

THE RUNAWAY (PART 1)

(Check out <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mQsFutBsL9E> to see the message)

Do you remember as a kid, getting mad at your family or friends and announcing, “I AM RUNNING AWAY!” ?

I remember one time when I announced to my mom and dad I was leaving and never coming back! So, I grabbed by granola bar, a bag of chips, my Capri sun, jumped on my bike and took off into the woods behind my house! Now I was most likely gone for an hour at the most. Then I was lonely, scared and wanted my bed.

(Feel free to tell a story of a time when you ran away or wanted to!)

One man who is one of the most famous RUNAWAYS’ is Jonah!

When we hear about Jonah, usually our minds immediately conjure up the idea of “Jonah and the Whale.” I mean, it is quite incredible that a guy is swallowed by a whale and lives to tell the story. Our minds can’t imagine what it must have been like inside the belly of a great fish for THREE DAYS.

How many of you basically know the story of Jonah?

So, you pretty much know the story of Jonah. A lot of people do, the story of a guy who doesn’t do what God wants him to do. God puts him in the belly of a big whale. He lights a candle. The whale throws him up on shore, and he gets to be a real boy for the rest of his life. (Wait that’s a different whale story.)

The book of Jonah is a true story of a man who had some serious feelings about what God asked him to do. So, with that, let’s jump in:

Jonah 1:1-3.

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

The book of Jonah opens with God, telling Jonah “I want you to go to a certain city called Nineveh, and tell them about me!”

Jonah is commanded to leave the comfort of his own little city and to go somewhere, that he doesn’t want to go.

So, what does he do? He runs away, because he doesn’t want to listen.

Now when we are faced with a hard choice or asked to do something that we don't want to do, what do we do in that situation?

Jonah like a lot of us, loves God and wants to serve him, but we don't always want to listen to him.

Sometimes God is going to ask you to do something you don't want to do, but you should still do it!

He'll often ask you to do some things that you don't want to do, and often times the reason we don't want to do it is because we really like to believe that we know what is best.

One thing we love to do is convince people that we know what's better. Don't do this, do that.

Sometimes, someone in authority or someone with more knowledge will tell us what to do and we will say,

"I don't want to do that. I feel like I know what's best." (MY PARENTS, YOUR PARENTS)

A lot of times, we feel like we know what is best, and we don't want to obey when the Word of the Lord comes to us and Says, "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."

Now, you might wonder, "Well, okay, Jonah is a prophet and that is what he does. He preaches God's Word, so why didn't he just obey this very simple assignment?"

Well, Jonah was from Israel and Nineveh, was their enemy! Their sworn enemy!
"Israel hated the Ninevite's and vice versa"

The Syrian empire, of which Nineveh was the capital city, whenever it was rumored that the Assyrians would be attacking somebody, they were very brutal in the way they would handle the captives.

If the Assyrians captured you they would torture you and destroy your entire home.

Sometimes a whole town of people would just commit suicide, because they would rather die that way than experience what was coming. That's how feared the Assyrian empire was, and they were hated. Let me tell you a little bit about it. **(Totally up to you whether or not to say all this.)**

-They would go in and they would take over a city and destroy it all.

-They would kill children, rape and kill women.

-They would take the husbands, the men, they would take them outside the city and they would skin them alive.

-Then, once they were skinned, they would actually bury them in the desert's sand up to their necks.

-Then, they would take their tongues and they would pull their tongues out, and they would drive a stake through it, through their tongue. –Then they would make them listen to Taylor Swift 24/7 till they begged to die...

-Then once they were dead, they would behead them, take the heads and would make a pyramid of heads outside their city.

AND THIS IS THE CITY WHERE GOD WANTED TO JONAH TO GO...

When you know that, maybe you have a little more mercy for Jonah when he said, *“I don’t want to go there. I hate these people.”*

God asked him to go somewhere to do something, that he was honestly terrified to do, because he knew how EVIL these people were. JONAH WAS SAYING: GOD YOU WANT ME TO GO THERE BUT THOSE PEOPLE DO ALL THOSE EVIL THINGS, AND THEY BUILD THINGS WITH PEOPLES HEAD LIKE THEIR LEGOS. NO!

