



*masterwork*

W I N T E R 2 0 2 2 - 2 3

# HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

In your opinion, what does it take for a person to get to heaven and have eternal life?  
The Bible answers this question in one word—**FAITH**.

## **F** is for **FORGIVENESS**

- Everyone has sinned and needs God's forgiveness: *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23).
- God's forgiveness is in Jesus only: *"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace"* (Ephesians 1:7).

## **A** is for **AVAILABLE**

- God's forgiveness is available for all: *"God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16).
- God's forgiveness is available but not automatic: *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 7:21).

## **I** is for **IMPOSSIBLE**

- It is impossible to get to heaven on our own: *"You are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast"* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

## **T** is for **TURN**

- Turn means repent. Turn away from sin and self and turn to Jesus alone as your Savior and Lord: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6); *"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation"* (Romans 10:9-10).

## **H** is for **HEAVEN**

- Here . . . Eternal life begins now with Jesus: *"I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance"* (John 10:10).
- Hereafter . . . Heaven is a place where we will live with God forever: *"If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also"* (John 14:3).
- How . . . How can a person have God's forgiveness, eternal life, and heaven? By trusting Jesus as your Savior and Lord. You can do this right now by praying and asking Jesus to forgive you of your sins and inviting Jesus into your heart.

Accepting Christ is just the beginning of a wonderful adventure with God! Follow Christ's command in baptism. Join a church where you can worship God and grow in your faith. Get involved in Sunday School and Bible study. Begin a daily personal worship time in which you study the Bible and pray.

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## **MasterWork: Essential Messages from God's Servants**

Winter, 2022-2023

Curtis Honts, Content Editor

Ken Braddy, Director of Sunday School

### **Send questions/comments to**

Content Editor by email to [Curtis.Honts@lifeway.com](mailto:Curtis.Honts@lifeway.com)

or mail to

Content Editor, *MasterWork*,

200 Powell Place, Suite 100,

Brentwood, TN 37027-7707.

or make comments on the Web at [lifeway.com](http://lifeway.com)

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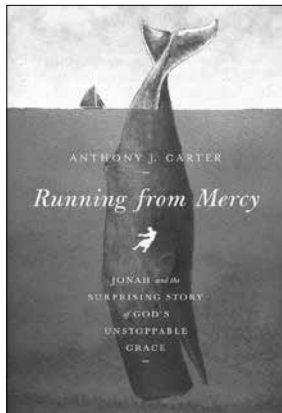
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# Books of Study

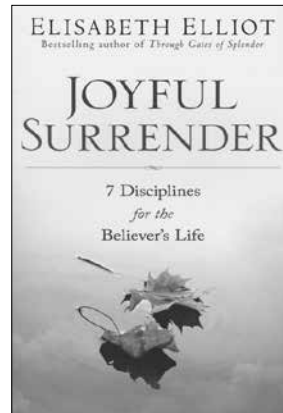
Further in-depth Bible studies by the authors presented this quarter in MasterWork® are available in their full-length books. To purchase your own copies to read and study, visit [lifeway.com](http://lifeway.com). Or you can order a copy by calling 1.800.458.2772.



## **Running from Mercy**

Anthony J. Carter

B&H Publishing  
ISBN: 978-1-5359-0245-8



## **Joyful Surrender**

Elisabeth Elliot

Revell  
ISBN: 978-0-8007-3131-1

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# How to Use

Here are a few suggestions to help you get the most out of this resource:

## Group Members

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1. Read Day One through Day Five prior to attending the group time. Complete the personal learning activities in bold type. Record your notes and questions.
2. Review your notes and questions a few moments prior to the group time as a means of preparing to be an active part of the group.
3. In the margins of this book, record insights gained during the group time.

## Group Leader

---

1. Complete step 1 above.
2. Identify the one main idea and goal for the lesson. The main point of the lesson and the goal are printed on the leader guide pages at the end of each lesson. (See p. 18.) Focus on the session goal as you lead the session.

**The main point of this lesson is:** God begins to weave the seamless revelation of His plan from the opening of the Bible.

**Focus on this goal:** To help adults affirm the importance of the beginning in their walk with Christ

**Key Bible Passages:** Genesis 1–11

*Leader Guide*

3. Read and study the key Bible passage(s) listed at the top of the teaching plan.
4. Develop a group time plan. Two options are offered in this book.

