

Study Series: Running from Mercy

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 Lesson Title: “Our Big God” (pp. 91-104)

Session 7

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The main point of this lesson is: God is bigger than our circumstances, attitudes, and concerns.

Focus on this goal: To help adults learn the key to contentment is Christ, not circumstances

Key Bible Passage: Jonah 4:5-11

During the Session

Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Hold a few brief impromptu contests to start class. Bring a few awards (candy bars, bookmarks, etc.) for the winners. Say: We’re going to start today with a contest called “Biggest is Best.” Our first contest is the biggest bag or purse. Who thinks they brought the biggest bag or purse to class today?

Give an award to the winner. You may also want to consider biggest Bible, biggest shoes (divided by gender), biggest glasses, or biggest birth weight.

Say: As we wrap up our study of Jonah today, we’re going to consider the bigness of God in light of our seemingly big situations.

Step 2. God Is Big

Engage learners in first considering the fact that Christians must be learners, willing to be challenged, corrected, and disciplined. You may want to ask: How well are you learning from the Lord these days? How do you know?

Draw attention to the Day One Note (p. 92). To drive home the point, ask: How does walking with the Lord teach us this rich truth?

Invite a few volunteers to share how they personally have come (or are coming) to grips with the bigness of God.

Read the last Day One paragraph (p. 93).

Step 3. God Is Bigger than Your Circumstances, Part 1

**Read** the first Day Two paragraph (p. 93). **Say:** I’m not even going to ask for a show of hands, but has anyone in here ever felt like this? Does anyone want to share that story? **Allow** two or three adults to share if they choose to do so, but **do not press** anyone to share.

**Invite** a volunteer to read Jonah 4:5-6. **Summarize or read** the Day Two paragraph (pp. 93-94) that begins with the sentence, “God was in control.”

**Point out** that God’s provision included things that seemed dangerous (the wind), deadly (the great fish), and delightful (the plant), but each thing was intended by God to draw Jonah’s attention back to Him.

**Use** Day Two content (p. 94-95) to **guide** learners in considering their own tendency to find joy in blessings rather than in the God who gave the blessings.

Step 4. God Is Bigger than Your Circumstances, Part 2

Invite a volunteer to read Jonah 4:7-8. Point out the two new appointments in Jonah’s life: “a worm” and “a scorching east wind.”

Acknowledge: Most of us have been in Jonah’s mindset: can’t I just catch a break? Point out, though, that God was not willing to let Jonah wallow in his misery, anger, and hatred.

Say: God does the same to us: He gives us comforts and He takes away comforts. Read Job 1:21 and 2:10, pointing out the fact that Jonah was not the first and won’t be the last person to experience God’s sovereignty in both comfort and disaster.

Read Paul’s testimony in 2 Corinthians 12:1-4 (or Day Three, pp. 96-97).

Step 5. God Is Bigger than Your Attitude

**Use** the Day Four opening paragraphs (pp. 97-98) to **stress** to learners that chronic discontentment is ultimately dissatisfaction with God.

**Say:** *We could sit here all day and talk about what’s wrong with the world. That would make us normal. So let’s do the opposite: What’s amazingly wonderful about your life and this world?*

After learners have shared for a few minutes, **challenge** them to try this daily on their own.

**Invite** a volunteer to read Philippians 4:11-13. **Engage** learners in discussing the reason Paul could be content in every situation (Christ was His source of strength; nothing else!).

Step 6. God Is Bigger than Your Concerns

**Invite** a volunteer to read Jonah 4:9-11. **Point out** that Jonah was angry about the fact the plant had died, but not happy that thousands had repented.

**Say:** *Like Jonah, we often get very concerned about our own lives and comfort, but honestly care very little for the lost, dying world around us.*

**Use** Day Five content (pp. 100-101) to help learners see that God is aware of our concerns for daily needs and for blessings, but His greater concern is for spiritual lostness of the world.

Step 7. Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

**Remind** learners of the parallels between the story of Jonah and the prodigal son. **Read** Luke 15:28-32. **Say:** Both Jonah’s story and this parable end the same way: the pleading, compassionate God is inviting a self-righteous son to join Him in celebrating salvation. But both stories leave us hanging; we don’t know what their final attitude or actions are because the Bible doesn’t tell us.

**Read** John 3:16 and the Day Five Note (p. 101).

**Invite** volunteers to step back this week and consider God’s big plan, not only for our lives and our lifetimes, but for His eternal plans and purposes for the entire world.

**Close in prayer.**

After the Session

If one or more participants suggest by their words or attitudes that they have not yet resolved their spiritual lostness, **set up** an appointment to visit with them about their need for the salvation only God can provide. The inside front cover of this book can help.

