A ONE-DAY LESSON PLAN FOR ALL AGES
FOR SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE SUNDAY

 Were THEY Worth It?

And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

- Jonah 4:11
A Note to Teachers

The following pages are meant as an aid and guide for the lesson to be presented on Sanctity of Human Life Sunday.

The first section is a brief overview of the story of Jonah and some background information. The amount of information you use during class time will depend upon the age group you're teaching. Most will be familiar with the story of Jonah, so a brief review should be adequate.

The objective is to help students see the value of each life. Perhaps you can use Jonah 4:11 as a memory verse. Encourage your students to read the book of Jonah this week during their devotions or, for those that cannot read, have them ask a parent to read the story to them.

Thank you for being a Sunday School teacher. It is a job of inestimable value as we seek to reach the next generation with the Gospel and give them biblical principles to live by.

In His Service,

Dr. Walter E. Widdis
First Baptist Church
Laurel, Montana

Acknowledgements

Life Matters Worldwide wishes to thank Pastor Widdis for graciously offering these lesson plans to us, which he prepared for his church in 2005. We're grateful that he allowed us to expand and adapt them as necessary, and to then offer them to you.

We would also like to acknowledge Thomas L. Hartwell for the cover image, which was modified from his photograph of an Iraqi girl, taken May 29, 2003. The photograph was found online at www.usaid.gov/iraq/photogallery/gallery_16/sn01.html. More of Hartwell's images can be viewed and purchased at www.thomashartwell.net/.
This curriculum includes lesson plans for:

- Background Material for All Classes
- Preschool/Kindergarten
- Primary (Grades 1-3)
- Junior (Grades 4-6)
- Teenage and Adult Men
- Teenage and Adult Women

Instructions for Teachers

Purchase of this CD grants the owner permission to make as many copies of the lessons as needed. (A church is considered an “owner;” all of a single church’s Sunday school classes are covered under this agreement, for as long as the church owns the CD.) Contents are copyright protected. Additional CDs may be purchased from:

Life Matters Worldwide
P.O. Box 3158, Grand Rapids, MI 49501
(616) 257-6800, 1-800-968-6086
lifemattersww.org, store.lifemattersww.org
staff@lifemattersww.org
Were THEY Worth It?
Background Material for All Classes

OUTLINE

The Book of Jonah may be outlined as follows:

- Chapter 1 - Jonah’s path
- Chapter 2 - Jonah’s prayer
- Chapter 3 - Jonah’s preaching
- Chapter 4 - Jonah’s pouting

THE MAN JONAH

We are not told much about Jonah other than minor references to his family and hometown. He was the son of Amittai from the town of Gath-Hepher (2 Kings 14:25). This was in the region of Galilee. In the New Testament we see the error of the Pharisees in forgetting Jonah (John 7:52). Jewish tradition held that Jonah was the child Elisha raised from the dead (1 Kings 17:8-24).

Jonah’s ministry as a prophet was during the reign of Jeroboam II in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The Northern Kingdom fell to the Assyrians roughly 50 years after his ministry. Elisha was his predecessor; Amos and Hosea were his successors as prophets to the Northern Kingdom.

THE MESSAGE OF JONAH

Jonah is the author of this book. He probably wrote it toward the end of his ministry, circa 770 BC. It is primarily a biographical account of what happened when he was called to bring a message of repentance to Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria, Israel’s enemy. Jonah is the only record of an Old Testament prophet being sent to a foreign nation. Some have called him the “Old Testament missionary.”

The book contains no direct predictions other than the recorded sermon of Jonah about God’s coming judgment upon the city in 40 days. From the New Testament, however, we know that Jonah’s sojourn in the belly of the great fish prefigures the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Matthew 12:39-41).

The root problem that people have with the account is that it is full of the miraculous. There is the storm, the fish, the lottery, Jonah’s survival in the fish, the gourd, the worm and the wind, not to mention the repentance of an entire city – from Nineveh’s palace to the poor house – in response to Jonah’s prophecy. All sought God’s mercy in sackcloth and ashes!

