking it to the streets through this new mobile unit. We're involved in a battle for life in a culture that has so indulged itself in selfishness. No matter how many facts, images, or reasoning there is to understand about what is in a mother's womb, our culture does not embrace it as a human life, a separate life! Yet, the same laws by which we would protect life after birth, our culture justifies the squelching and the removal of it because it says, *No, that's my choice, my decision, my way, my will.*

I love this statement by Dr. Alveda King, the niece of Dr. Martin Luther King and someone I tremendously admire:

"Abortion and racism are both symptoms of a fundamental human error. The error is thinking that when someone stands in the way of our wants, we can justify getting that person out of our lives. Abortion and racism stem from the same poisonous root, selfishness." —Dr. Alveda King

That was exactly what was going on with Jonah. He didn't think Nineveh deserved to exist. Talk about prejudice and racism! Jonah thought Nineveh should have been extinguished by God. And the story

concludes with a heartless, bigoted, arrogant prophet refusing to honor God's purpose and desire, and wanting to dictate his own destiny.

2. God's Treatment of Jonah (Jonah 4:6)

"Now the Lord God appointed a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant" (Jonah 4:6).

God showed Jonah kindness, mercy, and God actually extended to Jonah something that could bring comfort.

How many times has God extended comfort to us, and we refused it along with His goodness and kindness? How many times have we underestimated the wonder of God's mercy amid our own misery because we were determined we were right when what we really needed to do was repent?

Once Jonah finished spitting out his speeches to God, don't you just feel like God should say, *You little twit!* (It's a proper English term from our mother country. Look it up and you'll understand its meaning.) *Who do you think you are? What do you think you're saying?* But that's not what God did.

God was gracious. He was merciful and kind to Jonah. It's almost the idea that the Lord picked up Jonah and said, *Now listen, Jonah. Come on, come close.* But Jonah would have nothing to do with it.

Have you ever tried to comfort a baby that didn't want to be comforted—especially a toddler pitching a fit? You can get hurt trying to comfort a baby! In the same way, Jonah was responding to God. Jonah's nostrils were flaring. The steam was rising. In Jonah 4:7-11, we see Jonah venting all of this to God. But Jonah forgot one thing, one thing you and I must always remember. Maybe you've heard it before: "Your arms are too short to box with God!"

While Jonah was throwing punches, God just held him at bay, but God didn't leave him that way. God let Jonah vent, but God didn't let him win. You and I need to be reminded of that. God will allow us to go so far, but ultimately there will come a moment when God says, *That's it. You won't win.* That's where we see this going with Jonah.

3. Our Discontentment With Grace (Jonah 4:9)

It's easy for us to look at Jonah and say, "Yeah, Jonah was a twit!" No. Instead, we have to look at Jonah and say, "Jonah is an amazing picture of me." We need to deal with our own discontentment with grace. So many times we are discontent with the grace of God in our lives and jealous of the grace of God in the lives of others. Someone has said,

"Some people want the benefits of God's grace but not the burden of God's love for others."

Many times we don't want to love and have the compassion and care God had for Nineveh, but instead, we're like Jonah. We just want God to comfort us and make us content. We just want God to give us our place in the shade, and we really are not concerned about others.

"Jonah's problem was spiritual myopia. All he could see was himself. All he could think about was what was best for him. Jonah was consumed with Jonah. As we look around at our generation, this problem is rampant, even in the church. Here's what Jonah didn't realize: we get our needs met in life only by meeting the needs of others." —David Jeremiah

I love the fact David Jeremiah said this is an issue *in the church*. One of the saddest things I'm watching—and I know many of you are watching as well—are churches who once were bright lights and now are dim lights. Some places have become dark houses all because ultimately, they lost their love for others, their love for the lost. Instead of addressing the needs of their community and living out a sense of mission, they were consumed with their patterns, programs, preferences, and their own purposes, and ultimately, they wanted God to give them a nice, shady place to meet on Sunday to make them happy and then to go home. But at the end of the day, they gave up the mission of God.

That's why over and over again I have preached, taught, encouraged, and challenged you, church of Warren, to not sit back and satisfy our own comfort while there's a world in conflict around us that needs us to speak and preach the gospel! That means doing whatever we have to do to change, to reach, and to connect with others.

When I talk about change, I'm not talking about compromising the gospel or accommodating the culture. I'm speaking about church practices, preferences, and appearances; and making a big deal out of facilities and protecting who we are and our past. No, we don't live for our past; we live for the future. And we live for it in the present. That means whatever we do, we have to let God work in us!

You don't have to hate "Ninevites." You just have to hate the next generation and the church will die! Listen to what I'm telling you. You don't have to hate all the "Ninevites" in the world. You just have to hate the next generation and spend your days "malding" over them. But if you don't reach the next

generation, if you don't have a passion for them and do everything you can, then you miss the heart of God! Tragically, we'll lose the mission of God, and ultimately, we will die as a people.