- One option is to follow the leader guide at the end of each lesson.
  - A second option is to use the discussion questions in the margins of the lessons.
- Some group leaders use a combination of both group time plans.

<p>Written by forty authors over 1,600 years, sixty-six books tell one seamless story about how God redeems us, and has a future for us. Let's explore the beautiful story of Scripture. How does this story fit so successfully in with Christians who were</p>	<p><b>DISCUSS</b></p> <p>When might a visit to a library be overwhelming? When might it be exciting?</p>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

*Discussion Questions*

5. Customize the electronic versions of the suggested teaching plans, available on the Internet at [masterwork.lifeway.com](http://masterwork.lifeway.com) to fit your group.
6. Review and refine your teaching notes as you move toward the group time.
7. Arrive early, praying for the group time.

SECTION 1

## LEADER GUIDE

**The main point of this lesson is:** God begins to weave the seamless narrative of His plan from the opening of the Bible.

**Focus on this goal:** To help adults affirm the importance of the beginning of their walk with Christ.

**Key Bible Passages:** Genesis 1-11

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**During the Session**

**STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion**

**Intelle** adults to indicate if they've ever read books or watched movies that were part of a series. **Ask** to describe the books or watch the movies out of order and still enjoy them? What's the value of reading or watching them in order?

**Note** reading or watching serial stories in order gives us a better grasp of the overall story and aids in deeper understanding of the characters and plot. **Help** us see how all the stories fit together. **State:** That the book of Scripture as well as the characters and events unfold like stories but understanding how they fit together into one seamless narrative can bring the Bible's truth into much clearer focus.

**STEP 2 - Getting Started**

**Intelle** a volunteer to read the first two verses of Day One (p. 7).

**Relate** the author's experience of not understanding what Christians were talking about and how this general audience group on the Bible (p. 7).

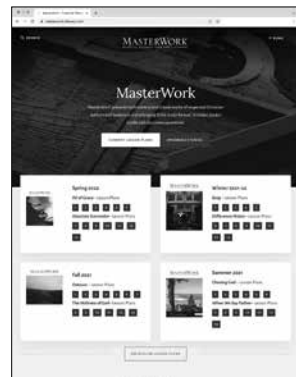
**Intelle** a volunteer to share what has helped them understand the Bible better.

**Relate** the author's desire for readers to see Scripture's overarching story and its characters and themes to come to life. **Relate** the author's challenge by reading the Day One paragraph (p. 10) beginning with, "Before we start..."

**Discuss:** Day One activity 2 (p. 8).

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*Leader Guide*



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masterwork

**Study Series: Seamless**  
Author: Angie Smith

**Lesson Title: "The Beginning"** (pp. 6-13)  
Session 1  
September 4, 2022

**The main point of this lesson is:** God begins to weave the seamless narrative of His plan from the opening of the Bible.

**Focus on this goal:** To help adults affirm the importance of the beginning of their walk with Christ.

**Key Bible Passages:** Genesis 1-11

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**Before the Session**

1. Prayers 780 (Step 1)  
2. Karaoke 780 (Step 1)

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**During the Session**

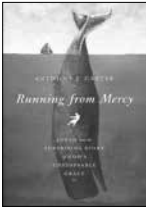
**Step 1: Title**

**Intelle** adults to indicate if they've ever read books or watched movies that were part of a series. **Ask** to describe the books or watch the movies out of order and still enjoy them? What's the value of reading or watching them in order?

**Note** reading or watching serial stories in order gives us a better grasp of the overall story and aids in deeper understanding of the characters and plot. **Help** us see how all the stories fit together. **State:** That the book of Scripture as well as the characters and events unfold like stories but understanding how they fit together into one seamless narrative can bring the Bible's truth into much clearer focus.

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*Customizable Teaching Plan*



# RUNNING FROM MERCY

## ABOUT THE WRITERS

**Anthony J. Carter**, author of *Running from Mercy*, is a graduate of Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, FL, and Point University of East Point, GA. Tony is lead pastor of East Point Church, East Point, GA. He is author of several books including *What is the Gospel: Life's Most Important Question*. He is co-author and editor of *Glory Road: The Journeys of Ten African Americans into Reformed Christianity*. Pastor Tony lives in East Point, GA with his wife and five children.

