



WOODLAND HEIGHTS CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Castaway: God's Relentless Pursuit of Redemption Part #1 – Running from God

Small Group Discussion Guide on Jonah 1:1-17

Woodland Heights Christian Church Core Value Connection

This sermon on Jonah 1:1-17 resonates deeply with the core value of **Discipleship** at Woodland Heights Christian Church. Discipleship is about growing into faithful followers who obey God's Word and live out His calling.

Jonah's story—a prophet running from God's mission—mirrors our own struggles to trust and follow the Lord during different seasons of life. Through this study, we'll learn to embrace God's purpose, as the sermon's Big Idea urges: *"Stop Running from the Calling of the Lord and Start Trusting in His Purpose and Plan for Your Life."* This aligns with our church's mission to "Reach, Teach, and Serve others for the Cause of Christ" as we seek to train disciples who reflect the love of Christ and live out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).

Section #1 – ENCOUNTER

"Observing God's Word"

Picture a seasoned sailor, weathered by years at sea, who spots a storm brewing on the horizon. He knows the signs—the dark clouds, the restless waves—and he's faced tempests before. But this time, he ignores the warnings, convinced he can outsmart the storm. He sets sail, only to find himself tossed by waves, his ship groaning under the weight of his choice. Friends, that sailor is Jonah—and sometimes, it's us. We hear God's call, sense His nudge, but we chart our own course, thinking we can outrun His plan. Yet, as Jonah learned, God's love pursues us through the fiercest storms, not to sink us, but to save us. Let's dive into Jonah's story and discover how God's relentless grace chases us down, even when we're sailing the wrong way.

Let's start by anchoring ourselves in Scripture. Read Jonah 1:1-17 (ESV) as a group, family, or an individual, letting God's Word sink in. Picture the scene: Jonah fleeing, the storm raging, the sailors trembling.

Core Questions

- Who are the key individuals in this story? What do their actions reveal?
- What are key words, phrases, or themes that grab your attention in this text?
- What is the main lesson or lessons that God wants you to remember from this passage?

Section #2 – EXPLORE

“Understanding the Passage and Sermon”

Let’s unpack Jonah’s story with questions that connect the sermon’s insights to our lives. Discuss these as a group or reflect on them as an individual.

Quote – “You can’t run away from God. The farther you go, the harder He pursues, because His love will not let you go.” – **D.L. Moody**

- Have you ever sensed God’s call in your life but resisted? What made you hesitate?

The Call and the Run (Jonah 1:1-3)

God’s command to Jonah was clear: “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it.” (Jonah 1:2).

- Why did Jonah run to Tarshish instead? What fears or excuses might have driven him?
- How does Jonah’s unique refusal as a prophet challenge us to examine our own response to God’s call for our own lives?

The Storm of Correction (Jonah 1:4-10)

God sent a storm to wake Jonah up physically and spiritually. The message related this important theme to remember in your life: *“Running from God’s call sends shockwaves beyond yourself.”*

- How did Jonah’s rebellion have a ripple effect on those around him? Can you think of a time your choices affected others?

The sailors sensed God’s divine fingerprints in the storm.

- What does this teach us about God’s sovereignty, even in our disobedience?

Reflect and respond to the lessons learned from a man who runs from his calling and commitment to the Lord.

Running from God’s call robs you of a sacred partnership.

When you run the Lord’s purpose, you miss the thrill of being His hands and feet in a world that needs Him.

Running from God’s call sends shockwaves beyond yourself.

Your choices, when you turn from God’s path have a ripple effect in the lives of those around you.

Running from God’s call erodes your integrity and trust.

When you abandon God’s mission, you sacrifice the trust others place in you and the honor of living out your calling.

God’s Grace in the Deep (Jonah 1:11-17)

Jonah told the sailors, “Pick me up and hurl me into the sea” (Jonah 1:12).

- Why do you think he offered himself? Was it despair, courage, or something else?

Quote – “No man can flee from God. He may run, but God is already where he is going.” – **A.W. Tozer**

The sermon states: “*The Compassion of the Lord is Revealed in Your ‘Big Fish Moments’ to Bring You Restoration and Redemption.*”

- How does the fish show God’s mercy, not punishment? Share a “big fish moment” where God redirected you through hardship.
- How does God use even our failures to draw others to Him?

Section #3 – EMBRACE

“Applying God’s Word”

Go deeper by exploring how Jonah 1:1-17 and the sermon’s insights can shape your life today. Discuss these application questions and commit to one actionable step this week.

Trusting God’s Plan

- What is one practical step you can take this week to say “yes” to God’s call instead of running from it? (e.g., praying for courage, seeking advice, taking a small step of obedience)

Recognizing God’s Grace

- Read Psalm 139:7-10 (the sermon’s memory verse). How does this passage reassure you of God’s presence and guidance, even in moments of rebellion or fear?

Impacting Others for the Lord

The sermon illustrates how Jonah’s story led others to encounter God.

- How can obedience to God’s call influence those around you (family, friends, coworkers)?
- Brainstorm one way your small group can “reach” others with the Gospel this week. (invite someone to church, use your gifts to serve in the church or community).

Prayer

Close your time by praying.

- Thank God for His relentless grace and pursuit of each person in the group.
- Ask for courage to obey His call and trust His plan.
- Pray for those in your life who are running from God, that they may encounter His love.