

"Walking Away"

Lesson Passage:

Jonah 1-2

Lesson Focus: The children will learn that walking away from God only leads to trouble but God is always ready for us to turn back to Him.

Key Verses: 1:3, 2:1-2, 7

Lesson Intro: Print out a picture of a wasp, and a bull if possible. Start with this true camp story.

One summer at a camp in Monterrey, Mexico a man discovered the hard way what happens when you decide to do your own thing instead of doing what you are told. Part of the rules of that camp was that no one was to leave the camp without permission. Near the camp there was a small neighborhood with a store. If you were driving it would only take five minutes or less going up and down some dirt roads. But if you walked you could cut through some of the woods and farms nearby making the store within walking distance. One of the campers had decided that he would sneak off and go to the store without asking permission. The camp director would not have ever know what this camper did. Except that that evening the camper came back asking for forgiveness. He had snuck out, but he had not gotten away with it. While cutting through the woods the camper had encountered wasps which chased and stung him. In addition, on the same trip he had jumped a fence to cut through only to get chased by a bull. The camper realized he had not done what he was told and was sure all that had happened to him was evidence of how wrong he was. Sounds maybe like a funny story. Maybe like a crazy story. But how many times have we ended up in a lot of trouble like this camper because we did not do what we were told? Let us look at the story from the Bible today and see what happened to our Bible character when he tried to do his own thing.

Story Outline

- I. The Perfect Plan. Jonah 1:1-2
- II. The Prophet's Plan. Jonah 1:3-5
- III. The Pressing Problem. Jonah 1:6-11
- IV. The Passive Prophet. Jonah 1:12-17
- V. The Prophet's Prayer. Jonah 2

Story Overview

God had something planned for Jonah the prophet. The prophet Jonah decided to follow his own plan. Jonah discovered that his choice was wrong. Jonah at a low point of his disobedience turned to God in prayer. God responded to the disobedient Jonah.

Start with the story of Jonah in Jonah 1-2

I. The Perfect Plan. Jonah 1:1-2

Jonah was a prophet, a man who God spoke to directly. God would give His message to Jonah and Jonah would tell the message to the people who God wanted to reach with His message. Prophets were known as men of God. One day God came to Jonah with a message He wanted him to deliver to the people of Nineveh. It was an urgent and important message. So, God spoke directly to Jonah and told him what he needed to do. What an opportunity Jonah had once again to go and speak on behalf of God.

There is nothing better than to be walking with God and doing what God wants you to do. There is no better plan or purpose for us than that which God has. Just like Jonah we have the opportunity to do what God has created us to do for Him.

II. The Prophet's Plan. Jonah 1:3

God had spoken to Jonah and he was to go and do what God planned for him. But Jonah decided he would do his own thing. Jonah decided to run away, flee, from the plan that God had. Jonah came up with his own plan so that he would not have to do what God wanted him to do. It is interesting that twice it is mentioned that Jonah very specifically had determined to flee from the presence of the Lord. God is everywhere but Jonah did not want to be in the plan and way that God had commanded him to follow. So, he made a plan and paid for a trip on a ship to try to sail away from what God had commanded.

We hear the story of Jonah and maybe we think of how wrong he was. But it is true that we are sometimes the same as Jonah. Perhaps God does not send us to Nineveh. Still we know many things that God commands us and that we ought to do but we come up with a plan to run away. Maybe you have come up with a plan to not obey your parents. You have come up with a plan on how you are going to lie. You have come up with a plan on how to convince your parents not to have you pray or read the Bible. So many things that we too try to walk away from that God has commanded us.

III. The Pressing Problem. Jonah 1:5-11

Jonah thought he had succeeded. He was on a ship to Tarshish. He had gone down into the boat to take a nap. He was not worried and had not thought of what his disobedience would bring. But immediately God had a plan to get the attention of Jonah. The Lord sent a storm. Not just any storm but a storm that seemed would tear the boat apart. The people on the boat were terrified trying to keep the boat from sinking and figuring out why this was happening. Interestingly they all suspected someone was at fault for this to be happening. So, this was no ordinary storm. However somehow Jonah laid asleep on the boat. Jonah was not worried one bit of what could happen from his disobedience which he had done on purpose. They came to Jonah told him to wake up and start praying. They had all been calling on their fake gods and were hoping maybe one of them would answer and help. They tried to figure out with their own methods whose fault this might be. They concluded it was the fault of Jonah. When they asked Jonah who he was it was confirmed that it was his fault. Jonah did not seem to feel bad in any way for what he had done. He told them about his true God and how he had decided to walk away from His command. They asked Jonah what they should do to stop it all.

