

STOP RUNNING: You Can Run...

November 1, 2020

Week 1 Reading Plan

Day 1-

READ: [Jonah 1: 1-17](#)

REFLECT: Take a few minutes and write out a short outline of Jonah Chapter 1. Who are the main characters and what are the primary events that take place? Although the story of Jonah and the big fish is well known, the part about the fish is actually pretty short. As you read the first chapter, what did you learn about Jonah's character and what are some details about his story that you may not have heard or thought about before? How might those details help you think about the story differently, or more deeply?

PRAY/ PRACTICE: Take some time to really slow down and ask God how the details and context of the scriptures build layers of meaning. Can you see this story as an illustration of any foundational Biblical principles? Ask God to open your eyes and heart to see and hear the message He has for *you* in this moment.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

WATCH: "[How to Read Jonah](#)" - an animated overview by the Bible Project. [Need a *free* RightNow Media account? Register [here](#).]

Day 2-

READ: [Jonah 1: 2-3](#), [Matthew 21: 28-32](#), [Matthew 19: 21-22](#)

REFLECT: God gave Jonah a very clear instruction – how did Jonah respond? Although he did not actually say the word 'no', his actions communicated his refusal. Has God ever asked you to do something that you did not want to do? What kind of message did your responding actions communicate to God?

PRAY/ PRACTICE: Do you have a 'Nineveh' of your own? A place that you have refused to go with Him? A place or action that you are avoiding? Ask God for revelation of any underlying attitudes or beliefs that tempt you to rebel against God's direction for your life. If you are aware of a direction that He has given that you have ignored or disobeyed, spend a little time thinking about why you said 'no' and ask Him to change your heart. Repent of your disobedience and commit to responding with 'yes' actions the next time He speaks.

Day 3-

READ: [Jonah 1: 2-3](#), [Romans 9: 14-16](#), [Matthew 5: 43-48](#)

REFLECT: God clearly wanted to speak to the people of Nineveh – while Jonah clearly did not. Nineveh was a major city in the Assyrian empire and Assyria had a history of conflict with Israel. Why would God send his prophet to a place outside of Israel, to a people who were considered enemies of God’s people? Since the Ninevites did not serve the God of Israel, their culture and religion would have been very different from Jonah’s homeland. How do you think those differences may have influenced his perspective on the people and his response to God’s command to warn them of coming judgment?

PRAY/ PRACTICE: Have you ever found yourself holding back when God prompted you to bless someone who hurt you? Or reach out to someone whose lifestyle you do not agree with? Spend a little time talking with God about these reservations and asking Him to replace your fear/hurt/anger/etc. with His perfect love.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

READ: “[Meet Jonah – the Prodigal Prophet](#)”, an article from the Gospel Coalition, written by Tim Keller (Oct 4, 2018)

REFLECT: Have you ever found it difficult to grasp that God is both merciful and just?

Day 4-

READ: [Jonah 1: 3-5](#) and [Jeremiah 23: 24](#)

REFLECT: Estimates vary, but Nineveh was likely more than 500 miles east of Jonah’s hometown. Tarshish, on the other hand, was representative of the most remote possible location in the opposite direction, possibly more than 2,500 miles west. Take a look at [this map](#) of these relative locations. Jonah was willing to travel a very long way in an attempt to avoid God’s presence in his life!

Despite all his efforts, how far from God did Jonah actually get? How successful was he in hiding from God? Since the first sinful act by Adam and Eve (Genesis 3), people have been trying to hide from God when they know they are outside His will for them. Can you think of any times that you have tried to hide? What did that look like? What convinced you that being away from His presence would somehow be better?

PRAY/ PRACTICE: Read [Psalm 139](#). Ask God for a fresh revelation of how well He knows you and how much He loves you, wherever you are. Surrender your heart to his searching and allow Him to lead you deeper into His presence.

Day 5-

READ: [Jonah 1: 1-2, 9](#) and [Matthew 3: 8-9](#)

REFLECT: Who was Jonah? Consider his heritage and his occupation. How did his responses to God and his actions in this story reflect or contradict who he claimed to be? Did he truly ‘fear God’? Who do *you* believe you are? How do your actions and responses to God reflect or contradict this belief?

PRAY/ PRACTICE: Listen to “[Who You Say I Am](#)”, by Hillsong Worship Ask God to show you any ways that your attitudes or actions contradict who you are in Him. Commit to aligning your responses with your true identity.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

READ: “[I Am a Hebrew, and I Fear the Lord,](#)” a Gospel Coalition article written by John Starke

REFLECT: Are trust and obedience foundational in your relationship with God?

STOP RUNNING: The Turnaround

November 8, 2020

Week 2 Reading Plan

Day 1-

READ: [Jonah 1:17](#), [Jonah 2](#)

REFLECT: Have you ever felt as if you are being swallowed by circumstances around you? Note Jonah's prayer from the belly of the fish. Jonah was trying to avoid God but when he found himself in the "pit" he cried out to God. He didn't wait until he was back on dry ground.

