

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ are dependent on God for salvation (Acts 4:12).

SCRIPTURE

JONAH 1:1–16

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Jonah was a real person and prophet of God. He probably became quite popular after his prophecy about expanding Israel's borders under Jeroboam's rule came true (2 Kings 14:23–25). His name means "dove," and he is the only person named in the entire book.¹ We see that his response to God's first call to go to Nineveh was to run in the opposite direction to "flee...the presence of the LORD" (v. 1:3), the only Old Testament prophet recorded attempting to run from God. As a prophet of God, Jonah surely would have known the impossibility of such an attempt (Psalm 139:7–12), so this running from God might be Jonah running from his position as prophet.²

Check out the *Teacher Prep Video* for this lesson: <https://vimeo.com/1065876626>



OPENING

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

-
-

GAME or ICE BREAKER

Based on your group's size, choose a **Game** from **Deep Discipleship Games** OR use the **Ice Breaker** prompt.

- **Game**—We recommend **Bordering States** or choose another screen game from **Deep Discipleship Games**
- **Ice Breaker**—What rule (family/school/team) do you break the most?

WORSHIP

Craft a time of worship with a live band or sing along to a playlist.

- Check out our curated Spotify list. We understand that every church has a different theological view of worship. These songs are suggestions, please pick what works best for your church.
- <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/2xmeIKGUjkEE7bJYSCbRwe?si=d254ec715a4749e5>

MEDIA AS STUDENTS ARRIVE

1. Play background music (optional)
2. Display **SERIES TITLE Slide** and announcement slides in a loop or customize the provided **PowerPoint**.
3. Play a 5-minute Countdown Timer 5:00 minutes before you start.

DEEP DISCIPLESHIP GAMES

Find free games in **Deep Discipleship Games**. It's already included with your Deep Discipleship subscription. View the game in advance in case you need supplies or slides.

SLIDES (optional)

Use **SERIES Background & Blank Slides** or **PowerPoint** to create lyric slides.

TRANSITION TO MESSAGE

Include a brief element that transitions students from worship to teaching time, like a prayer or video. This will keep students focused and prepared for the message while the band leaves the stage.

VIDEO (optional)

Show **SERIES Promo Video** or **LESSON Intro Video** after the last worship song.

MESSAGE

Use the following teaching points and suggested illustrations as a starting point to build your message.

POINT 1: Disobedience leads us “down”

Read or have someone in your group read Jonah 1:1–3, 5 and 2:6

God gave Jonah a clear message with clear instructions. This means that when Jonah headed to Joppa, in the opposite direction of where the Lord was sending him, he was not making an accidental mistake. Jonah deliberately disobeyed “the word of the LORD” (v.1).

ILLUSTRATION: Tell a personal story about a time you accidentally did something wrong. Then, tell a story about a different time when you did something wrong intentionally.

Verse three shows us that Jonah was not only being deliberately disobedient by running, but he was also trying to run from, “the presence of the LORD.” This was obviously a very bad idea. Look at the language the Bible uses to describe Jonah’s actions. Jonah went “down” to Joppa (v. 3), “down” into the inner part of the ship (v. 5), and “down” into the depths (v. 2:6). Going against God’s Word will always lead us down to the places we shouldn’t be. The longer Jonah ran, the worse his circumstances got.

SLIDES (optional)

Use the **SERIES PowerPoint OR the Background & Blank Slides** to create these slides to support your message:

- Jonah 1:1–3, 5 and 2:6
- Point 1

POINT 2: Disobedience leads God to speak to Jonah differently

Read or have someone in your group read Jonah 1:4–6, 17

God first speaks to Jonah in this chapter like one person speaks to another—words and conversation. When Jonah refused to listen, God chose a few different methods to get Jonah’s attention. First, God sent a mighty storm, one strong enough to destroy the boat Jonah was in (v. 4). Jonah ignored it. God then chose to send unbelievers to get Jonah to turn to God (v. 6). It is a sad day when someone who does not know God, the captain, is the one suggesting that a prophet of God, Jonah, pray. Finally, God sent a huge fish to catch Jonah’s attention.

When we choose to ignore God’s Word in our lives, he may choose more aggressive methods of getting our attention. C.S. Lewis once wrote, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” God speaks to us like a loving Father, but if his message falls on deaf ears, he may use pain as a megaphone we can’t ignore.

SLIDES (optional)

- Jonah 1:4–6, 17
- Point 2



POINT 3: Our disobedience affects more than us

Read or have someone in your group read Jonah 1:7–10

Jonah’s choice to go against God’s Word did not just bring consequences upon himself. His selfish decisions had a negative impact on those around him.