**Leslie Hudson** wrote the personal activities, interactive questions, and leader guide suggestions for this study. A member of First Baptist Church, Dickson, TN, Hudson strives to help others find "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" within God's Word. She lives in the perfect small town of White Bluff, TN, where she drinks hot coffee and practices praying God's Word.

"Call me Ishmael," is one of the most iconic beginnings to a book ever written. It begins the classic *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville. *Moby Dick* has been called the greatest American novel in history. Melville himself took much inspiration from the Bible; in particular, the biblical account of the prophet Jonah. At the heart of *Moby Dick* is a great whale. At the heart of Jonah is a great God.

"Call me Jonah," could easily be the beginning of a book on the ministry of Jonah. Jonah's story is one of the most epic in the Bible, and through the years it has been a favorite of both serious and casual Bible readers. It has served as source and inspiration for both cartoon animation and dramatic theatrical productions. Both old and young have found it insightful, instructional, and entertaining. Both Bible scholar and Sunday School student have found much to ruminate on in the short but eventful account.

*Moby Dick* is a fictional story about a great whale. Jonah is a factual story about a great God. Yes, Jonah is about a man and a fish, a great storm, revival, and repentance. But more than all these, Jonah is about God and the unstoppable greatness of His mercy and grace. The great fish of Jonah is merely an instrument pointing to the greatness of God's grace, with which God pursues rebellious sinners to their everlasting delight.

Jonah is an old, old story. And yet it still offers to us insight, encouragement, and faith for living faithfully in our new world. In a world that is changing at a pace unimaginable by Jonah and his contemporaries, we can still look to the simplicity of God's dealing with Jonah to see what faith looks like in our world today. Jonah was a rebel. We are rebels too. Jonah was running. We run too. Many of us run as fast as we can away from God, but God's grace is faster. God's grace was great to Jonah. To us God's grace is greater still.



# GRACE FOR THE REBELLIOUS

*Day 1*

## **A Rebellious Beginning, Part 1**

Most of us are familiar with the name Benedict Arnold, a name infamously associated with the idea of treason. But most people probably don't know that before Benedict Arnold committed treason against the colonial states of America, he was a much-accomplished general in the colonial army. As the Revolutionary War waged on, Benedict Arnold became frustrated by the way the war was progressing and offended he did not receive the notoriety and accolades he thought he deserved. Furthermore, he considered defeat at the hands of the British to be inevitable. Consequently, he sought to get back in the good graces of the British before it was too late. So he switched sides and became an ally of the British. Many would argue Benedict Arnold committed the greatest act of treason in American history.

Yet it is not the greatest act of treason ever committed. That dubious distinction belongs to Adam and Eve. They rebelled and committed cosmic treason against the sovereign, Creator God. And ever since the garden of Eden, every human being has come into the world as a rebel. The Bible is clear. When Adam and Eve rebelled, we all rebelled (Rom. 5:12).

- 1. Look up Romans 5:12 in your Bible. Paraphrase it in your own words, making sure you use the word "me" or "I" in your restatement.**

### **DISCUSS**

Who comes to mind when you think of treason? What makes treason so very heinous?

## NOTE

That's the whole story line of redemptive history—God's gracious pursuit of rebels. It's the story line of the Bible.

Yet the grand and gracious story line of the Bible is “God reaching down to be gracious to rebels.” That's the whole story line of redemptive history—God's gracious pursuit of rebels. It's the story line of the Bible. It's the message of Jonah.

The prophecy of Jonah begins with rebellion. God sent Jonah to preach to a people in rebellion against God. “The word of the LORD came to Jonah” (Jonah 1:1). The word that came to Jonah was clear, it was direct: “Get up! Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it because their evil has come up before me” (v. 2). God sent Jonah to a rebelling people. He sent him to Nineveh.

Nineveh was a great city by any measure of worldly standards. It was the capital of the Assyrian Empire, at the time the most prominent and powerful empire on earth. It was the most prominent city in the most prominent nation in the land. It was, as Jonah 3:3 says, “an extremely great city, a three-day walk” to traverse. It was populated by upward of 130,000 people at any time. Nineveh was a great city by any stretch of the imagination. But it was not only great for what it was; it was great also for what it did. It sinned. And it was full of evil. A great city given over to great sin, filled with idolatry, greed, lust, murder, and all the wickedness of the human heart. It was filled with false worship. It was a pagan city and stood against the will and rule of God.