PRAY/ PRACTICE: Cry out to God from where you are. Stop running and ask God for forgiveness and Salvation in Christ if you have not accepted him. He will hear you where you are. If you know God but have been running from something you know he wants you to do, Pray for forgiveness and guidance from the Spirit of God.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

WATCH: "[How to Read Jonah](#)", a Bible Project video on Right Now Media. [Need a *free* RNM account? Register [here](#).]

REFLECT: There is no where you can go to be out of the presence of God. He is everywhere at all times. He sent his Son so you could experience His presence in your life personally. Listen to the song, [Big Fish](#)

Day 2-

READ: [Jonah 1:17](#); [Matthew 12:40](#)

REFLECT: Jonah was a foreshadowing of Jesus' death burial and resurrection. Jonah 1:17 "*And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.*" How is Jesus the better Jonah?

PRAY/ PRACTICE: Thank God for his provision of Salvation in Christ. Jesus Died, was buried, and rose again on the third day. Thank God that he has given to us the promise that we will live forever with Him. Ask God to give you courage to say YES to wherever and whomever He calls.

Day 3-

READ: [Jonah 2:9](#), [Psalm 18](#), [Psalm 86:13](#)

REFLECT: In two columns, make a list- What does Jonah say about God here? What does David say about God? What do you learn about God's character and His work?

PRAY/ PRACTICE: Praise His name for who He is and what He has done- use words from the lists you wrote.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

PRACTICE: Make a list of things God has done for you. Praise him for each thing on your list.

WORSHIP: [Psalm 18 by Water Deep](#)

Day 4-

READ: [Lamentations 3](#)

REFLECT: How does Jeremiah feel at the beginning of this Chapter? What did he do to change his focus from the devastation of Israel to the Mercies of God? How can we call to mind the goodness of God in our lives?

PRAY/ PRACTICE: Pray using the ACTS format: Adoration = Praise God for His character and His actions. Confess your sins to God. Thank God for all he has done for you. Supplication = lift up your needs and others' needs to God, trusting Him to hear you.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

WORSHIP: [Raise A Hallelujah](#)

Day 5-

READ: [Jonah 2](#)

REFLECT: Even though Jonah was running from the Presence of God, God did not give up on him. When Jonah found himself in the water and sinking down God sent a fish to swallow him. He heard Jonah's prayer and was his salvation. Whatever we have done to separate ourselves from the presence of God is forgiven by God's Mercy through Jesus. He has never left us, and he has provided a way that we can be in His presence through Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

PRAY/ PRACTICE: Pray again through the ACTS process. Praise God for his Mercy and forgiveness- for sending His one and only Son to reconcile us to him. Confess your sins as Romans 3:23 says, "*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" Look back and Thank God for all he has done to bring you to this point. Bring your needs to Him and ask for His will to be done.

STOP RUNNING: Second Chances

November 15, 2020

Week 3 Reading Plan

Day 1 -

READ: [Jonah 3](#)

REFLECT: What is your first reaction to this chapter? What questions does it raise? How is this passage meeting you where you are today?

PRAY/PRACTICE: This week, as we focus on a chapter that has much to do with repentance and returning to God, begin today asking God to search your heart. Ask Him to reveal or send someone to you to show you what you need to turn from, if need be. Pray [Psalm 139:23-24](#)

Day 2 -

READ: [Jonah 3:1-3](#) and [John 8:1-11](#)

REFLECT: Through the years, what circumstances has God used to get your attention and show you that you needed to change direction? How did you respond to that “Second chance?” How may God be seeking to get your attention now? How do you need to turn your “No” to a “Yes”?

PRAY/PRACTICE: Option 1. Write a prayer to God telling him how you believe he is trying to get your attention and tell him your response. Option 2. Write a prayer reflecting on what God has brought you out of and write a prayer of thanks and praise.

TAKE IT FURTHER

WATCH: [Session Five](#) (Jonah 3:1-5) from the Series “The Book of Jonah” by Eric Mason on RightNow Media. [Need a *free* RNM account? Register [here](#).]

Day 3 -

READ: [Jonah 3:4-9](#) and [Luke 19:1-10](#)

REFLECT: What does this passage tell you about what saying “Yes” to God looks like? That is, What does repentance look like? How have you shown repentance in the past? How do you need to show repentance now?

PRAY/PRACTICE: Pray [Psalm 51:1-10](#). As you pray admit specifically how you have been saying “No” to God.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

READ: What does the Bible say about repentance? <https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-repentance.html>

WATCH: [Session Six](#) (Jonah 3:6-10) from the Series “The Book of Jonah” by Eric Mason on RightNow Media. [Need a *free* RNM account? Register [here](#).]

Day 4 -

READ: [Jonah 3:4-9](#), [Ephesians 2:4-10](#)

REFLECT: Today, reflect on this sermon point, “When God does something *in* you, He wants to do something *through* you.” Do you already have a story of how God has used what He has brought you out of to impact others? What is it? How might God use what He is doing in you? A word of encouragement: Sometimes what God is doing in us is so raw that it’s hard to imagine how He could use us. But be assured, even if it’s hard to see how He will use you, He has a plan and you will see it, in His time!

