

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>



FACILITATOR NOTE: We've giving you a lot of teaching material. Don't feel like you should cover everything here. You know your group better than anyone. Choose the material that will best fit your students and skip over the rest.

OPENING

PRAYER

Start your small group by asking the Lord to bless your discussion and time together.

OPTIONAL: Give students an opportunity to lead the prayer.

1–2 minutes

OPENING QUESTIONS

- How was the week? What's the best thing that's happened? Anything major going on?
- What rule (family/school/team) do you break the most?

3–5 minutes



EXPLORE

EXPLORE GOD'S WORD

3–5 minutes

Jonah made some deliberate choices that went against God's word and will. He purposely disobeyed God's direction. Instead of giving up on Jonah and choosing someone else to carry out his message to Nineveh, God continued to pursue Jonah. The Lord even used Jonah's disobedience to reach a lost group of sailors. Because of his great love and forgiveness, God chases after his people and chooses to use us despite our moments of unfaithfulness.

Read Jonah 1:1–3 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- In what areas/times of your life have you knowingly disobeyed or ran 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).

- 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, we hide from God (Adam and Eve—Genesis 3:8).



Say something like: God loves us and wants to have a relationship with us. When we make choices to damage that relationship, we should be quick to turn back toward him for forgiveness.

Read Jonah 1:4–10 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- How has God shown your 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 didn't 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.

- 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.



Say something like: God is faithful to us even when we are unfaithful to him. His love and mercy are truly unconditional. His treatment of us is not dependent on our treatment of him. These are just a couple of the amazing qualities that make God so good.

FACILITATOR NOTE: If you have extra time, go through the next set of questions. If not, skip to the **Connection** section.

Read Jonah 1:11–16 and discuss 1–2 of these questions:

7–10 minutes

- How do you think their time with Jonah changed the lives of the sailors?

We can't 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.

- 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.



Say something like: God can use all things, even disobedience, to his glory and people's good (Genesis 50:20). This means our failures and past mistakes don't eliminate us from being used for God's purpose and serving in God's Kingdom.



CONNECT & APPLY

CONNECTION

5-7 minutes

Show your students how Scripture connects to their lives: Use the example below OR share a personal story where you were given multiple chances to get something right.



Example: Jesus told a parable that we refer to as the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-24). In this story, a wayward son takes his father's inheritance before his father has even died and leaves home to live the life he wants to live. His poor choices quickly lead to him squandering his inheritance, leaving him penniless and desperate. When he returns home to seek his father's forgiveness, his father not only forgives his son but celebrates his return.

- In what ways have you walked away from God like the prodigal son? How do you think God responds to your return to him?

Answers will vary. This parable is more about the loving father than the son. Much like the father in this story, heaven celebrates when we repent and seek God (Luke 15:10).

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

2-3 minutes

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

Use the Mark of a Disciple to reinforce the lesson and challenge students to apply it to their lives.

APPLY IT

5-10 minutes

Who is your accountability partner? Find a trusted friend you can give permission to tell you hard truths. Those close to us who love us may notice our disobedience to the Lord quicker than we do.



Be specific:

- What are you going to do?
- When are you going to do it?
- Is there someone who can keep you accountable?



FACILITATOR NOTE: Allow students who are comfortable to share their plans for application. This may encourage or spark ideas for other students, plus add a level of accountability.



CLOSING**PRAYER**

2–3 minutes

Take a moment to ask for prayer requests. Spend some time praying that your students turn toward God instead of hiding when they've been disobedient.

Write down any prayer requests mentioned and ask your students about them at your next meeting.

MEMORY VERSE

Send the memory verse graphic included in your download to your students later this week to keep the conversation going.

"Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Luke 15:10 (ESV)

NOTES

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.