God sent Jonah to speak out against this pagan city. These were not the people of God; these were the Ninevites. But there is no people or nation on this earth who will not answer before God. Not a nation, not a people, and not a person who is not subject to God. Jesus is not simply the Lord of the church; Jesus is Lord of all (Rom. 14:7-8)—and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Phil. 2:10-11). Jesus is not simply Lord of the redeemed; He is Lord over all. Every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess. And He holds all accountable for their rebellion.

**2. Who comes to mind as a person or group who has no acknowledgment of God as Lord of all? Pause and pray for them right now.**

**Were you ever in that group who did not acknowledge God as Lord of all? Explain.**

## What brought about the change in you?

The remarkable thing is that God was gracious to these rebellious people. God sent His word to them through the mouth of His prophet. However, in this instance, the prophet was no different from the people. How's that for irony? God sent a rebelling prophet to rebelling people. God told Jonah, "Get up! Go to . . . Nineveh" (Jonah 1:2). The word of the Lord was clear. Yet Jonah's first instinct was to rebel because rebellion comes naturally. We come into the world rebellious. You don't have to teach children how to rebel; just leave them alone! Because we are by nature rebellious people. Yet, as it was to Jonah, the will of God is clearer than most of us want or are willing to admit.

## Day 2

### A Rebellious Beginning, Part 2

Too many of us search around for the will of God as if it were some ever-illusory magical formula. And because we are unable to discern what God's will is, we are content to live in disobedience. We chase after and hope for a word from God. Unfortunately, what we fail to do is look into *the* Word of God. Like Jonah, if you would look to the Word of God, you would find the will of God. God's will was clear because God's word was clear. It was that way to Jonah. It is that way to us. It is clear if you go into the Word of God.

According to the Word of God, the will of God is for husbands to love their wives (Col. 3:19) and for wives to submit to their husbands (v. 18). The will of God is for children to obey their parents (v. 20) and that we abstain from sexual immorality (1 Thess. 4:3). It doesn't get any clearer than that. The will of God is that you and I would be growing in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ (Col. 1:10) and give thanks in all things

#### DISCUSS

What is your first memory of being rebellious? How does that memory help you see your propensity toward rebellion?

#### DISCUSS

In what ways do people look for a "word" from God outside of the Bible?

(1 Thess. 5:18). As you can see, the will of God is clear if we would go to the Word of God to find it.

So it was with Jonah; there was no misunderstanding of what God wanted Jonah to do. But rebellion is not rooted in ignorance. Rebellion is rooted in rank disobedience. Jonah didn't want to hear it. We don't want to know the will of God, so we don't go to the Word of God. We want to rebel. So instead of rising and going to Nineveh, Jonah rose and fled to Tarshish.

**1. What excuses have you used for your rebellion in the past?**

**Jonah fled to Tarshish in his rebellion. What does your rebellion look like?**

Tarshish represents obstinacy and rebellion. It is the place men and women go to hide from God, the place we convince ourselves we are out of sight and out of mind. Yet to think you are ever out of God's sight is to be out of your mind. No matter how far you try to go, you can't go far enough. No matter where you seek to hide, there is no hiding place (Ps. 139:7-8). No matter how hard you run, mercy runs harder. Mercy runs faster. Jonah thought Tarshish would save him from God. The wonderful truth is that God saved Jonah from Tarshish.

**2. Rewrite those previous two sentences, filling in the blanks with your own story:**

“\_\_\_\_\_ thought \_\_\_\_\_ would save him/her from God. The wonderful truth is that God saved \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_.” Explain as necessary.

**DISCUSS**

How well do most people do at following the simple, clear standards from God identified in the paragraph on pages 9-10? How well do Christians do at following these words?

I am sure there were people in Tarshish who needed to hear the Word of God, but that is not what God sent Jonah to do. How often do we do that? We rationalize our disobedience and rebellion by thinking we can make something good come out of it. Yet partial obedience only leads to full disobedience. God told Jonah to rise. He rose, but that's where the obedience stopped. Instead of going to Nineveh, he went to Tarshish. Jonah was not just fleeing but also refusing to do the will of God.

