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**The Runaway**

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**Why do we run from God?****God will often ask you to do things you don't want to do.**

The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."  
Jonah 1:1-2

**When we run from God, we run to the strangest places.**

But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord. Jonah 1:3

**Then the Lord...**

Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. Jonah 1:4

**Runners are often the last to make the connection.**

All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish." Jonah 1:5-6

**Now the Lord...**

Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. Jonah 1:17-2:1

**You can run from God, but you can't outrun God.**

My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in. Proverbs 3:11-12

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**Connect**

Did you ever run away from home as a child? What happened?

**Word and Reflection**

Jonah's life and story teaches us so much about God's goodness and grace. God will often ask us to do things we don't want to do. We have a choice as to how we'll respond. If we choose to run, we can always find a "ship" ready to take us in the wrong direction. But eventually, God will send a "storm" or provide a "big fish" to grab our attention. When He does, it's not to pay us back, but to bring us back. God disciplines those he loves, as a father the children in whom he delights.

Jonah 1:1-2:1; Proverbs 3:11-12

- Which part of the message made an impact, caught your attention or challenged you?
- Read Jonah 1:1-3. As you look back, describe a point in your life when you were "running" in a direction away from God. What has God asked you to do that you have yet to do? Is there any area of disobedience in your life?
- Read Jonah 1:4-6. Jonah seemed to be the last person in the boat to recognize the chaos going on around him. Why is it that often those who are running are the last to connect their choices to the chaos in their lives?
- Read Jon 1:15-2:1; Prov 3:11-12. What has God used in your past (or present) to grab your attention? Why do many view difficulties in their lives as God's way of paying them back? How might the hardships you're currently experiencing be God's way, not of paying you back, but of bringing you back to Him?
- Who is currently your "Nineveh"? With whom in your life have you refused to share God's message of mercy and grace? Are you withholding God's message because of fear, bitterness, judgment, or something else?

**Action**

- In what areas of 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 surrendering to God? Share this with your Grace Group or someone who will pray for you and hold you accountable.

**Prayer**

- Ask God to give you a greater love for the people you find are most difficult for you to love.