It is not difficult for those who know and believe the God of the Bible to accept miracles. He is able to do all He says. His revealed record is accepted by faith as a true and accurate account of what He wishes to show us.

Of course, the main miracle that unbeliev-
ers scoff at is the great fish swallowing Jonah without consuming him. If God can create the entire world in six days, He can certainly create a fish capable of swallowing a man. There have been records in the past of men being swallowed by sea creatures (whales, whale sharks, etc.) and living. Critics and scoffers have no evidence other than their own unbelief.

The account is rather short. Jonah was called by God to go to Nineveh – a city that still exists in what is now Iraq — and preach God's message of judgment against it. The city was known for its great wickedness. Jonah rebelled and went in the exact opposite direction (see map below) in an attempt to escape God's plan. He secured passage on a vessel in Joppa bound for Tarshish (some believe this to be a port in ancient Spain) and promptly fell asleep in the hold. God sent a great storm against the ship. After lots were cast to determine which of the passengers caused the fearsome storm, Jonah confessed his rebellion. The sailors didn't wish to anger God further by casting His prophet overboard, but finally conceded.

Jonah was swallowed by a great fish. While there, Jonah repented of his sin and sought God's forgiveness and mercy. The Lord then spoke to the fish, which vomited Jonah onto dry ground. Jonah was re-commissioned to go and preach, and this time obeyed.

Upon entering the city he preached the message of doom. The city repented and God granted mercy. Jonah became extremely angry at this turn of events and went out to the east side of the city to see what would happen. It is here we focus attention for this lesson.

THE MEANING OF JONAH

While many lessons may be learned through study of this little book, the greatest is of God's mercy and grace. Despite Jonah's poor performance, God continued to protect him and provided:

- a storm to correct his course (1:4);
- a fish to preserve his life (1:17 and 2:10);
- a plant to shade him from the desert sun (4:6);
- and a worm to turn his heart back to Him (4:7).

Similarly, despite their great wickedness, God sent a prophet to the godless people of Nineveh in order to give them an opportunity to repent (1:2).

We know the story of Jonah as the tale of a reluctant prophet. But it is also the story of a redemptive God. God's concern for the Ninevites is expressed regardless of Jonah's reluctance and rebellion. Even though Jonah refused to care for his audience, God's redeeming love could not and would not be hindered or overcome. Despite the messenger's indifference, the message bore fruit because God's word has life and power. God demonstrates the magnitude of His love by hearing our feeble cries of repentance and withholding His punishment (3:10). He also shows His love by paying attention to complaints like Jonah's (4:2-3) and responding to them with a gentle and patient correction (verses 4 and 6-11).

Ironically, Jonah eventually completed the mission while failing to mirror God's care and concern for the lost. Consider some of the ways he failed to image God by reflecting His compassion for the lost:

**THE GEOGRAPHY OF JONAH**

Background Material for All Classes

---

He misrepresented the transcendence of God, thinking he could flee from His presence.

He placed his shipmates’ lives in danger.

He refused to repent and would rather have been killed.

He represented Jehovah to the sailors as a god who could be appeased by human sacrifice.

He cared more for a plant — ultimately more for himself — than for the people of Nineveh.

Ultimately, the sailors and Ninevites showed more respect for God than Jonah. If anyone was going to see anything about God from Jonah’s life, it was by a very dim reflection, to say the least.

Two key verses are:

- **JONAH 2:9** – But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.

- **JONAH 4:11** – And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

The first shows the need for repentance on our part and faith to trust in God as the source of salvation. The second shows God’s great grace and willingness to show mercy.

**TODAY’S FOCUS**

In this story we learn how Jonah’s prejudice against the Assyrians caused him to initially disobey, and then be angry when God exercised grace. The goal of this lesson is for students to grow in appreciation for God’s mercy toward those who cannot be held accountable – including the very young, the unborn, and also those who may be mentally disabled by deformity, age or disease.