Here's the real issue: Jonah was fleeing from the presence of God. It wasn't just that Jonah did not want to do what God had called him to do; Jonah didn't want anything to do with God Himself—that's really the issue whenever we rebel. When we rebel against God's Word, we rebel against God. Nevertheless, rebellious people and prophets—and you—don't stress God. Because God is resourceful. God has unlimited resources at His disposal, and what He doesn't yet have, He can create.

## Day 3

### A Resourceful God, Part 1

Jonah discovered what everybody discovers when they run from God. When you run from God, you run smack into God. Our God is a resourceful God, and we see the nature of His sourcefulness grounded in His character. Who is this God Jonah is rebelling against? This God we seek to run away from? The first thing you ought to know is that He is an *omnipresent* God.

*Omnipresent*

**1. How would you explain God's omnipresence to someone who had never considered it?**

#### NOTE

When you run from God, you run smack into God.

#### DISCUSS

When have you tried to run away from God but ran into Him? Explain.

## What is the significance of God's omnipresence?

*Omnipresence* means God is everywhere present. There is no place or space in the universe where God is not fully there. Twice in verse 3 Jonah is said to have fled from the presence of the Lord. How does one escape the presence of the Lord? The impossibility is staggering if you just contemplate it for a moment. Where are you going? In Psalm 139:7-12, the psalmist says: "Where can I go to escape your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I fly on the wings of the dawn and settle down on the western horizon, even there your hand will lead me; your right hand will hold on to me. If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me, and the light around me will be night' — even the darkness is not dark to you. The night shines like the day; darkness and light are alike to you."

Fleeing from God? Where are you going? In Jeremiah 23:23-24 God says: "Am I a God who is only near . . . and not a God who is far away? Can a person hide in secret places where I cannot see him? . . . Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?"

The idea of God's omnipresence is not that God is simply present or partially present; the idea is that He fills the place. He is fully present—in all of His being, character, and attributes—everywhere, at all times. Nothing and no one escapes His attention.

However, when you are in rebellion, the last person you want to see is God. But everywhere you go, there God is. You cannot get away from Him. When we are rebelling, this seems like bad news. But it is actually great news. We should thank God that we cannot get away from Him.

Do you realize that the happiness in heaven and the horrors of hell are rooted in the same reality? The reality is the uncompromised holiness and justice of God. For the rebellious the justice of God is a horrible, terrible reality. For the redeemed it is their hope; it is their joy. Heaven is heaven because God is there in all of His goodness, giving those made righteous in Christ their reward. Hell is hell because there God's holiness is on display

### DISCUSS

Are there places that feel like God would never be? Explain. How do Jonah's experience, Psalm 139:7-12, and Jeremiah 23:23-24 relate to that feeling?

in the fullness of His wrath and righteous judgment. Everywhere you go it's the holiness and justice of God.

You cannot hide from God. A better course of action is to hide in God. You hide in Him, not from Him. "He hideth my soul," the songwriter says, "in the cleft of the rock."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, He does. It is God's delight for you to find refuge in Him. It is God's delight that you know Christ as that Rock in whom you can hide from the ravages of the wrath of God against rebellious sinners. You don't run from God; you run to Him. You don't hide from God, but rather by faith "your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3).

## 2. What does it mean to hide in God in our everyday lives?

**How do you hide in God?**

# Day 4

## A Resourceful God, Part 2

### *Omniscient*

God is not only omnipresent; our God is *omniscient*. Omniscience is God being all-knowing. God not only knew where Jonah was, but God also knew where Jonah was going. He not only knew Jonah was getting in the ship, but God knew where the ship was headed. God knew what Jonah was thinking, what was in his heart.

Omniscience is God's seeing all things, knowing all things. Jonah thought he was going to pull one over on God, yet the Bible says in Psalm 94:11, "The LORD knows the thoughts of mankind." Psalm 139:2 says, "You understand my thoughts from far away." Genesis 6:5 reminds us that prior to sending the great flood, God knew "that every inclination of the

### **DISCUSS**

Why might someone resent God's omniscience? Why might someone appreciate God's omniscience?

human mind was nothing but evil all the time.” Jeremiah 17:9-10 begins, “The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable—who can understand it?” It goes on to say, “I, the LORD, examine the mind, I test the heart.” God knows our hearts infinitely more than we can ever know them.

