

How to Come Back to God

Word

Scripture Reference

Jonah 2:1-10

Discussion Questions

1. Why do some Christians turn their back from God? Discuss the reason why it is possible to come back to God.
2. The prophet Jonah ran away from God when He found out where God wanted him to go. Instead of following God, he went to the opposite direction (v. 1:1-2). Jonah probably didn't mean to end up being so far away from God; but what did he do to flee from the Lord (v. 1:3)? What transpired after Jonah boarded the boat (v. 1:4-16)?
3. Read Jonah 2:1-10. Being thrown out of the boat into the sea in a raging storm must have terrified Jonah. What did the Lord provide in order for Jonah to return to Him (v. 1:17)? Jonah found himself in a highly unusual and unwelcome situation as a result of his disobedience. From his experience, we learn what it takes to come back to God. First, we need to come back to God with honest prayer (v. 1-2, 7). What did Jonah say to God in this most hopeless circumstance? Was God really too far away from him? Was there a time in your life when you thought you could hide from God? Do you actually think you can hide from God? Explain why or why not. How does it make you feel knowing that God is just a prayer away? How can you help someone who is not aware of God's presence?
4. Secondly, we need to come back with heartfelt faith (2:3-6, 9). Jonah did not only recognize that God is near, but he also recognized that God is in control over the circumstances of his life. Moreover, Jonah reaffirmed his faith in God and believed that God would deliver him (v. 6). Jonah had memorized and hid God's Word in his heart, which enabled him to pray out of the scriptures. Read the following verses and see how he quoted the book of Psalms in his prayer: Psalm 120:1; 86:13; 88:6; 42:7; 31:22; 69:1-2; 30:3. Do you memorize Bible verses? How does it help you in times of trouble? How would God's Word show you the way back to God? Discuss.
5. Thirdly, we need to come back to God with humble confession. What did Jonah say we miss out on when we run away from God (v. 2:8)? We can infer from Jonah's prayer that he had confessed his sins and repented in two ways:
 - (a) He was repentant by acknowledging that he deserved the things that happened to him when he ran away. Have you ever experienced enduring the consequences of your sins? How did you deal with them?
 - (b) He showed repentance by not asking for anything. He was simply genuinely sorry for his sin. What makes this attitude worthy to be emulated? Do you repent in exchange for something or repent with hidden motive? Why is it wrong to do so?
6. Finally, we need to come back to God with holy praise (v. 2:9-10). Because God has delivered him, Jonah vows to sing with a voice of thanksgiving and to offer sacrifices fitting for what God has done for him. Discuss how God's children can express their praises and thankfulness to God. How would being able to return to God end in praises and thankfulness?

Walk

Jonah discovered that the road back to God begins with honest prayer. It is telling God, "I'm in trouble, I turn to you, Lord!" Likewise, as a wayward child you come back to God the Father with heartfelt faith, with humble confession, and finally with holy praise.

"So the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land." (v. 10). Chapter 3 tells us that Jonah went to Nineveh, the place where God wanted him to go in the first place. What do you learn from Jonah's experience about wandering from God? Would obedience and keeping close to Him save you from trouble? Ask the Lord to learn not only from your own mistakes, but also from the mistakes of others.

Worship & Prayer

Heavenly Father, if there is one thing I would often be reluctant to do, it is to come to You in humility and ask forgiveness for not making obedience to You the top priority in my life. Instead, I often feel the pressure of being Your follower in a world that rejects You. I cave and run away from what You ask me to do, sometimes in selfishness, oftentimes in fear. But Father, thank You for being the God who is merciful, the God who delivers even when I have wandered away. In Jesus You have given me unlimited chances to come back to You, and I do so today, acknowledging that I am wrong in choosing my desires over Yours. Forgive me, Father. Allow me and enable me to accomplish what You have planned for me. I praise and thank You, in Christ name. Amen.