Students also need to realize that all of human life is precious to God, the giver of life (Psalm 116:15, Ezekiel 33:11, Acts 17:25). God showed how precious life is to Him by sending His Son to earth to die for all mankind (John 3:16).

In light of these truths, students will understand that to denigrate (look down on) another person is to devalue him or her as God’s creation and likeness. This displeases God in a similar way to how Jonah did by wishing that all of Nineveh had been destroyed.

**LESSON TRUTHS**

- God is the giver of life
- God values all life, even:
  - Those unable to care for themselves
  - Those undesired by society
  - Those in rebellion to Him
- As a Christian, I must value life in the same way
- God demonstrated His valuation of life by sending His Son Jesus
- I display this same value for life when I share Jesus with others

**Background Material for All Classes**
Were THEY Worth It?
Lesson for Pre-School

CATECHISM QUESTIONS
Use those from preceding lessons. Perhaps at the close of class you may introduce some that are related to this lesson, such as:

- **Who gives life?** God is the giver of life.
- **Does God love everyone?** God loves everyone.

MEMORY WORK

- **Jonah 2:9C** – Salvation is of the Lord.

BIBLE STORY
Use flannelgraph, if you have it, to present the story of Jonah. Be sure to focus on the conclusion of the story where Jonah became angry about God’s mercy toward the Assyrians. Highlight the fact that God told Jonah that He should have mercy toward Nineveh, especially since there were 120,000 people who did not know their right hand from their left. Children of this age (four- and five-year-olds) may still be learning to tell their right hand from their left, but the teacher can ask students who else might be included in that group, such as infants and very young children, unborn babies, and people who are mentally disabled. All life is precious to God.

**Suggestion for story-telling:** Instruct the children to listen closely to the story. Whenever they hear the name “Jonah” they should make running motions with their feet. When they hear “God,” they should raise their right hands, and when they hear “Nineveh” or “ Ninevites” raise their left hands. At the end, ask them whether they found it easy or hard to remember which hand to raise. This exercise will reinforce the idea about knowing your right from left hand.

HANDWORK TIME

Use crayons or markers to decorate the fish book markers. A space is provided for a name, their own or – in line with the theme of this lesson – the name of someone they can pray for or tell about Jesus.

SNACK TIME

Serve gold-fish crackers and blue juice, signifying the sea and the great fish.
GAME TIME

If time allows, play a game that reinforces knowing your right hand from your left.

- Play “Simon Says,” emphasizing instructions for the right and left: “Simon says turn to the right.” “Simon says hop on your left foot.” “Touch your right ear with your left hand.” And so on.

- Play “Neighbor’s Hand.” Have students form a circle around a leader. The leader walks around inside the circle and stops in front of one of the players. The leader says, “Hands up!” The player whom the leader has chosen must stand still, but his or her neighbors (on the right and on the left) must raise the hand that is nearest the chosen player. (The neighbor on the right raises his or her left hand; the neighbor on the left raises his or her right hand.) Any neighbor who makes a mistake becomes the leader. To help young students, prior to the start of the game the teacher should demonstrate how the game is played and rehearse right and left hands.

- Play “Two Signals.” Have students form a line. When they hear one whistle, they should quickly raise their right hand. (A bell or other gentle noise-maker may be used in place of a whistle.) When they hear two short whistles in quick succession, they should raise their left hand. At three short whistles, they must keep their hands to their sides.
Salvation is of the Lord. 

Jonah 2:9c

Name
Were THEY Worth It?
Lesson for Grades 1 through 3

Ask students how they feel when someone treats them as though they are not as good as others. Remind students that we ought to treat others the way we want to be treated.

- **LUKE 6:31** - And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

- **EPHESIANS 4:32** - And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.

**BIBLE STORY**

Introduce the story of Jonah. Let the students know there is another reason for treating other people well beside the fact that we want to be treated that way. The reason is that all people are made in the image of God. When we treat others badly we show disrespect for God. (See Proverbs 14:31, 17:5 and 22:2.) Tell them that we learn this in the story of Jonah.

