

"A Whale of a Tale"

I. God says "effect", Jonah says "defect." (1:1-3)

Looking at Jonah.

1. Why did God send Jonah to Ninevah?

- | | |
|---|--|
| F a. for a vacation. | F h. God wanted to give the Ninevites a chance to bake Jonah in the sun. |
| F b. so Jonah could get away from his family | T i. God needed a messenger & chose Jonah |
| T c. God had something for him to accomplish | F j. God needed some fishbait! |
| ? d. To test Jonah's obedience | T k. to direct the Ninevites away from their path toward destruction. |
| F e. To punish Jonah's disobedience | ? l. Jonah could get his relationship right w/ God |
| F f. Jonah had some free time to waste. | |
| F g. God didn't send Jonah, this is an allegory | |

Option k is the primary reason God sent Jonah. Jonah's name literally means "dove," a bird traditionally used as a messenger, as well as, a symbol of peace. God is merciful, but he is also just. The Ninevites later went back to their wicked ways and God destroyed them. (See II Kings 14:25) At the time of Jonah it was a large Gentile city, about 60 miles in circumference and contained about 600,000 people. Ninevah was the capital city of Assyria. Assyria was one of the most cruel and brutal nations in the ancient world. They thought nothing of burying their enemies alive, skinning them alive, or impaling them on sharp poles under the hot sun until they died of sunburn and exposure.

Jonah's hometown was Gath-heper in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, about four miles north of Nazareth. He was the Son of Amittai, of whom nothing more is known. His approximate dates of ministry were 782-753 BC.

Other biblical references to Jonah seem to indicate that this is a true account. There are also documented accounts of men who have been swallowed and lived for 2 days inside a whale and lived to tell the story. In Luke 11:29-32, and Matthew 12:39-41, Jesus refers to the story as a fact.

2. How do you think Jonah felt after hearing "the word of the Lord" instructing him to go to Ninevah?

- | | | |
|----------------|---------------------|--|
| F a. betrayed | F g. confident | ? m. Content where he is. |
| T b. confused | T h. uncomfortable | T n. in capable of the task |
| T c. scared | T i. unenthusiastic | F o. "I'll make a fool of myself" |
| T d. Why me? | T j. unprepared | T p. "I don't want to make waves." |
| T e. angry | T k. unqualified | T q. "I don't see why it's necessary." |
| T f. skeptical | F l. unnecessary | r. Other: _____ |

We are not told explicitly how Jonah felt, but we can guess based upon his actions. Those actions thought most probable have been marked as true, those improbable as false.

3. Tarshish was about 2000 miles in the opposite direction of Ninevah. Why do you think Jonah ran way?

- | | |
|---|--|
| T a. He was afraid of what would happen if he obeyed God. | F g. He thought God made a mistake. |
| T b. He was afraid it would end his life if he obeyed | T h. He was rebellious. |
| T c. He thought he could get away from God. | F i. He remembered something he had forgotten to do. |
| T d. He thought if he was gone, God might forget | T j. Obeying God was too difficult. |
| T e. He wasn't ready to trust God that much yet | T k. He didn't want to give things up |
| F f. He was afraid of what friends would think | F l. He forgot about God's task. |

We are not told explicitly why Jonah ran away though from what we can glean of Jonah and what we know of Ninevah we can make some guesses. Those reasons thought most probable have been marked as true, those improbable as false.



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| c. God had something for him to accomplish | j. God needed some fishbait! |
| d. To test Jonah's obedience | k. to direct the Ninevites away from their path toward destruction. |
| e. To punish Jonah's disobedience | l. So Jonah could get his relationship right w/ God |
| f. Jonah had some free time to waste. | |
| g. God didn't send Jonah, this is an allegory | |

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| b. He was afraid it would end his life if he obeyed | h. He was rebellious. |
| c. He thought he could get away from God. | i. He remembered something he had forgotten to do. |
| d. He thought if he was gone, God might forget | j. Obeying God was too difficult. |
| e. He wasn't ready to trust God that much yet | k. He didn't want to give things up |
| f. He was afraid of what friends would think | l. He forgot about God's task. |

4. What do you think Jonah thought the consequences of his actions would be on himself? God? Ninevah? Others?

Looking at Ourselves

5. How do we as Christians hear "the word of the Lord" today?

6. Why is it important for Christians to hear and know what God is saying?

7. Is hearing God's word and knowing God's Word enough? Explain.

8. Why did you come to this camp?

- | | |
|--|---|
| a. for a vacation. | g. You're not really here. You're day dreaming |
| b. to get away from your family? | h. You wanted a chance to bake in the sun. |
| c. because God had something for you to get accomplished here? | i. God needed a messenger and you were his choice |
| d. because God wants to test you? | j. You came as fishbait! |
| e. because God wants to punish you. | k. to direct you away from your path toward destruction |
| f. You had some free time to waste | l. So you could get your relationship right with God |
| | m. Other _____ |

9. What are some Ninevah's to which God might send Christians today?

Student Page I.

