

Message Series: Classics week 3

Message Title: Jonah – The Call

Date: July 23 & 24 2016

Message Summary: If we are not running to God and with God, then we are running from God.

Leaders: The questions that follow are designed to stir reflection and discussion. Please read through them prior to your meeting, so you can be prepared to prayerfully pace your group well. Feel free to write your answers down and make notes so you are prepared to lead your group. And remember, as leader, your goal is to promote increased *biblical*-awareness, as well as individual *self*-awareness – a combination that with the help of the Holy Spirit, results in revelation and...transformation!

Below you will find questions that relate to the primary scripture and additional scripture. There will be other reflective questions intended for group discussion and application.

Introduction

As a child or teenager, did you ever deliberately not do something that your parents asked you to do, then work hard to cover it up? How did the scenario end up playing out?

If you are a parent, have any of your children ever done that to you? How have you handled it as a parent?

There is no sense in pretending we're not all sinners. All children have lied to their parents, and all children will continue to. The relationship between parent and child is often a great reflection of our relationship with God. How often does He ask us to do things that we don't want to do, yet we go about our lives pretending that our disobedience doesn't matter? This idea is at the heart of today's study in Jonah. What we learn is that if we are not running to God and with God, then we are running from God.

UNDERSTANDING

READ JONAH 1:1-10.

God gave a specific command to Jonah: Go to Nineveh and preach against it. Sometimes obeying God takes us out of our comfort zones. This certainly would have been true for Jonah.

Is there something you would have a hard time doing if God asked it of you? Why?

In verse 4, what was the consequence of Jonah's disobedience? What are some consequences we experience today when we run from God's will?

We attempt to run from God in a variety of ways. Being in God's will is not primarily a matter of where we are geographically as much as where we are spiritually. Jonah's disobedience was an expression of a heart that did not beat in sync with God's. Any believer attempting to run from God eventually will face the consequences of that disobedience in the hope that he or she might turn back to God. God does not quickly give up on His people who fail to do His will. He desires to accomplish His purposes through us. He has more ways of "catching up" to us than we do of running away from Him.

Read Jonah 2:1-9

Does it surprise you that Jonah prayed in this moment? Why or why not? What stands out to you about Jonah's prayer?

What two things did Jonah make a commitment to do in verse 9?

What is the difference between a sacrifice and a vow? Why are both important in our relationship with God?

Jonah was expressing not only the desperation of his situation but also his gratitude to God for the Lord's provision and protection. Jonah was able to see that despite his circumstances, God was still in control. God's grace calls for sacrificial service. In response to His mercy and grace let us confess our sins to Him and commit ourselves anew to serve Him in whatever way He directs.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JONAH 3:1-4.

Has God ever asked you to do something that was too big and overwhelming for you to handle? What happened?

In your own words, what was Jonah's message to Nineveh?

What was the result of Jonah's obedience to God? What can we expect when we are obedient to God's call?

The Bible lets us look at the interaction between God and Jonah so we can understand better our own interaction with God. God still calls people into service and sends them to faraway nations. He also sends His servants to next-door neighbors, to friends and coworkers, to enemies and opponents. So before we condemn Jonah too harshly, let his example remind us of how we have responded or are responding to God's call.

READ JONAH 3:10–4:11.

What emotions does verse 1 say Jonah experienced? Why do you think he felt that way?

Is it possible for us to be obedient to God and have a bad attitude at the same time? Why or why not?

What lesson did God teach Jonah through the vine? In what way do the comforts of life that we enjoy prevent us from being what God wants us to be and doing what God wants us to do?

APPLICATION

Identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to our lives.

What do you think God wants to happen in our lives as a result of this study? What's the first step toward making that happen?

Has God been asking you to do something for Him recently? What is the next step of obedience?

What feelings or desires are most likely to steer you away from God's will? How can our group encourage one another to fight off those feelings?

PRAY

Thank God for loving us and including us in His redemptive plan. Pray we will stop running from Him and run to Him and with Him.