Tell the story using a combination of flannelgraph and picture cards. You may also let the children tell the story as best they remember it, correcting where necessary. Another option is to allow the children to act the story out.

For this lesson, focus attention on the final scene of the story, in Jonah chapter 4. This is where we learn of Jonah’s prejudice against the Assyrians, to the extent that he would rather God destroy them than show them His mercy. Emphasize God’s response to Jonah, that there were 120,000 who didn’t know their right hand from their left (such as infants, unborn babies, people with mental disabilities, etc.). These people were precious enough to God that He would spare the city because they repented of their sin.

**DISCUSSION**

Discuss how, by thinking we are better than someone else – smarter, richer, prettier, faster, of a better ethnic background, etc. – we are in danger of treating them badly, as though they are worthless. Discuss how telling people about Jesus is one of the best ways to show we think they are special. Remind students that Jesus thought we were precious enough to die for our sin. Explain the Gospel for any students who may never have heard.
ACTIVITY

If time allows, have students color the fish bookmark. Instruct students to write the name of a person they can pray for this week in the space provided. Encourage them to use the bookmark as they read their Bibles.

GAME TIME

If time allows, your students may enjoy playing a game that reinforces knowing your right hand from your left.

- Play “Simon Says,” emphasizing instructions for the right and left: “Simon says turn to the right.” “Simon says hop on your left foot.” “Touch your right ear with your left hand.” And so on.
- Play “Neighbor’s Hand.” Have students form a circle around a leader. The leader walks around inside the circle and stops in front of one of the players. The leader says, “Hands up!” The player whom the leader has chosen must stand still, but his or her neighbors (on the right and on the left) must raise the hand that is nearest the chosen player. (The neighbor on the right raises his or her left hand; the neighbor on the left raises his or her right hand.) Any neighbor who makes a mistake becomes the leader. To help young students, prior to the start of the game the teacher should demonstrate how the game is played and rehearse right and left hands.
- Play “Two Signals.” Have students form a line. When they hear one whistle, they should quickly raise their right hand. (A bell or other gentle noise-maker may be used instead of a whistle.) When they hear two short whistles in quick succession, they should raise their left hand. At three short whistles, they must keep their hands to their sides.
Salvation is of the Lord. 

Jonah 2:9c.
Were THEY Worth It?
Lesson for Grades 4 through 6

INTRODUCTION
Discuss what it's like to be treated as though your life has no value. What do people do to show they don't value others? (Have someone write responses on the board or a large sheet of paper.) Has anyone ever treated you this way? How did you feel? Have you ever treated someone else this way? What can you do to change?

BIBLE STORY
Review the story of Jonah, perhaps by having the class read aloud portions of the account, or by retelling the story in their own words. They may also want to act it out.
Focus students’ attention on this verse:

- JONAH 4:2 – And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

What does this verse tell us about the reason Jonah ran from God? Why he was angry about God's mercy? (He was prejudiced against the Assyrians since they were Israel's enemy. He did not want God to forgive them.)

ACTIVITY
Jonah's prejudice caused him to look down on the Assyrians and devalue their lives. We also often do the same. Use the handout (if desired) to review some of the things that we often use as gauges to place a value on someone else's life. Here are the principles they should discover.

- Beauty – beauty is vain, it eventually fades
- Health – our life is but a vapor and bodily exercise profits only a little
- Smarts – the wisdom and intelligence of this world is at best foolish in the sight of God
- Riches – money is fleeting and temporary
- Religion – man's religion can only bring a form of bondage
- Works – all that we can do is nothing compared with our need of salvation. We are saved by grace through faith!
APPLICATION

Discuss the key verse (Jonah 4:11) and why God values people. The impact of this lesson is to understand that God was willing to be merciful to 120,000 people who did not know their right hand from their left (a group that can include infants, unborn babies, the mentally disabled, etc.). Every human being is precious to God, even those we don’t care about and who may be rebelling against Him.