PRAY/PRACTICE: Make [Psalm 51:10-15](#) your prayer. Suggestions: Tell God that you yield your life to Him to be used however He desires. Ask God to open your eyes to how He wants to use you next?

Day 5 -

READ: [Jonah 3:10](#), [Psalm 103:1-18](#)

REFLECT: What impact has this reading (and this sermon series) had on your view of God? Are there any ways that you are having a hard time accepting that God has extended you mercy and forgiveness? What are they? In Psalm 103 we see how the “Lord is” or what the Lord will always do. That is, these are character qualities of God which will never change. So many people before you have been extended mercy and forgiveness. What does this mean for you?

PRAY/ PRACTICE: Dedicate this prayer time to praise and worship. Write a prayer (your own psalm) reflecting on the grace, and mercy of God. Take time to sing or listen to songs of praise.

WORSHIP: [Glorious Day](#)

STOP RUNNING: An Illogical Attachment

November 22, 2020

Week 4 Reading Plan

Day 1-

READ: [Jonah 4:1-11](#)

REFLECT: It looked like Jonah had a change of heart while he was in the belly of the fish in chapter 2, but in chapter 4 we see that Jonah still doesn't believe that God's grace should be available to the Ninevites. His heart change was self-focused, and that's not ultimately what God is after. Has your faith been more self-focused or others-focused recently? How can you include others-focused practices in your walk with God?

PRACTICE: Pray for the people you encounter today. Say quick, silent prayers during your interactions with your family members, coworkers, classmates, and strangers who you walk/drive past. If you use social media, scroll slowly and pray for each person whose content you see.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

REFLECT: Sometimes Christians have the opposite issue as Jonah – they don't believe that God's grace should be available to them because of the things they have done. If that's you, reflect on this quote from Tim Keller: "Mercy and forgiveness must be free and unmerited to the wrongdoer. If the wrongdoer has to do something to merit it, then it isn't mercy, but forgiveness always comes at a cost to the one granting the forgiveness."

Day 2-

READ: [Jonah 4:1-4](#)

REFLECT: Jonah scolds God for being merciful and boldly tells God that if the Ninevites won't die, then he wants to die – a "It's them or me!" mentality. It's almost as if Jonah thinks, "If God's on my side, he can't be on their side, too." What's an example in your own life where you feel like God is on your side,

not “their” side (a boss, coworker, or peer who treats you poorly, someone who hurt you, a group of people who hold different beliefs, etc.) How might God want to change your heart toward them?

PRAY: Pray and ask God to reveal the blind spots in your heart. Confess any unloving thoughts or attitudes you’ve had toward others. Ask God to help you see them the way He sees them.

Day 3-

READ: [Exodus 34:1-6](#)

REFLECT: Exodus 34:6 should sound familiar because it’s what Jonah ironically quotes in Jonah 4:2. In this passage, God invites Moses to come back up Mt. Sinai to receive the ten commandments again because Moses broke the first tablets upon discovering that the Israelites were worshipping a golden calf right after they had experienced a series of miraculous mercies. This is the narrative repeated through the entire Old Testament – the Israelites ditch God, and God welcomes them back. How have you seen this narrative play out in your own life?

PRAY: Praise God for his “illogical attachment to people who don’t deserve his grace” – including yourself!

TAKE IT FURTHER!

LISTEN: Listen to [Who You Are](#) by Bryan McCleery and celebrate God’s loving kindness.

Day 4-

READ: [Matthew 12:38-41](#)

REFLECT: Jesus warned the legalistic religious Pharisees that the “enemy” Ninevites were more righteous than them because the Ninevites were remorseful over their sin. The Pharisees on the other hand were so wrapped up in their religious practices that they had become blind to their own sin. Does your sin drive you to repentance? Why is repentance an important faith practice to do regularly?

PRAY: Confess sin in your life to God. Tell Him how you plan to turn away from that sin and walk in obedience and love.

TAKE IT FURTHER!

PRACTICE: For centuries Christians have recited many helpful prayers to turn their hearts back to God regularly. Find an old prayer of repentance online that you like, or use this Prayer of Confession from the Book of Common Prayer to guide your repentance:

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent, for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Day 5-

READ: [Jonah 4:5-11](#)

REFLECT: The book of Jonah ends with a question for religious people: Do you care about what God cares about most? It can be an uncomfortable question, but we see in this last chapter that God will make you uncomfortable to reveal what's in your heart. How would you answer the question "What does God care about most?" based on your reading of Jonah? Have you ignored or rejected the discomfort that God might be trying to use to reveal what's in your heart?

PRACTICE: Write down the question "Do I care about what God cares about most?" on the top of a piece of paper or journal page. Then take inventory – is the answer to that question "yes" or "no" when you reflect on your thoughts, your words, how you spend your time, the things you prioritize in your week, the people you invite into your life, and the way you interact with others on social media? How can you move your answers to "yes" in the areas where you're at a "no" or "not enough"?