This is a very important truth out of the book of Jonah. The strangest thing to know is that Jonah had good theology. Look at Jonah 4 again.

"And he [Jonah] prayed to the Lord and said, 'O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for **I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster**'" (Jonah 4:2, *emphasis added*).

Jonah knew about God, but Jonah didn't have the heart of God. He didn't love God.

"Biblical orthodoxy without compassion is surely the ugliest thing in the world." —Francis Schaeffer

There are many, many people who are straight as an arrow doctrinally. They have their theology, but at the end of the day, they're more concerned about the shade over their head and the comfort of their lives than they are about the risk, the price, and the sacrifice needed for the gospel.

Jesus said that *if you would follow Me, you must take up your cross and die to yourself*. (See Matthew 16:24-26).

That must always be our posture as a church. When our heart does not match God's heart, we become obstructors and resisters. Jesus said,

"Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters" (Matthew 12:30).

Jonah was an Old Testament pharisee. He had it all right. He was confirmed in his righteousness, and he wasn't really wrong, except he left out the equation of the whole character and heart of God. That's so important for us to guard!

Jonah, in many ways, is like the older brother in Luke 15 when the prodigal son came home. Do you remember the story? There was a young man who was wild and rebellious, and he told his father, *I wish you were dead and I'm going. I want you to give me my inheritance now*. The young prodigal left to sow his wild oats until finally, one day he came to the end of himself. He found himself—as a Jewish boy—slopping hogs in a pig pen! He thought, *This isn't where I need to be. At least I can go back to*

my father and I can ask to be a servant. I can't ask to be his son; I've shamed him. I've brought guilt upon myself. So he went back home. When he was still a far way off, the father saw him. The father had never quit longing for him, and the father pursued him, went to him, reached out, and brought him in. The father put a robe on his son, and a ring, and had a big party to celebrate the son who had come back.

So many times we're so focused on the prodigal son, we forget to look at the elder brother. The Bible says in Luke 15:

"Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends'... And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours'" (Luke 15:25-29, 31).

The father said, *Everything I have is yours. You've enjoyed all these privileges.* But the resentment was so deep and the anger so strong, the older brother would not go and see his brother reclaimed, redeemed, and renewed. The father left with these words:

"It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:32).

How many times does God look at us and say, *Quit being ultimately dissatisfied with My grace and Jesus in your life, and being jealous of my grace in the life of another?*

"The sad thing about making our own god is that we become what we worship. Jonah worshiped a narrow god and he became a little man, short on vision and compassion, long on judgment and hate. Jonah forgot something we often forget. He forgot that he needed God as badly as the people of Nineveh did... We must not let ourselves believe that it is easier for God to love us than for him to love someone else." —Jimmy Draper

"Do you do well to be angry?" (Jonah 4:4). That's the question God asked Jonah. I mentioned before when we started this series that every year, the Jews on the highest and holiest day of the year, *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement), read the book of Jonah, and collectively they confess, "I am Jonah!"

Lord, we make that confession today, knowing that there are attitudes and actions in us we defend and protect, and yet so often, we fail to honor You and Your heart and to see how great our own need is of ongoing grace and mercy in our lives.

Father, we look at the life of this man, and frankly, we're just disturbed that it would end with him in this place, and yet, there You are in Your grace and mercy, having redeemed the city of Nineveh and still caring for this man named Jonah.

Lord, I pray that if there's a person here today, a person who has never looked to You, who has never called upon the name of Jesus, that they would understand Jesus came to express the relentless pursuit of Your love for them. Jesus did not reluctantly come, but He came to die on the cross with joy that those who look to Him might be forgiven, reclaimed, healed and saved.

Father, I pray if there's someone today who needs to come to You, may they see this moment as a moment You have opened and put before them, and they would call upon You. I pray if there's someone here today, a single adult, a family who needs to be a part of this church family, that You might move in their hearts and gather them together with us, that together we might live out the mission You have for us. We realize You've not called us to attend church; You've called a church to be a sending mission and agency.

God, we want to live out that sending mission together, but we can't do it unless we're aligned in heart and life, in investment, service, sacrifice and love. I pray You might bring some to be here today.

I pray, Lord, that if there's some here who are harboring and holding that anchor of resentment in their lives that today, You would give them the ability to come to You and find the grace and mercy to love and to restore a relationship with another. Thank You for this truth and this opportunity to share it. In Jesus name, Amen.

This is an edited version of a message preached from the pulpit of Warren Church, 3203 Washington Road, Augusta, GA 30907 on Sunday, June 22, 2025, by Dr. David H. McKinley.

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