Student Page

Student Page

Student Page

Student Page

Student Page

Student Page

4. What do you think Jonah thought the consequences of his actions would be on himself? God? Ninevah? Others?

Though there are many possible answers to this question, Jonah was probably not thinking about the consequences of his actions on others at the time.

Looking at Ourselves

5. How do we as Christians hear "the word of the Lord" today?

Possible answers are: Bible, Pastor, Prayer, Other Christians, Circumstances, Church, Church activities, gut feeling, etc.

6. Why is it important for Christians to hear and know what God is saying?

Possible answers: so we know what to do, clues us to what is ahead, tells us when we are wrong.

7. Is hearing God's word and knowing God's Word enough? Explain.

No, you have to obey it.

8. Why did you come to this camp?

- a. for a vacation.
- b. to get away from your family?
- c. because God had something for you to get accomplished here?
- d. because God wants to test you?
- e. because God wants to punish you.
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- k. to direct you away from your path toward destruction
- l. So you could get your relationship right with God
- m. Other _____

The students are given several choices that directly correlate with the questions asked of Jonah. The idea is to get the students to examine the story of Jonah and relate it to themselves. It is to get them out of the realm of just "knowledge" and into seeing how scripture applies to that they can live a life of obedience. You might have each youth write their choice anonymously on a notecard to give you an indication of your group.

9. What are some Ninevah's to which God might send Christians today?

Possible answers: family, dealing with drugs, alcohol, eating disorders, or sex in one's personal life, school, life as a missionary, non-Christian friends, taking a stand for Christ, living for Christ, etc.



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 - g. God didn't send Jonah, this is an allegory
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 - l. So Jonah could get his relationship right w/ God

Student Page

2. How do you think Jonah felt after hearing "the word of the Lord" instructing him to go to Ninevah?

- a. betrayed
- b. confused
- c. scared
- d. Why me?
- e. angry
- f. skeptical
- g. confident
- h. uncomfortable
- i. unenthusiastic
- j. unprepared
- k. unqualified
- l. unnecessary
- m. Content where he is.
- n. in capable of the task
- o. "I'll make a fool of myself"
- p. "I don't want to make waves."
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- r. Other: _____

Student Page

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- c. He thought he could get away from God.
- d. He thought if he was gone, God might forget
- e. He wasn't ready to trust God that much yet
- f. He was afraid of what friends would think
- g. He thought God made a mistake.
- h. He was rebellious.
- i. He remembered something he had forgotten to do.
- j. Obeying God was too difficult.
- k. He didn't want to give things up
- l. He forgot about God's task.

Student Page

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Student Page

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6. Why is it important for Christians to hear and know what God is saying?
7. Is hearing God's word and knowing God's Word enough? Explain.

Student Page

8. Why did you come to this camp?

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- k. to direct you away from your path toward destruction
- l. So you could get your relationship right with God
- m. Other _____

Student Page

9. What are some Ninevah's to which God might send Christians today?

10. How do you feel after hearing "the word of the Lord" to go to your "Ninevah?"

see student guide for options. Encourage youth to share how they feel. You might take several of the possible Ninevah's identified in question #9 and have youth share what they might feel if that had been the Ninevah to which God called them.

11. How do people run away from God today?

Don't go to church, don't read their Bible, stop praying, substitute something else for God, avoid Christians, rebel, violence, literally run away etc.

12. In what areas of your life are you now running from God?

Youth may be running away from many things: School pressure, family conflicts, relationships, or may just desire to do things that they know are wrong. When we run from God, we may not always run away to do wrong. We might run away to do good. The problem is that we are not where God wants us to be. Most of the time when we sin it is because we are not where we are supposed to be. (e.g. David was on the rooftop instead of the battlefield, and got himself into trouble with Bathsheba.) You are safer in a danger zone if God wants you to be there than in a comfortable area that God does not want you to be.

13. When you run away from what God wants you to do, why do you run away?

(See student page for specific options) You might ask this as a general question first i.e. What are some of the reasons youth run away from what God wants them to do?

14. What do you think the consequences of your actions are on yourself? God? Others? Have there been times in the past when you ran away from something? What were the consequences?

15. Can someone really run away from God? Explain. (Psalm 139:7ff)

We cannot run away from God. We can shut off our relationship with him though.

16. God wants to have an effect on the world using you in your "Ninevah". Are you defecting from God's plan for your life? God says effect, what do you say?

Be sure youth have identified their own personal "Ninevah." before answering this question. In what area of life do they need to become obedient so God can use them?

Page 2

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11. How do people run away from God today?

12. In what areas of your life are you now running from God?

13. When you run away from what God wants you to do, why do you run away?

- | | |
|--|---|
| a. I'm afraid of what would happen if I obey | f. I forget about God's task. |
| b. I am afraid it will end my old way of life if I obey. | g. I think God made a mistake. |
| c. I think I can get away from God | h. I am rebellious. |
| d. I think that if I'm gone, God might forget | i. I remember something I had forgotten to do |
| e. I am not ready to trust God that much yet. | j. Obeying God is too difficult. |
| | k. I don't want to give things up. |
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Student Page

Student Page

Student Page

Student Page

Student Page

Student Page

Student Page