

“The Great Escape”

This guide is a tool to help you lead your group into spiritual transformation. Use it as a resource to train your group into potential disciple-makers and lead your group in discovering, owning, and applying the truths of God’s Word. There may be aspects you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on an aspect of their relationship with God. Your role is to help facilitate this encounter with God in His Word with His Body, not just to complete the guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid group task list.

Relate . . .

Begin your group time by engaging in relational conversations and prayer that may include the following elements:

Welcome—a simple, brief time to greet one another (especially new friends), enjoy refreshments, and make announcements.

Review—a time to review the truths discussed last week and report on how members have had success or frustrations in applying those truths during the week. (The leader will want to provide encouragement and shepherding during this time.) Periodically, the leader will also want to review the gospel and allow members to share reports about opportunities they’ve had to share the gospel. Occasionally, the leader will want to review the vision for the group and discuss ways to accomplish that vision better.

Prayer—a time of general prayer with the whole group praying for struggles regarding the application of truths, for those with whom the group is sharing the gospel, and for understanding of today’s truths.

Reflect . . .

Use the following summary and questions to review this week’s message and reflect on its implications for our lives. (As a training tool, leaders might want to have various members summarize the teachings in their own words each week sharing how they think the Scripture applied to the original hearers and how the principles apply to us today.)

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Message Outline

THE GREAT ESCAPE

Jonah 1:1-17

When something other than God captures your attention you will...

1. Flee God's presence.
2. Forget your sin.
3. Fear God's grace.
4. Face the consequences.

When you look God in the Face you discover He...

1. Calls
Sinners to Repent.
Saints to Obey.
2. Cares
For those who are lost.
Compassionate
Merciful
Gracious
Patient
Present
For those who have been found.
3. Controls
You cannot run from God.
His plan cannot be thwarted.
If our sin is never hidden from Him, our need is ever before Him.

Message Summary

The book of Jonah is a story about an 8th Century B.C. prophet named Jonah who was commanded by God to go to the great and evil city of Nineveh and preach against her sin. Jonah, however, disobeyed God and refused to go. Jonah attempted to flee the presence of God, yet, the result was disastrous and almost cost Jonah his life. Jonah boarded a ship and sailed in the opposite direction but God hurled a colossal storm on the sea. At Jonah's request the crew of the ship ultimately threw him overboard with the hope of appeasing the LORD and ultimately calming the storm. God, however, displayed grace on Jonah and appointed a large fish to swallow Jonah, keeping him alive and ultimately delivering him back to dry land. Jonah ultimately obeyed God, however, he still had much to learn!

For many, the story of Jonah is nothing more than a huge fish tale. However, through this first message in the series titled “Jonah: A Whale of a Story,” we saw the story of Jonah is a true, historical account of God dealing with the wayward prophet. Ultimately, we discovered this intense story is not about Jonah or the fish but about the beauty and majesty of Jonah's God!

We learned through Jonah's attempted “Great Escape” what happens when something other than God captures our attention. But we also learned that when we look God in the face we discover His beautiful attributes that lead us to live our lives radically devoted to Him. We learned that, as one pastor said, “real obedience to God is when you so value the face of God, it is so precious to you, that you would give up everything for it!”

As you prepare to meet with your community group this week examine the things or people that have captured your attention. Are you looking God in the face on a daily basis? Or are you attempting to flee His presence? Examine the following discussion questions and be prepared to discuss how you will live out the truths from this week's message.

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Group Discussion

Use the following questions to help make application of God’s Word to your Head (What God wants me to know), to your Heart (What God wants me to desire/value), and to your Hands (What God wants me to do).

1. Nineveh was a great and evil city. Their brutality toward their enemies was second to none. God commanded Jonah to go and cry out against the city. What do you think was the reason Jonah chose to disobey God and not go to Nineveh? What was the reason that was expressed in the message? In what specific ways have you been like Jonah?
2. It was said during the message that Jonah’s fleeing to Tarshish was open and emphatic rebellion against God; in running, Jonah was telling God, “I will not serve you!” How do you relate to Jonah? How does focusing on the attributes of God’s character change your willingness to obey God?
3. Examine the following statement: “For every excuse you have for disobeying God, the excuse is a place in your own life where you need to hear the Gospel.” Share with the group an area in your life where you are disobeying God and ask the group to share with you how the Gospel meets your need. Give enough time for everyone to respond.

(ex. “I don’t share the Gospel because I’m afraid of what others will think of me.” Gospel response: “Your need for God’s approval is most important. There is nothing you can do apart from Jesus to gain God’s approval. Jesus died in your place so you could live approved by God forever. No longer do you need to seek the approval of others because you’ve been approved by the one Who matters most.”)
4. God cares for unbelievers and believers. If you are a Christian, how has God displayed compassion, mercy, grace, patience, and His presence in your life before and after becoming a Christian? If you are still not sure about your relationship with God, how has He displayed these attributes to you?
5. The purpose for this message was to help you see that you will flee from the face of God when the belly of the fish seems more appealing. What has appealed to you more than the face of God? How does focusing on the Gospel help you “look God in the face?”
6. When the Jews say, “We are Jonah,” they are asking themselves the question of whether they’ll leave everything and follow God. As a Christian, how do you identify with this question? How will you answer this question everyday?

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Respond . . .

- What are some of the main truths that God wants you to know from this study?
- How do your thoughts need to adjust to align with these truths?
- According to the truths from this study, what does God want you to desire/value?
- How do your values need to change to align with His values?
- What actions does God want you to take according to the truths of this study?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?
- What is going to be the most difficult aspect of this study to personally apply?

Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength to apply these truths, for personal needs, for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel, and for our weekly prayer focus as a church...

Weekly Prayer Focus

- **Church:**
Annual Meeting on December 7, 2014.
 - Elders as they prepare 2015 budget.
 - Celebrating all God did in 2014.
 - Wisdom & excitement as we look to 2015.
- **Local:**
Farm Day; November 1, 2014 so *that the world may know!*
 - Volunteers.
 - Steve Boyd (sharing the Gospel during round pen demonstration).
 - Gospel conversations.
- **Global:**
Paul & Sarah Young and Dakota Baptist Church in Fort Totten, North Dakota.
 - Provision for family and ministry.
 - House plans & construction.
 - New Day Church family mission trip Summer 2015.