



# Running Man - Jonah 1:1-17

## Introduction for Leaders

This study is not primarily about the fish. Jonah 1 is about God's call, human resistance, and God's relentless mercy.

The aim is not to get people talking about historical details, but to help them honestly reflect on where they may be resisting God's direction in their lives and how God lovingly pursues us even when we run.

Some questions may touch on sensitive areas. Allow space for silence. Don't rush to fill every gap. Encourage honesty without pressuring anyone to share more than they are comfortable sharing.

## Opening Question

Think about a time when you knew you should do something, but kept putting it off.

What made it difficult?

What happened when you finally dealt with it?

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## Read Together

Read Jonah 1:1-17.

As you read, notice:

- What Jonah does
  - What God does
  - What the sailors do
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## Part 1: Running from God's Call

### Read Jonah 1:1-3

God calls Jonah to go to Nineveh, but Jonah heads in the opposite direction.

The issue is not simply fear or inconvenience.

Jonah knows that God is merciful and does not want Nineveh to receive that mercy.

## **Discuss**

1. Why do you think Jonah reacted so strongly to God's command?
2. What stands out to you about Jonah choosing Tarshish, the furthest destination available?
3. The message suggested: "There will always be a boat heading to Tarshish."

What do you think that means?

1. Have you ever mistaken an easy or convenient option for God's will?

## **Reflect**

Are there areas where you know what God is asking, but you've been choosing an easier alternative?

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## **Part 2: The Cost of Running**

### **Read Jonah 1:4-10**

Jonah's decision appears personal, but it creates consequences for everyone around him.

The sailors experience the storm even though they had nothing to do with Jonah's disobedience.

## **Discuss**

1. Why do we often convince ourselves that our choices only affect us?
2. In what ways can spiritual drift impact those around us?
3. Jonah is asleep while everyone else is fighting for survival. What might his sleep represent spiritually?
4. Can you think of examples where avoiding something important has affected relationships, family, church, or community?

## **Reflect**

Is there an area where your withdrawal, avoidance, or reluctance might be affecting others more than you realise?

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## Part 3: The Turning Point

### Read Jonah 1:11-17

One of the most significant moments in the chapter comes when Jonah admits: "It is my fault."

Before repentance comes honesty.

Before change comes ownership.

### Discuss

1. Why is admitting fault often so difficult?
2. How does taking responsibility open the door to healing and change?
3. What surprises you about the sailors' response to God compared with Jonah's response?
4. What might the author be teaching us through the contrast between Jonah and the sailors?

### Reflect

The sermon described Jonah as having correct theology but an unaligned heart.

Have there been times when you knew the right things about God but struggled to live in line with them?

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## God's Mercy for Runners

The fish is often seen as punishment. But in many ways it is rescue.

God refuses to abandon Jonah to his rebellion.

The same mercy Jonah wanted withheld from Nineveh is the mercy that pursues Jonah.

### Read Psalm 103:8

"The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love."

## Discuss

1. How do you see God's mercy throughout Jonah 1?
  2. What does this chapter teach us about God's character?
  3. Why is it good news that God doesn't simply leave us where we are?
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## Application: Three Invitations

Take a few moments of quiet reflection.

Consider these three questions:

### 1. Name Your Nineveh

What conversation, step of obedience, act of forgiveness, or opportunity has God been putting before you?

### 2. Name Your Boat

What convenient alternative, distraction, or excuse have you been using to avoid obedience?

### 3. Wake Up

Where have you become spiritually passive, disconnected, or simply going through the motions?

If appropriate, share one area with the group and invite prayer.

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## Prayer

Spend time praying for one another.

Ask God for:

- Courage to obey
- Grace to stop running
- Wisdom to recognise the "boats to Tarshish"
- Hearts that reflect God's mercy
- Confidence that God's pursuit of us is rooted in love

Close by thanking God that He is already ahead of our running, and that His mercy reaches us wherever we are.