No doubt, this is a terror for those seeking to flee from Him. He knows what you’re planning before you plan it. For those trying to flee from God, this is a terrible thought. But for those seeking to find comfort and refuge in God, this is a comfort. Thus the psalmist could say with confidence in Psalm 139:23-24, “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the everlasting way.”

**1. Pause and pray the words of Psalm 139:23-24. What do you hear God saying to you?**

That’s the joy of knowing the Lord knows you. His knowledge of you calls you to repent of your sin, turn from your rebellion, and come to Him because you know there is no other refuge. The amazing thing is, the Lord who delights to know you in spite of your rebellion is the One who loves you. Have you ever contemplated that He who knows you best loves you most? Every person longs to be fully known and fully loved, but we are all afraid that if we were fully known, we could never be fully loved. Yet He who knows you most loves you best.

See how resourceful our God is? He’s all-present. He’s all-knowing. He’s all-powerful also.

*Omnipotent*

God is *omnipotent*. Omnipotence is God being all powerful. Jonah fled from God. Perhaps he thought God would find him too difficult to deal with. If the Bible makes one truth unmistakably clear, it is that the power of God is a beast. God’s power is not subject to the whims of nature or the will of men.

Both Jonah and the sea were in the hands of El Shaddai, the all-powerful God. Jonah believed himself safe in the boat heading to Tarshish.



However, in Jonah 1:4 we read, “The LORD threw a great wind onto the sea.” Why? Because God has a purpose, a plan. And His purposes were not going to be thwarted by Jonah’s schemes or obstinate rebellious ways.

Jonah underestimated the power of God and thought he could get in the ring with God. Like many of us, Jonah decided to fight with God. The truth is the power of God never wanes, nor does He get exasperated. Instead, God hurled a great wind upon the sea then threw the sea against the ship.

The men on board the ship began to fight for their lives. Yet they were not just fighting wind and wave. They were fighting against God. In a fight against the power and might of God, the best people can do is to call upon their idols. That’s what the men on board the ship did. And the best their idols could tell them to do, apparently, was to lighten the load, throw some of the cargo overboard. Their gods’ power and understanding amounted to nothing.

**2. Like the men on the boat, we hear plenty of worldly advice when it comes to navigating life’s storms. From your observation, what do people most often try, aside from yielding to God?**

**When have you tried this or another piece of worldly advice?**

The sovereign power of God is a sweet and awful place. Nothing can thwart His plan. If His purpose is to redeem you, and to bring you into the knowledge of Jesus Christ, who can stop Him? He is prepared to expend any resource at His disposal. He is prepared to extend everything, including the life of His own Son. He is prepared to use all of His power to save you.

Unfortunately, like Jonah, when God calls most of us, we are sound asleep. It is usually a rebellious sleep.

#### **DISCUSS**

What happens when, like Jonah, people think they can “get in the ring with God”? Have you ever attempted to take God on like that? Explain.

#### **NOTE**

He is prepared to use all of His power to save you.

# Day 5

## A Rebellious Sleep

Rather than obey God, Jonah went to sleep. Few things are as offensive as being asleep when you are supposed to be alert. Jonah was not just asleep. The Bible says Jonah was in a deep sleep. While the wind was blowing and the waves were crashing, Jonah was literally sleeping in the midst of God's power. This rebellious sleep illustrates Jonah's spiritual numbness.

There is a time to sleep, but not in the midst of God's power. Not when God is working His wonder and revealing His will all around you. God was doing mighty things around Jonah, yet Jonah was sleeping. There is a time to sleep, but not on the gospel. Romans 1:16 states, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation." Don't sleep when the power of God is at work all around you. Don't sleep as the gospel is being proclaimed. Wake up! Now is not the time to sleep.

Jonah slept in the midst of God's power. But he also slept in the midst of pagans. Who had to wake Jonah up? It was the unbelievers. Jonah may have slept on what God was doing, but the unbelievers weren't sleeping. They didn't know all that was going on, but they knew something was not right. There is a unique shame upon our spiritual numbness when the watching world can look at Christians in the church and know something is wrong, yet we seem to be asleep to it.