Often, we think that walking away from God and what He wants us to do is no big deal. We think that our plan will work and that nothing is going to happen. Yet we learn from this story that there can be dangerous consequences when we decide to do our own thing.

IV. The Passive Prophet. Jonah 1:12-17

Jonah knew that this horrible storm and situation was his fault. Jonah decided that the solution was to throw Jonah into the sea. The people did not see it that easy. They did not want Jonah to possibly die. They tried to figure out other ways but, in the end, they decided to throw Jonah in the sea. But before they did that, they did something Jonah had refused to do. They prayed to God to ask for forgiveness for what they were about to do with Jonah. They recognized that it was God who was doing this because of the bad decision Jonah made to walk away. Then they proceeded to throw Jonah in. Jonah never did what they did. Jonah never prayed to God. Jonah never asked for forgiveness. He would rather be thrown in the sea than go to talk to God. When Jonah was thrown into the sea the storm stopped. Perhaps Jonah thought that this would end it all because of his disobedience. But God was not done with Jonah as Jonah thought. God sent a big fish.

How often we are like Jonah. We know that what happens to us is because we have decided to disobey. We know that we have on purpose walked away from God and what He wants us to do. Yet just like Jonah we refuse to go to God and make it right. We refuse or won't say sorry to our parents for our disobedience. We refuse to admit our lie. We refuse to do what we should do to make things right.

V. The Prophet's Prayer. Jonah 2

Somewhere inside in the darkness of the belly of the fish Jonah came to his senses. Perhaps Jonah had thought that being thrown into the sea would be the end. But God was not done with Jonah. Jonah had on purpose disobeyed and walked away from God and what He wanted him to do. But out there in the middle of the sea inside the belly of a big fish Jonah prayed to God. Jonah sought the person from whom he tried to walk away. He admitted that he had been brought to a very low point in his life. Jonah knew why too. And when Jonah sought God even after disobeying. Even after Jonah came up with his plan to walk away from the plan and command of God. Even after Jonah refused to pray while on the boat to see if God would forgive and stop the storm. God answered and heard the prayer of Jonah after three days and three nights in the belly of the fish. God commanded the fish to throw Jonah up. God was loving and patient to give Jonah a second chance.

God is always waiting for us to return to Him. God is always willing to forgive us. Jonah had done something horrible deliberately walking away from God. And although Jonah had to come so close to the end of his life God waited till then for Jonah to come back. God is always willing for us to return to Him. It does not have to come to the point Jonah got. We do not have to wait till it all gets bad and dark. We can turn to God now and He will hear us. He will forgive us.

Conclusion: Boys and girls how are you doing in your obedience to God? Maybe this summer since you have been home so long you have struggled. You have found a way to do your own plan and not what you know God wants you to do. Maybe you have been constantly disobeying your parents. Perhaps you have spent all this time fighting and not getting along with your siblings. Or some of you are in big trouble because you have been constantly lying. Whatever it is that you have been disobeying on purpose it probably has you in a lot of trouble. Some of you have spent most of the time grounded. Yet even though you know you are wrong maybe you have not tried to get it right. You have not turned to God for forgiveness. You have not shown your parents that you truly are sorry for it all. Maybe you think God cannot forgive you. The truth is God is waiting. He is waiting to take you back and to forgive you. Today from the belly of whatever fish you have ended up, however bad it has gotten you can call on God. You can talk to Him and He is ready to listen.

Maybe today boys and girls you are here, and you do not know if you will ever be with God. You know that you have sinned, disobeyed, God. You know that there are so many ways and so many things that you have done that go against what God says we should do. Because of this you think that God would never take you. That you are too bad for God. The truth is boys and girls that God knows that we are sinners, so He

made a way to pay and forgive us of our sins. Jesus came, died, was buried, and rose again the third day. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). The Bible says that Jesus was given to us out of love so that whoever believes in Him would not perish (John 3:16). So, the question is what will you do? God has provided a way and it is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8). We have the choice to believe or not to believe in Jesus as our Savior (John 3:18). He is ready for you to go to Him and ask Him for this gift of salvation. The Word of God tells us that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Rom. 10:13). Will you call on Him?