



Stop Running: You Can Run...

Pastor Derek Sanford

November 1, 2020

Life Group Discussion

Encouragement: Share an example of God's mercy in your life; a time that you were disobedient in something He asked of you, but that He redeemed when you returned to Him.

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

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. Jonah was willing to travel a very long way in an attempt to avoid God's command and His presence in his life!

- Since the first sinful acts by Adam and Eve (Genesis 3), people have been trying to hide from God when they know they are outside His will for them. Why do you think that is?
- Despite all his efforts, how far from God did Jonah actually get? How successful was he in hiding from God? What do you think he was trying to accomplish?
- What did Jonah's run-away actions communicate about his actual heart toward God?
- What did God's pursuit say about His actual heart toward Jonah?
- Can you think of any times that you have tried to hide from God? What did that look like? How successful were you? What convinced you that being away from His presence would somehow be better?

Prayer: Read [Psalm 139](#) together. Ask God for fresh revelation of how well He knows us and how much He loves us, wherever we are.

Next Steps: Think about any areas of your life that you have not fully surrendered to God – maybe an area that you have refused to let Him speak into in the past. Challenge yourself to openly confess that area to Him and purpose to really listen to what He says.



STOP RUNNING: The Turnaround

Pastor Derek Sanford

November 8, 2020

Life Group Discussion

Encouragement: No matter what we do and where we run God will always take us back when we turn around. Think about when you accepted Christ and how it felt to be forgiven by Jesus.

Scripture: [Jonah 1:17](#) , [Jonah 2:1-10](#)

God sent a fish to swallow Jonah. He was able to focus on God because he had no distractions. In our day, we have so many distractions. How can we eliminate distractions to draw closer to God?

Derek reminds us to invite God's strength into our weakness. When we pray, we need to ask God to supply his Spirit to strengthen us in our weakness. Jonah's weakness was that he was in a position where only God could save him. Jonah prayed knowing his position. What is your position today?

How do we need to change our thinking? Jonah said those who trust in idols lose their hope. What idols do you trust in? How can we discard our "idols" and trust in God? What or who do you trust in for your salvation? Are you trusting in Government to save you, or in your own works? Jonah says, "Salvation belongs to the LORD!"

Prayer: Ask God to let you see things from his perspective. Pray for the Spirit of God to strengthen you and counsel you. Praise God for his salvation and all the ways he works in your life.

Next Steps: Do the next right thing to cause a Turnaround. Remove the things that distract you. Pray for wisdom and change your way of thinking.



STOP RUNNING: Second Chances

Pastor Derek Sanford

November 15, 2020

Life Group Discussion

Encouragement: This week we celebrated our wonderful, merciful, patient, and gracious God who gives “second chances” over and over again. What are your favorite second chance stories? (Your own or other’s)

Scripture: [Jonah 3:1-10](#)

1. The Big Idea of this week’s sermon was, “If God gives you a second chance, take it!” What do you think is at stake if you don’t take the second chance?
2. What does repentance involve? What does repentance look like?
3. How does our journey through first and second chances give us more opportunities to be used by God?
4. What does it reveal about the character of God that He gave Jonah, and He gives us, second chances?

Prayer: Have a group member read [Titus 3:3-8](#). How can we pray for the second chances you are seeking to say “Yes” to right now? What friends or family members need a second chance?

Next Steps: Where is God giving you a second chance? Does someone else in your life need a second chance- how can you pray for them, forgive them, encourage them, etc?



STOP RUNNING: An Illogical Attachment

Pastor Derek Sanford
November 22, 2020

Life Group Discussion

Encouragement: Ask your group to share examples of times when God provided good things for them when they definitely didn't deserve it.

Scripture: [Exodus 34:1-9](#)

Jonah quotes Exodus 34:6 when he explains why he didn't want to go to Nineveh (Jonah 4:2). This is ironic because in Exodus 34, God is giving the Israelites (Jonah's ancestors) yet another chance to remain in covenant with him after they abandoned him to worship an idol that they made out of gold given to them when they were miraculously freed from Egyptian slavery...talk about a slap in the face! God had extended mercy to the Israelites before and would continue to do so countless times after. Despite Israel's atrocious track record, Jonah believes that the Ninevites aren't deserving of the same forgiveness. His attitude toward Nineveh results in resentment toward God.

Why is it hard to see people you dislike receive a good thing from God?

What do our attitudes toward others tell us about our understanding of God? How about our understanding of ourselves?

How often do you think about your "enemies" being made in the image of God? How can you move toward treating everyone with the love that God has for them – be specific!

Prayer: Pray for your "enemies" or those who are hard to love, and ask God to give them good things.

Next Steps: Choose someone in your life who is hard to love and find a tangible way to extend grace to them this week.