When we look down on someone we are devaluing him or her. God showed how precious life is by sending His Son to die for us. Are we showing how valuable everyone’s life is to us by sharing Him with others?
Were THEY Worth It?

The Assyrians could be very cruel to others. They were Israel’s enemy. When God told Jonah to preach to them he didn’t want to. He ran away. He believed they didn’t deserve to hear about God.

When we look down on others for any reason, we are saying their lives don’t have as much value as our own. Look up the following scriptures to identify what some people believe gives value to their lives. In the space below each, use your own words to describe what the Bible says about each one.

B  PROVERBS 31:30
H  JAMES 4:14, 1 TIMOTHY 4:8
S  1 CORINTHIANS 3:19
R  PROVERBS 23:5, 27:24
R  MATTHEW 23:15, MARK 7:4
W  EPHESIANS 2:8, 9

The thing that gives all of us our worth is not listed above.

We all have worth because we are CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD. God showed how precious we are to Him by sending His Son Jesus to die for our sins in our place. Unlike Jonah, Jesus gladly carried out His mission.

Do you treat those around you as ones whom God loves so much? Are you telling them about Jesus or are you like Jonah, judging them to be unworthy of the Good News?
INTRODUCTION

Legally, a man has little say if the mother of his unborn child wants an abortion. He may not be able to stop her. The attitudes men have toward children can also, however, encourage women to have abortions:

- Selfishness – “That’s not what I wanted in a relationship. I’m out of here.”
- Lack of the expression of strength that women need from their protectors

Even though secular voices claim abortion is “a woman’s issue,” men can be pro-life by treasuring children and staying married to their mothers – becoming examples to others of purity and faithfulness by patterning their lives after their Heavenly Father.

The sanctity of human life involves more than just being against abortion, though that is perhaps the most visible and publicized debate in the news today. It also covers things such as in-vitro fertilization, euthanasia, embryonic stem cell research, and human cloning. The basis for proper attitudes and correct positions on these issues depends upon a foundational view of life itself.

AN ATTITUDE THAT REGARDS ALL HUMAN LIFE AS PRECIOUS

Toward the unborn

Review the following passages: Psalm 139:13-16, Jeremiah 1:5, Galatians 1:15. God was so concerned about the unborn child that law covered the case of a pregnant woman’s injury that resulted in loss of the baby:

- EXODUS 21:22-26 – If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman’s husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

Toward those conceived in acts of rape and incest

To abort an unborn child simply because the circumstances surrounding his or her conception were unlawful would be no less than killing the child for the sins of the father.
**DEUTERONOMY 24:16** – The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.

**Toward those who are different from me**

Differences could be in relation to a person’s ethnic background, physical appearance, abilities or disabilities, mental competence, etc. All life is from God. There are no accidents. No one’s life is of less worth than another’s. (Isaiah 45:9-11)

**ACTS 17:25** – Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

**EXODUS 4:11** – And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man’s mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord?

**Toward the declining**

The elderly have lessons to teach and experiences to share. We should value them! (See 1 Timothy 5:1-16, James 1:27)

**PROVERBS 16:31** – The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.

**AN ATTITUDE OF PREVENTION**

**In teaching our sons**

Sons mainly learn how to be a man from their fathers. They learn the rest from other men, whether good or bad. The boys in our lives — our sons, neighborhood children, nephews, and church members — need us to be biblical examples of manhood.

Prepare young men for fatherhood by showing them what God, our Heavenly Father is like, both by example and by the Word of God. Distribute the “Fatherhood of God” handout. (Copy on colored paper and cut in half to make 8.5x5.5” sheets.)

**In the treatment of women in general**

**1 TIMOTHY 5:2-3** – The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity. Honour widows that are widows indeed.

**In the treatment of our wives**

**1 PETER 3:7** – Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

See also Colossians 3:19, Ephesians 5:25, Numbers 30:8, Deuteronomy 24:5. The general duties of the husband/father in the family can be summarized as:

- the Provider – 1 Timothy 5:8;
- the Protector – Ephesians 5:28;
- the Propagator of the faith – Deuteronomy 6, Ephesians 6:4.

