



Life Principles Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding God's Word

THE COSTLY DECISION TO RUN FROM GOD

KEY PASSAGE: Jonah 1:1–3 | **SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE:** 2 Kings 14:25 | Psalm 139:7 | Jonah 1:12; 2:1-9; 3:1-3, 9; 4:1-11 | Matthew 12:38-40 | Galatians 6:7-8

SUMMARY:

Many people run from God to drugs, alcohol, or illicit behavior.

Some lose themselves in work, social activities, or other distractions. We try to avoid guilt by filling our lives with activity or entertainment. But anytime you and I disobey the Lord's specific instructions to us, we are running from Him.

The story of Jonah illustrates what can happen when we disobey the Lord. This prophet lived and ministered in Israel from about 793-753 B.C. (2 Kings 14:25; Matt. 12:38-40). His story teaches us a powerful lesson about the purpose and plan of God. Even if we dislike what the Lord commands us to do, we are foolish to run from Him.

SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES:

God will never withdraw or change His command simply because we are unwilling to obey it.

The Lord commanded Jonah to preach to the city of Nineveh and call its inhabitants to repentance (Jonah 1:2). It was a town full of ruthless, wicked warriors who were greatly feared by the people of Israel.

Jonah knew that the Lord was merciful, and that if the citizens of Nineveh repented, He wouldn't destroy them. The Bible says that the prophet would have preferred to see God annihilate the city. Therefore, he ran from the Lord. But God's

command to preach remained unchanged.

You might say, "I don't hear the Lord as clearly as Jonah did." If you don't hear God's voice, ask Him to speak to you in a way that you can understand. Be sure to slow down enough to listen to Him. God communicates to us through His Word, through our conscience, and through the Holy Spirit. Then, once you know what He wants of you, obey immediately and completely. Partial obedience is disobedience.

It is impossible for believers to run from God successfully.

In Psalm 139, David writes, "Where can I go from the Lord?" (v. 7). Eventually, he concludes that no one can escape from God. But Jonah tried. He took a ship "to flee to Tarshish and from the presence of the Lord" (Jonah 1:3).

The prophet headed in the opposite direction from Nineveh. God caused a fierce storm that threatened to sink the boat Jonah traveled in. So he told the sailors to cast him into the sea if they wanted to survive. At this point, the prophet was willing to die rather than obey God (Jonah 1:12).

After they threw Jonah overboard, he was swallowed by what the Bible calls "a great fish." Finally, in the belly of this sea creature, the prophet declared his willingness to obey the Lord (Jonah 2:1-9).

How do believers attempt to run from God? Ultimately, they seek what pleases them rather than what the Lord desires for them. A man might ignore wise counsel about a woman he

is dating and marry her anyway. Or parents might fail to discipline their children as the Bible commands.

In time, these people will experience the consequences of their rebellion against God.

Running from God results in painful circumstances.

The greater the call on your life, the more guilt you will feel when you choose to disobey. I believe Jonah immediately felt uncomfortable after he made the decision to rebel against God. Ultimately, he was willing to commit suicide. He said, "Throw me into the sea" (Jonah 1:12). Rebellion against the Lord always results in loss of some kind. We may lose abilities, time, money, or relationships.

When you run from the Lord, your disobedience brings pain and loss to others.

Jonah's disobedience cost the sailors their cargo, and therefore, their profit from the voyage. He also endangered their lives. People like to think they can sin in isolation, and no one will be hurt. But when we rebel against the Lord, others are always affected.

Sin is selfish by nature. It asks, "What is best for me?" with no thought for the needs of others. Wrong choices always have consequences. When we don't experience them immediately, it is because the Lord is patient with us. He desires us to repent and return to obeying Him.

The Father's grace often provides a second chance.

Many times, the Lord in His mercy gives us another opportunity to obey Him. However, we don't always have a second chance because some of the Lord's commands are time-sensitive.

After the sea creature deposited Jonah on land, the prophet chose to obey God's instructions (Jonah 3:1-3). The people of Nineveh responded to the divine warning and turned from their evil ways, and the Lord didn't destroy the city. Jonah

had hoped God's judgment would fall on the wicked place. When nothing happened, the prophet was so angry and depressed that he asked the Lord to take his life (Jonah 4:1-8).

Notice that God used the prophet to speak to the city despite his attitude. He isn't looking for perfect men and women but for those who are available to serve Him.

Running from God can have disastrous, eternal consequences.

Scripture says that we reap what we sow (Gal. 6:7-8). If a person runs from the Lord by choosing not to believe in Jesus, they risk eternal separation from Him.

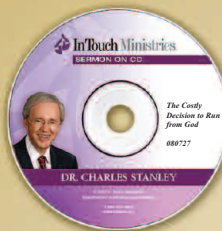
I pray that you will turn to Christ and ask Him to forgive your sins. Surrender to the Lord, and God will do an awesome work in and through your life.

CONCLUSION:

The book of Jonah teaches us that God's commands don't change because we try to run from Him. The Lord is everywhere, and no one can be entirely successful at avoiding His presence.

When you and I rebel against the Father's plans for us, we bring pain and loss upon ourselves, as well as on other people. These consequences won't always be immediate, but eventually we will reap what we sow. Disobedience always has a price.

The good news is that God often gives us a second chance to obey Him. The Lord operates through imperfect people who are willing to be used. Have you been running from God in some area of your life? If so, return to the Father and give Him complete control. He delights to work through available, obedient servants. 🙏



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