Now this is where it hits us-

The Word of the Lord will come to some of you, and you will hear specifically from God, “This is what I should do,” and in your mind, you may think, “Okay, I understand that’s what You want me to do, but I don’t want to do it! I don’t want to have anything to do with it.”

Perhaps, you can relate in different ways.

-Maybe someone has **wronged you** and hurt you, or hurt someone that you love, and the Word of the Lord comes to you, and the Word of the Lord, for you, is to forgive them – to forgive as you have been forgiven, and

you look and you go, “I don’t want to. They don’t deserve it. I don’t feel like forgiving them. I know that’s what God wants me to do, but I don’t want to do it.”

You’ve got a choice. A lot of people will say, “Well, I know that’s what God says, but I want to do this. I don’t care what God says. I want to do this.

Or maybe you decide that you just don’t want to go do what God asked you to do NOW but LATER. Okay, I know what I’m supposed to do, but I don’t want to do that now. ***I’ll do it later. I’ll do it later. I’ll get to it. I’ll get to it later.”***

Remember this. **Delayed obedience is still disobedience.**

Jonah said, “I don’t want to go there. I don’t want to have anything to do with those people. They make me angry.” So, the dude jumped into a boat and went the complete opposite direction.

-You can always find a boat sailing in the wrong direction. YOU CAN ALWAYS RUNAWAY!

You can always find a ship moving in the wrong way. Some of you know what I'm talking about. You say, "Hey, I want to obey God. I want to do what He's called me to do," and all of a sudden, your old buddy comes up and says, "Hey, don't do it that way. Let's go back to what we used to do. Hey, let's go back to the old life."

Watch how it happens here in Jonah. God says, "I want you to preach to the Ninevites." Verse 3, "But Jonah ran away from the Lord, then headed for Tarshish.

Why did he sail for Tarshish? Because he wanted to what? He wanted to ... He wanted to **run** from God. What did God say? God said, basically, "Go east to Nineveh," and Jonah said, "Uh, no, I'm going west to Tarshish."

Tarshish stood more than 2,500 miles from Israel in the opposite direction of Nineveh. It was the most remote destination available to Jonah. Jonah was trying to put as much distance as he could between himself and the place God called him to go. Whatever happened to Nineveh, Jonah would not be there to see it.

4 Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. 5 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.

Now because Jonah ran away from what he was called to, his disobedience not only impacted himself, but those around him.

Sometimes our disobedience is going to impact those around us! Disobedience does not just affect you but those around you as well.

A group of sailors on the ship find themselves in the middle of a storm. Sometimes our running causes all kinds of storms in our life and then others are pulled into the storm's path, because of us.

Now some of you might be sitting in your seats and you're beginning to think of your own life. ***Some of you, right now, you can relate.***

God has said "Here is what I want you to do!" Pray for that kid you hate, forgive that person that hurt you, pray for that person that curses you. And somewhere along the way, months or weeks or years back, you said, "No, no and you ran away."

-You've been on the run, and you think you can keep running.

You need to understand, you can run for a while, but you can't run forever because **God will**

always find you, because He's never left you.

We are separating ourselves from Him, we are just like Jonah.

We are looking for the way out, we want to go the opposite direction.

We are looking for that way out, because we don't feel like "those people" deserve to have God.

We are looking for that way out because we want to do what we want to do.

When you are on the run, doing the wrong thing, God may send a storm to grab your attention.

You might find yourself in a rough time, things are not going well, things aren't the way they should be. You feel like your whole life right is a storm. Well maybe a storm is the only way to get your attention.

Maybe as we start to think about Jonah, we can begin by remembering the times we have rebelled and run in the opposite direction.

LET'S STOP RUNNING FROM GOD AND START RUNNING TO GOD!

Possible Discussion Questions:

When was there a time that it was hard to be obedient to God?

Think of another situation where you did obey God... What was the difference between the two?

Are there people in your life that are hard to love or share Jesus with?

If God called Jonah to go to Nineveh, what might He be calling you to do?

We saw Jonah could not escape God's presence. Do you find this comforting or concerning? Why?