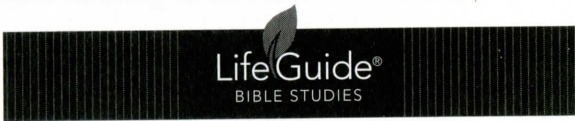


OLD TESTAMENT CHARACTERS

12 STUDIES FOR INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS



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Jonah: Running from God

Jonah 1:1—3:3

Sometimes we are reluctant to do God's will. We find it inconvenient. We are too busy. We feel uncomfortable. At such times we are tempted to ignore God and hope he goes away. When he doesn't disappear, we may even try to run from him.

GROUP DISCUSSION. Describe a few present-day scenarios of someone "running from God."

PERSONAL REFLECTION. Why are you sometimes reluctant to do God's will?

What false notions of God might play a part in your thinking?

Jonah had his own reasons for running from God's will. His experience challenges us to view our reluctance in a new light. Jonah, much like the people of Israel around him, had little compassion for the people of Nineveh, their enemies. Nonetheless God called him to move toward those he hated. *Read Jonah 1:1-16.*

1. What does God command Jonah to do and why (1:1-2)?

2. Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, was the most feared and hated of Israel's oppressors. How does this help us to understand Jonah's response (1:3)?

3. When have you been tempted to run from God?

4. Tarshish (1:3), traditionally identified as Spain, was at the opposite end of the known world. Why do you think Jonah chose to go there?

5. What does Jonah's disobedience teach us about the nature of sin?

6. God sends a violent storm (v. 4) to block Jonah's rebellious flight. What effect does the storm have on the sailors and on Jonah (vv. 5-16)?

7. Read *Jonah 1:17—2:9*. Describe the terrifying sequence of events after Jonah was thrown overboard.

8. In what ways does God get your attention when you run away from him?

9. Why must we often sink so low before we have a change of heart?

10. Read *2:10—3:3*. After being vomited onto dry land, how do you think Jonah felt when the word of the Lord came to him a second time?

11. In what ways has God "come to you a second time" in your life?

12. How does the portrait of God in these chapters encourage you to obey him?

Ask the Lord to forgive you for any areas in your life where you might be running from him. Affirm your commitment to obey him.

Now or Later

Read the parable of the talents found in *Matthew 25:14-30*. What additional insight does Jesus give for what it means to "run from God"?