His role is a leading role and as such is the authority in the home.

**In the treatment of our daughters**

In 1 Corinthians 7:37 we see that a father even had jurisdiction over his daughter’s romantic interests. He is to function as an umbrella of protection until she marries and he passes that responsibility off to her husband. Remember, your daughter will one day be a woman. She learns much about the kind of man she would desire as a husband from how you treat her. Your son learns how to be a proper husband from how you treat your wife and daughter. He learns to be a proper man in his attitude and actions toward women by how you teach him to treat his mother and sister.

**Lesson for Men**
In the treatment of nature

- **PROVERBS 12:10** - A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

Do we take more care to not wound an animal while hunting than we do to avoid wounding our wives, children, and others with our words and actions?

We can do much to promote the sanctity of human life by the way in which we view all life and how we interact with others. May we not hold correct positions and views, but betray them by our actions and words.

ARE YOU A MAN OF GODLY INFLUENCE?

It is often said or implied that a “real” man is one who is successful, powerful, athletic, independent, etc. Without “feminizing” men, the Bible teaches that a godly man is also discerning, wise, compassionate, meek, humble, nurturing, and available to serve others – like the Lord Jesus. These other traits in no way diminished His manliness. He still had the physical and moral fortitude to call the Pharisees “snakes” and to chase the money-changers from the temple with a whip.

The prophet Jonah was successful and held a position of influence as a prophet of Jehovah (2 Kings 14:25 and Jonah 1:1). He would have been considered a “real” man but, when faced with the task of interacting with a group of people whom he didn’t think should be valued, he failed. Jonah needed to learn the foundational lesson that all life is valuable to God.

God created men to have the leading role in family and society. This not only applies to the physical “manly” things but emotional and spiritual things as well. When it comes to the sacredness of life, men who are children of God should lead the way in promoting God’s standards and expectations.

How well are you expressing this truth in your life – in terms of being a husband and father, in business dealings, in friendships, in service to the church? In what ways are you instilling it in the lives of the young men you influence?
The Fatherhood of God

We needn't look far for an example of perfect fatherhood. Our heavenly Father is revealed to us in Scripture. What is he like?

- **GOD IS FAITHFUL, KEEPING HIS WORD** - Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised). [HEBREWS 10:23]

- **GOD IS PURE AND HOLY, NEVER VIOLATING HIS OWN STANDARDS** - But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. [1 PETER 1:15-16]

- **GOD’S LOVE IS UNCONDITIONAL AND SACRIFICIAL** - But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. [ROMANS 5:8] Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. [1 JOHN 3:1]

- **GOD PROTECTS THE SMALL AND WEAK** - A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation. [PSALM 68:5] Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish. [MATTHEW 18:14]

- **HE PROVIDES FOR THOSE WHO DEPEND ON HIM** - If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? [MATTHEW 7:11]

- **GOD DISCIPLINES HIS CHILDREN** - For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth. [PROVERBS 3:12] If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? [HEBREWS 12:7]
Were THEY Worth It?
Lesson for Women – Teen through Adult

INTRODUCTION

God doesn’t owe anyone a reason for loving such a wicked city like Nineveh, but in Jonah 4:11 he shared his rationale for sending Jonah there. Discuss God’s reasoning. Why did He have this concern? Have various ones read such passages as Lamentations 3:22, John 3:16 and Romans 5:8. Can you think of other passages of Scripture that echo this compassion?

Applicable passages include: Genesis 16:7-13; Leviticus 19:14; Job 29:11-17; Psalm 72:12-14, 82:3-4; Proverbs 24:10-12, 31:8-9; Zechariah 7:9-10; Matthew 18:5-6, 10, 14, 19:14; Mark 9:36-37, 10:13-16; Luke 6:36; 1 Corinthians 1:27-29; James 1:27, 2:15-17; I John 3:17-19. You may want to write out the references on slips of paper and hand them out at the beginning of class so that students can look them up ahead of time. As they are read, ask readers to share how each passage contributes to our understanding of God’s love.

