

Community Group Discussion Guide

Week 1 | Jonah 1:1-6 | The Runaway Prophet

Read the Passage: Read **Jonah 1:1-6** aloud together.

God's Heart & Jonah's Running

"Jonah wanted grace for himself, but not for the 'bad' people of Nineveh."

God calls Jonah toward Nineveh with His mercy, but Jonah runs the opposite direction. Jonah knows God is compassionate and merciful (Jonah 4:2) and that is precisely his problem. His running reveals something deeper happening in his heart: He wants God's grace for himself, but struggles with what that same grace means for people he believes do not deserve it.

Discussion Questions:

- What do verses 1–3 reveal about God's heart toward Nineveh and Jonah's heart toward Nineveh?
- Why do you think it can be easier to receive God's grace ourselves than to desire or extend that same grace toward others?
- Jonah's running was dramatic. Ours may be quieter. What can "running" from God look like in our everyday lives?

Down, Down, Down

"Running away from God always means running toward something else."

Jonah goes down to Joppa, down into the ship, and eventually down into a deep sleep. The movement paints a picture: Jonah is trying to escape God's presence and authority, but his running is not leading toward freedom. It is taking him down toward death. The same can be true of us. When we run from God, we inevitably run toward something else. Comfort, approval, control, safety, success, or even our own plans can become substitutes for trusting God. These things promise life, but they cannot ultimately give it.

Discussion Questions:

- What stands out to you about the repeated picture of Jonah going "down"?
- What are some things we tend to run toward when we are running from God?
- Where might comfort, approval, control, safety, or another desire be making it difficult for you to follow God or love others well?

The God Who Pursues Runners

"Like Jonah, we keep running. Yet God keeps pursuing us."

Though Jonah runs, God's grace runs after him. The Lord even uses a storm. Jonah is foolish and faithless, yet God remains faithful. Jonah resists God's compassion, yet God continues to show him compassion. Ultimately, Jonah points us toward the true and greater Jonah: Jesus. Jonah ran away from his enemies; Jesus moved toward His. Jonah went down in disobedience; Jesus willingly went down in love, taking our sin and judgment upon Himself so that we could have life.

Discussion Questions:

- What do verses 4–6 reveal about the ways God pursues Jonah even while Jonah is still running?
- How have you experienced God pursuing, interrupting, awakening, or redirecting you by His grace?
- How does Jesus moving toward us rather than away from us change the way we think about moving toward others?

From God's Pursuing Grace to God's Mission

Throughout this Jonah series, we want to grow together in seeing and loving the people God has already placed around us. Each week, we'll begin making space for a simple conversation around three questions:

- WHO? Who has God placed around me?
- HOW? How am I showing and telling the good news?
- HELP? How can we pray, encourage, or go together?

These questions are not a "evangelism scorecard" but rather a simple rhythm to help us notice what God is already doing, take faithful steps, and encourage one another along the way.

But before we start with WHO, we need to start with our own hearts.

Jonah reminds us that sometimes the greatest obstacle to moving toward others isn't knowing *what to do*, but understanding our hearts. Fear, comfort, approval, control, indifference, or even judgment can cause us to run the other direction.

This Week: Start with the Heart

This week, everyone is invited to work through Running & Returning: A Three-Day Journey of Heart Renewal through Jonah. Using the Three Rs, Reveal, Repent, Rejoice, we'll ask God to expose why we run, turn from the things we trust instead of Him, and rejoice again in the pursuing grace of Jesus. Let this week prime the pump. Before asking, *"Who should I reach?"* or *"What should I do?"* Instead, let's begin with: Where am I prone to run, and how does the pursuing grace of Jesus free me to move toward others in love?

Take up Prayer Requests & Close in Prayer