And yet here is the patience of the grace of God: God is not averse to using the unrepentant to awaken the repentant so the repentant may demonstrate repentance to the unrepentant. In other words, God will use the ungodly to wake up the godly so the godly will repent and show the ungodly what repentance looks like. God used these pagans to awaken Jonah. Here is the irony of ironies. They say to Jonah what Jonah should have been saying to Nineveh. "Get up! Call to your god. Maybe this god will consider us, and we won't perish" (Jonah 1:6). There it is—grace to the rebels. God was not going to let Jonah stay asleep. He came in power to wake Jonah up. He does the same thing for you and me.

### DISCUSS

What might spiritual numbness or spiritual sleep look like in the life of a Christian?

### NOTE

God will use the ungodly to wake up the godly so the godly will repent and show the ungodly what repentance looks like.

## 1. How has God awakened you from a spiritual slumber at some point in the past?

God is going to use all His power to finally wake you up because His desire is to pursue rebels unto bringing them into the knowledge and the will of God. What a marvelous, grace-filled thought. Perhaps, if you get up and call on God, He will be gracious. And the operative word here is *perhaps*, because salvation isn't owed to anyone. Perhaps, God will be gracious because salvation is always by grace. God is not obligated at all to deal with any of us contrary to what we actually deserve. Jonah was a rebel. Jonah was treasonous. And like Nineveh, Jonah deserved death.

Rebels don't deserve mercy. Traitors deserve to be executed. And if you are anything like me, then you know your life is that of a rebel. You know where you have come from, where you were when you were in rebellion against God. The only hope rebels have is the mercy of God. The message of Jonah is, stop the rebellion and cry out to God for mercy.

I am confident that if you call on God for mercy today, God *will* (not just *perhaps*) be merciful to you. He will be merciful because now is the time and today is the day of salvation. He sent one greater than Jonah, and His name is Jesus; and He says, "Wake up! Salvation has come to your home and your heart today. Wake up!" Stop rebelling. His will is best. Stop running. Find your rest in Him.

## 2. Who do you know that needs to hear the message: "Stop rebelling. Stop running"?

**How might God use you to deliver that message in the near future?**

### DISCUSS

Read Exodus 34:5-7. How does the experience of Jonah reflect the message of these verses?

1. Fanny J. Crosby, "He Hideth My Soul."

# LEADER GUIDE

**The main point of this lesson is:** Each person is rebellious toward God, but He extends grace to them anyway.

**Focus on this goal:** To help adults acknowledge their own rebellious tendencies toward God

**Key Bible Passage:** Jonah 1:1-6

## Before the Session

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On a board or large piece of paper, draw a long horizontal line, labeling the far left with the number 1, the far right with the number 10, and the center with the number 5. Write *Rebellious* at the top. (Step 1)

## During the Session

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### STEP 1 - Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

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Briefly **share** a humorously rebellious time in your history. (For example, if you hated brushing your teeth and went to great lengths to avoid it.)

**Draw** learners' **attention** to the board. **Say:** *I'm not going to ask you to tell the situation, but consider the most rebellious season of your life. On a scale of 1 to 10, where would you rate your rebellion compared to others your age?* As learners volunteer a number, **write** their names on the chart at the corresponding spot.

**Write**, *Jonah* at the number 10. **Say:** *For the next several weeks, we're going to look at a man whom many might consider to be the most rebellious God follower in the Old Testament: Jonah.*

### STEP 2 - A Rebellious Beginning, Part 1

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**Ask:** *If you had to summarize the story line of the Bible in one sentence, what would it be?* (**Request** that any learners who remember the author's

summary not volunteer his answer.) **Read** the Day One Note (p. 8). **Engage** learners in discussing if they agree or disagree with the quote.

**Read** Romans 5:12 from your Bible; **draw** parallels between that verse and Jonah's theme.

**Invite** a volunteer to read Jonah 1:1-2. **Help** learners understand that God's command was clear and direct.

**Read** the last paragraph of Day One (p. 9), **pointing out** the irony of a rebellious prophet, but reminding learners we are all inherently rebellious.

## STEP 3 - A Rebellious Beginning, Part 2

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**Enlist** a volunteer to read Jonah 1:1-3. (Yes, that's repeating the first two verses. We'll do that a few times.) **Say:** *We'd like to think that if we clearly heard a word from God, we'd immediately follow. But what do you think pointed Jonah away from Nineveh?*

**Help** learners consider Jonah's opinion of Ninevites and his own selfish feelings toward certain groups of people today. **Use** Day Two content (pp. 9-10) to **point out** that it's not ignorance that's the source of rebellion; it's willful disobedience.