We are all called to mirror God’s care and concern for those who don’t know their right hand from their left. Who are they? How can we show care and concern for them?

THE PROBLEM

- PROVERBS 3:8-10 – But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

One way we often fail to show care and concern is through our speech. James 3:8-10 admonishes us to stop destroying the image of God in others by what we say. We don’t always see the damage a careless word — or outright curse — does to people, or to those within listening range. Children or other innocent bystanders who hear us gossip or complain about someone else are also victims of our words.

Wayward comments might lead young people to believe abortion is a way to avoid admitting sexual sin. Some parents believe it could save their reputations. Sadly, too many teens from Christian homes choose abortion.¹

---

¹. Although those with no religious affiliation account for the highest rate of abortion, 13 percent of women obtaining abortions call themselves ‘born-again’ or ‘evangelical.’ (Jones et al., “Patterns in the Socioeconomic Characteristics of Women Obtaining Abortions in 2000-2001,” Perspectives on Sexual & Reproductive Health, 34:5, September/October 2002.)
Abortion clinics are full of girls and women who have heard hateful comments, either directed at them or others:

- “You’d better never come home pregnant!”
- “I’ll kill you if you ever embarrass me like that!”
- “Doesn’t she know about birth control?”

Ask the class to suggest other negative statements about pregnancy. What does it do to a person to hear something like this? How do these words portray an unborn child?

**DISCUSSION**

What messages can parents, churches and Christian schools give teenagers to help them understand both the sinfulness of sex outside of marriage and the futility of hiding a resulting pregnancy under the cloak of abortion? Before they ever get in that situation, how can we convey love to them, keep them safe, and help them value life? As we teach them the proper place of sex (within marriage), how can we also advise them on what they should do if they fail to live up to biblical standards and become pregnant outside of marriage? How can we help them avoid compounding one sin with another? Ask for suggestions, and be sure to include in the discussion any teenagers who are present.

Here are some messages that ought to be included in the discussion:

- **Leave doors of communication open:** “You can talk to me about anything.”
- **Express a willingness to help in times of trouble:** “Whatever happens, we’ll get through it together.”
- **Be honest and mature about your emotions:** “I may feel hurt and get angry, but I’ll always love you.”
- **Show mercy to anyone who confesses sin (sexual or otherwise), following the model of Paul in 2 Corinthians 2:5-8:** “You are forgiven.”
- **Demonstrate compassion to families who struggle with their teenagers’ unplanned pregnancies:** “How can I help?”
- **Celebrate every baby’s life, regardless of how he or she was conceived:** “Thank you, Mom, for not choosing abortion!”

Let’s not abandon teenagers to Planned Parenthood and the abortion clinics, becoming unwitting accomplices in their abortion decisions. Let’s choose our messages wisely.

**DEALING WITH THE SIN OF ABORTION**

What should we say to someone who has had an abortion, or helped someone obtain one? Like Jonah, we can tell them abortion is a sin that requires repentance, but unlike Jonah we can also express God’s message of love and forgiveness to sinners.

Distribute the “God’s Love for Those Guilty of Abortion” handout. (Copy on colored paper and cut in half for two 8.5x5.5” sheets.)
GOD’S LOVE FOR PEOPLE who are guilty of abortion

Do you know someone who is struggling with the guilt of an abortion? You can minister to her (or him) by leading her to the following scripture passages and helping her apply truth to her life:

- **Psalm 103:8-14** - The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.

- **Proverbs 28:13** - He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

- **Isaiah 43:25** - I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

- **Isaiah 55:7** - Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

- **Romans 6:23** - For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- **Ephesians 1:7** - In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.

- **1 John 1:9** - If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.