

Study Series: Running from Mercy

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 Lesson Title: “You Can’t Outrun God” (pp. 21-34)

Session 2

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The main point of this lesson is: One might try to run from God’s call, but such efforts are futile.

Focus on this goal: To help adults cease any running from God and turn to Him

Key Bible Passage: Jonah 1:7-16

Before the Session

Find and preview (language may be inappropriate) an online video collections of “parent saves” or “dad saves.” (Step 5)

During the Session

Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Label a board or large piece of paper, Famous Runners. As learners arrive, invite them to add a name or group to the paper (Bill Rodgers, Forrest Gump, or Jamaican sprinters, and the like).

Open the session by asking: What if we don’t take the word runners seriously; who is someone who famously ran to or from something?” (OJ Simpson ran from the police, Clint Eastwood ran for governor of California, first responders ran to the burning Twin Towers).

Ask: Who here has ever run from anything? Allow a few moments for answers, then ask: Has anyone in here ever run from God?

Read the main point of this lesson (p. 32).

Step 2. You Can’t Outrun the Providence of God, Part 1

Briefly summarize Jonah 1:1-6, then invite a volunteer to read Jonah 1:7-16.

Clarify that Jonah wasn’t headed the wrong way out of misguidance or ignorance; he was in full rebellion, and he was running from God.

Read the Day One Note (p. 21). As a group, consider the idea of “providence,” using Day One content (p. 21) to solidify your definition.

Read Psalm 147:15 and add a line or two from your own life to the passage. (Such as, “He helps babies and dogs sleep when moms need it most.”) Engage learners in adding their own brief testimonies extolling God’s control over the elements.

Step 3. You Can’t Outrun the Providence of God, Part 2

**Use** Day Two content (p. 23) to **help** learners understand the biblical standard of casting lots, but **explain** that they were used by people who didn’t follow God, as well.

**Drive home** the fact that God is in control of every event, even something as trivial as casting lots. **Ask:** *How might people become anxious in light of such truth? How should we respond to God’s control in every situation?*

**Read** the Day Two paragraph (p. 24) that begins, “The Puritans would say . . . .” **Share** how you’ve been challenged this week to see the hand of God in your life and how it has changed your outlook.

Step 4. You Can’t Outrun Your Sin

**Invite** a volunteer to read Numbers 32:23. **Ask:** *What do small children do when they are confronted with a wrongdoing? What about teens? How about adults?* **Point out** that, all ages, people tend to throw blame, come up with an excuse, or even deny their sin. **Help** learners see that Jonah did none of those; he simply confessed his wrongdoing.

**Read** the last two sentences of Day Three (p. 27). As a group, **consider** what regular disciplines will help us hear God clearly when He confronts our sin and how we should respond when He does (in faith and confession).

Step 5. You Can’t Outrun God’s Grace, Part 1

**Show** the video clips of parent saves and **point to** the title of Day Four: “You Can’t Outrun God’s Grace.”

**Invite** a volunteer to read the first Day Four paragraph (p. 27). **Ask:** *How might this truth sound different by one in fellowship with God from how that person previously perceived God’s persistence when living in sin?*

**Help** learners who always felt guilty of God’s judgment see that His grace is God’s reason for seeking us out in our sin. **Read** Psalm 23:6 and **engage** learners in describing how this truth is exemplified in this portion of Jonah’s story.

**Point out** that Jonah’s confession of sin wasn’t enough to stop the storm; it also required that he (and the other men on the boat) stop trying to deal with sin themselves and yield to God.

**Draw attention** to the prayer of the sailors (Jonah 1:14) and **help** learners understand that we, like them, must recognize that only God has the power to save.

Step 6. You Can’t Outrun God’s Grace, Part 2

**Use** the first Day Five paragraph (pp. 29-30) to **point out** the irony of the first chapter of Jonah: he refused to preach to unbelievers, but because of the storm he preached to unbelievers.

If applicable, **share** a time in your own life when you sought to run from God’s will, but found yourself doing the very thing you hoped not to do, realizing it was what you were made to do.

**Read** Jonah’s confession from v. 9. **Ask:** *When was the last time you told someone who God was? What did you say?*

Step 7. Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

**Read** the Day Five paragraph (p. 31) that begins, “Don’t simply call on God.” **Help** learners see that Jonah and the sailors calling on God for salvation parallels with us calling upon Jesus to save us from our sin and accepting His Lordship.

In your own words, **share** the truth of Jesus, pointing out that He is most certainly God and He is the only way to call upon the name of the Lord at this point in the kingdom timeline.

**Close** with a sample sinner’s prayer as an example to any who have never prayed to Jesus.