**Read** the paragraph (p. 11) that begins, "I'm sure there were people . . ." and **challenge** learners to consider how they may hide their own rebellion from themselves and others.

## STEP 4 - A Resourceful God, Part 1

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**Read** from your Bible the first three words of Jonah 1:4 ("But the LORD"). Then **read** the Day Three Note (p. 11).

**Explain** that Jonah's story helps us understand more clearly some of God's most mysterious characteristics: first, He's omnipresent.

**Invite** a volunteer to read Psalm 139:7-12. **Share** a time in your own life that you tried to "hide" from God.

**Help** learners see that God's seeking us out in our rebellion is an expression of His mercy, not His judgment. **Read** the last Day Three paragraph (p. 13), and **engage** learners in what it means to hide in God rather than hiding from Him.

## STEP 5 - A Resourceful God, Part 2

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**Enlist** a volunteer to read Jonah 1:1-5. **Say:** *In addition to being omnipresent, we see in these verses that God is also omniscient and omnipotent.*

**Use** Day Four content (pp. 13-15) to be sure learners are familiar with these theological terms. **Read** the second Day Four paragraph (pp. 13-14) as a brief overview of Scripture concerning God's omniscience. **Point out** that His all-knowing understanding is terrifying for those rebelling, but comforting for those in His will.

**Ask:** *How do we see God's omnipotence in the first few verses of Jonah?*

**Read** the Day Four Note (p. 15). **Lead** learners in a discussion of that quote, **asking** if they agree or disagree and why. **Invite** a few volunteers to share their own testimonies of God's using His power to save them in some manner.

## STEP 6 -A Rebellious Sleep

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**Enlist** a volunteer to read Jonah 1:1-6. **Say:** *And while the storm was roiling and the men on the boat were panicking, Jonah was sleeping. How does that reflect his spiritual condition?*

**Use** Day Five content (pp. 16-17) to **guide** learners to consider their own spiritual slumber when we should be observing and participating in God's work around us.

**Read** the Day Five Note (p. 16). **Engage** learners in discussing the significance of that truth.

## STEP 7 - Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

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**Say:** *We can't read the first six verses of Jonah without encountering the knowledge, power, and presence of God. At the same time, we can't help but see His mercy.*

**Use** Day Five content (pp. 16-17) to **encourage** learners to dwell on God's mercy in Jonah's story as well as their own.

**Read** Luke 18:9-14. **Close in prayer**, asking that God would help us clearly see our own rebellious condition and cry out for God's mercy.

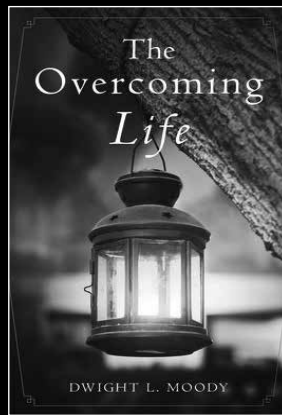
# Next Quarter

S P R I N G 2 0 2 3



**Unfailing Love  
in Uncertain Times**  
Ryan Wicker

7 sessions



**The Overcoming Life**  
D. L. Moody

6 sessions

S U M M E R 2 0 2 3

The Good Life, Derwin Grey (7 sessions)

Gideon, Priscilla Shirer (6 sessions)

F A L L 2 0 2 3

The God Who Is There, D. A. Carson (9 sessions)

Live No Lies, John Mark Comer (4 sessions)

## RUNNING FROM MERCY

Jonah heard God’s call to preach to the city of Ninevah and immediately set out—in the opposite direction. He was a prophet on the run. When God convinced him to follow through on His call, Jonah became angry when God demonstrated mercy to the city’s residents, then became angered again when God removed His mercy to Jonah in the form of a shady plant.

## JOYFUL SURRENDER

Jesus proclaimed He had come to give His followers life in abundance. But that abundance doesn’t happen simply by accident or chance. It happens as His followers discipline their lives to more and more completely surrender to His lordship, as a disciplined horse surrenders to it’s rider’s directives. Let’s examine several of those disciplines.

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