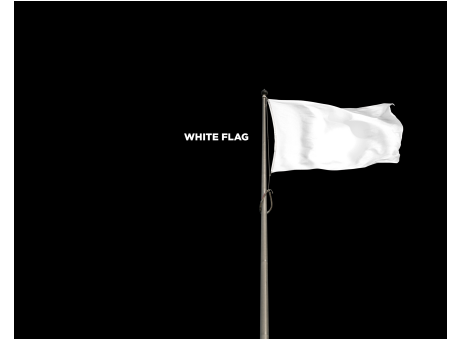


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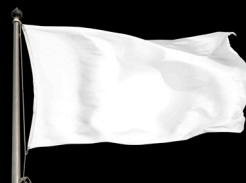
Jonah was a runner. But he wasn't running toward anything, like a marathoner pushes forward toward the finish line. He was running from something. It doesn't take much self-examination to realize that we've all run from something at some point in our lives. Though the length of the run is different for each of us, we all share the tendency to follow our own paths. Even when we explicitly know what it is that God wants us to do, like Jonah did, we still run in the opposite direction of where God is leading us.



BIG IDEA: God lets us run from Him, but we always run to the wrong place.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Did you ever run away from home as a child? What happened?
2. Has God ever called you to leave your comfort zone to follow him (like going on a mission trip)? How did you respond?
3. As you look back, describe a point in your life when you were “running” in a direction away from God?
4. Why do people run away from God? What is it about God’s reputation that causes many people to run *away* rather than *to* him?
5. In the book of Jonah, all creation responds to the Word of the Lord, except us. Why do you think we have such a hard time responding to the Word of the Lord? What is it that makes people so unwilling to obey the Creator, when the rest of Creation (nature, animals, etc.) obeys immediately?
6. *Read Jonah 1:1-4.* What seems reasonable and surprising about God’s command (v 2)? About Jonah’s response? Why did God tell Jonah to go and preach His judgment to the Ninevites? How do you think Jonah felt about the Ninevites? Why do you think he refused to take God’s message to them?
7. **Like Jonah, the Word of the Lord comes to us as well—through the Bible.** *Read 2 Timothy 3:16,17; Hebrews 4:12; 1 Peter 1:23; Romans 10:17.* How does God still speak to us today? What is it that usually keeps you from doing something that God wants you to do?
8. **God will often ask you to do things you don’t want to do.** What are some things that God asks us to do, in the Bible, that seem unreasonable or difficult to obey?
9. In his mind, Jonah had legitimate reasons for not wanting to preach to the Ninevites. Describe a time when you disobeyed God’s direction and faced the consequences. Share something God asked you to do that you didn’t want to do, but you did. What was the result? Who or what is currently the Nineveh in your life?
10. **You can always find a boat sailing in the wrong direction.** In your spiritual life, which direction are you running: towards God, away from God, with God, or behind God? Share a time when you thought you could ignore or run from God? Where did you end up? What does our running from God reveal about our concept of God?
11. *Read Psalm 139:7-10.* What was foolish about Jonah’s belief that he could flee from God (Jonah 1:3)? In what ways can you relate to Jonah’s disobedience? What do you think Jonah was thinking as he fled to Tarshish? During the turbulent storm?
12. **Chris said that, “When we run from God, we run to some very unstable places.”** What was a thrill has become an addiction. What was just so much fun has become nothing but debt. What was a great relationship has ended up in divorce court. Name some unstable places you have ran from God.
13. Even when you don't understand it, or when you flat out don't want to, why does it make sense to follow God's direction?



14. In what direction is God currently leading you that you don't want to go?
15. In what areas in your life are you currently running away from God? Are you experiencing any “storms” as a result? What is stopping you from taking off your running shoes and kneeling to find a God that’s been waiting for you to come back?

MOVING FORWARD

Think about where God is currently leading you that you don't want to go. What is the worst that could happen in this situation? What is the best that could happen? Can God be trusted to lead you through this?

CHANGING YOUR MIND

Where could I go to escape from you? Where could I get away from your presence? If I went up to heaven, you would be there; if I lay down in the world of the dead, you would be there. If I flew away beyond the east or lived in the farthest place in the west, you would be there to lead me, you would be there to help me. Psalm 139:7-10