ILLUSTRATION: Tell a personal story about a time you made a selfish choice that hurt you and those close to you.

Sometimes we convince ourselves that our sin hurts only us. This is rarely the case. Too often, our sinful choices bring pain to those closest to us.

SLIDES (optional)

- Jonah 1:7–10
- Point 3

POINT 4: God used Jonah’s disobedience to bring about good and his glory

Read or have someone in your group read Jonah 1:11–16

God is good, and his ways are good (Psalms 119:68). Beyond our understanding, God is good and can redeem our worst actions to bring about good (Genesis 50:20). God used the circumstances of a disobedient Jonah to open the eyes of pagan sailors. These men who did not know God now fear him as LORD and offer vows and sacrifices to him as God.

SLIDES (optional)

- Jonah 1:11–16
- Point 4

CLOSING

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ are dependent on God for salvation (Acts 4:12).

SLIDES (optional)

- Mark of a Disciple

FACILITATOR NOTE: DO YOU HAVE SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION RIGHT AWAY?

- If YES, then **STOP HERE**, divide into groups, and provide Small Group Leaders with the **Small Group Breakout Questions** on the next page.
- If NO, then end your gathering with the **Reflect & Respond** questions and **Prayer** prompt below.

REFLECT & RESPOND

Give the students time to silently think through what they have heard and contemplate these questions:

- Are there areas in your life where you are running from God?
- What consequences do you think you have faced because of deliberate disobedience to the Lord?

SLIDES (optional)

Use the **SERIES PowerPoint** OR the **Background & Blank Slides** to display the **Reflect & Respond** questions.

FACILITATOR NOTE: Don’t rush this part. Give the students a few minutes to really consider how their choices to follow God impact themselves and those around them.

PRAYER

Take time to pray for your students to trust God with every aspect of their lives and to follow his calling.



SMALL GROUP BREAKOUT (OPTIONAL)

Pick a few questions from each section to discuss. Close with prayer.

BREAKOUT QUESTIONS

Build Meaningful Relationships

- **In what areas /times of your life have you knowingly disobeyed/run from God?**
Answers will vary. Come prepared to share examples from your life.
- **Why do you think it is so easy to run from God or choose our way over his?**
We are born with a sinful nature (Psalms 51:5), which means our natural desire is towards sin. We are all guilty of it (Romans 3:23). However, God is good. As we grow closer to him, he molds us to be more like his Son, Jesus (Romans 8:29).

Share Personal Stories & Ask Intentional Questions

- **Is it hard or easy to turn back to God after you've strayed away from him? Explain your answer.**
Answers will vary for each person. Sometimes, we are so desperate for forgiveness that we run to God (Luke 7:37–38). Sometimes, we are so ashamed of our sin that we hide from God (Adam and Eve—Genesis 3:8).
- **How has God shown you mercy and grace through your disobedience?**
Answers will vary but could include: he forgave me when I didn't deserve it, he sent a friend/mentor to open my eyes to my sin, etc.
- **The fact that Jonah could sleep while running from God shows that he did not feel too bad about it. Why is not feeling bad about our sin such a dangerous thing?**
The Holy Spirit convicts us (lets us know it's wrong) when we sin (John 16:8). When we ignore the Holy Spirit and continue the same sin, our hearts grow harder. This makes them less sensitive to the Holy Spirit's guidance and leads us further from God.
- **How do you think their time with Jonah changed the lives of the sailors?**
We cannot know for sure, but because they offered a sacrifice and made vows (vs. 16); it's likely they continued to worship Jonah's God as THE God, or at least tried to learn more about who God is.

Make Life Application & Hold Students Accountable

- **In what ways did God show his continual pursuit of Jonah? What does this teach us about God?**
He sent a storm, the sailors told Jonah to pray, and he sent a big fish—all to get Jonah to turn back to God. God never gives up on his people or quits loving them.
- **Why would God still choose to use Jonah after his constant disobedience? What does this mean for us?**
God loves us more than we can understand and for some reason, chooses to use us despite our failures and unfaithfulness. Even though we are broken, God can use us in his Kingdom.

PRAYER

Take time to pray for your students to trust God with every aspect of their lives and to follow his calling.
Use this space to keep track of any prayer requests.

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright ©2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. May not copy or download more than 500 consecutive verses of the ESV Bible or more than one half of any book of the ESV Bible.

Any reference within this piece to Internet addresses of websites not under the administration of LeaderTreks is not to be taken as an endorsement of these websites by LeaderTreks; neither does LeaderTreks vouch for their content.

¹ Hannah, J. D. (1985). Jonah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 1460–1461). Victor Books.

² Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Jon 1). Victor Books.

