

Chapter 35: Don't Run Away, Taterpop

Life Application Verses:

Jonah 1: 3. But Jonah ran away from the LORD ... [READ JONAH 1 – 4 & NUMBERS 22: 21-39]

I've talked about my precious granddaughter a bit in these writings, and I received a nugget of Precious Love from her recently. When she comes over now, as she is growing up in Spirit, personality, and as a beautiful little young person (even at going on 5), she is a True Blessing for me and Nana. She's a burst of energy, and is most creative in her time with us. During this particular weekend, I had some work to catch up on, so she slept with Nana—only after she had me lay down with them until she fell asleep.

The next day, Dakota and I went to feed the ducks at the Shakespeare Museum and visit Wal-Mart! As we were leaving the Shakespeare Museum once our bread rations ran out, we talked on the way back to the SUV. I told her how much me and Nana loved her and enjoyed having her over to spend the night and have fun and play and learn stuff! Well, she gave me that nugget of Precious Love in her response: "I like to spend the night too, but don't run away Taterpop!" She was referring to my not being in the bed when she awoke. I thought that she would just wake up, we would be in our play modes, and feed the ducks and shop at Wal-Mart. But, she was a little disappointed that her Taterpop was not there in the bed the next morning with her and Nana. What hit me so hard when she presented this nugget of Precious Love was this: Is not what Dakota said to me the very approach God uses in His desire to have fellowship with us? Does He not pursue us and ask that we 'not run away?'

Since Dakota said that to me, I have felt a tug on my Heart-Strings about my running away from God, at times. Then I thought about the running-away from the perspective of the Holy Bible. There are many examples in God's Word and in our everyday lives that validate running from God, but the one that stands out for me is Jonah. Jonah's example sticks out like a proverbial sore-thumb because it is so plain to understand. If you are a Christian of any years and have spent time in your local Church or studied your Bible, you undoubtedly have read or heard about Jonah. The Book of Jonah is only four chapters long, but what a ride! I've never been in the belly of a great fish, nor does the idea have much appeal! But running away from

God—oh yeah, I've done that and if we are honest, we are all guilty of doing that at times in our lives.

Jonah was commanded by the Lord to go to Ninevah and tell the people of the city that their God was very displeased with them. But Jonah didn't want to go, so he ran from God by purchasing a ticket with The High Waves Cruise Line, to be a passenger on *The Bouncing Boat!* I can't imagine how high the waves must have been, but it frightened the men on the boat severely. When I was in Rota, Spain, I rode from

the tip of Southern Spain through the Straits of Gibraltar to the tip of Northern Africa on board a hydrofoil. These ships/boats ride above the water



and travel fast. We rode up the side of a wave and down the other side of the same wave. The waves (swells) were quite large, some **several** feet in height and the magnitude of their width across was staggering. I was a bit uncomfortable being in the trough of a wave that towered over the boat as we rolled up and rolled down those really big 'Ocean Ripples.' So, I can imagine a wee bit of what those men on the boat with Jonah were going through in terms of the waves—and add the power of the wind as it beat against those sails, and horrified men on the boat doesn't even begin to tell their story of fear.

Now, God saw that Jonah was on the run, so He did the following: “And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights” (Jonah 1: 17). I get this visual that God was watching Jonah run like crazy to the boat, and then He spoke to the 'great fish' and literally said, “My Great Fish, I am appointing you to do something for Me. My servant Jonah is on the run from Me because he does not want to help save those old Ninevites. Would you mind being at Latitude: 31°46'44” N, Longitude: 35°13'31” E, on Thursday morning at 9:37AM? The boat of which Jonah is a passenger will encounter a terrible storm Thursday.” (If you look up these coordinates, you will discover something very WOWish. Remember, this story is over water! I used these coordinates as an example...)

The great fish responds, “I shall do this, My Lord. You made me and I am a creature of Your design and creation.” The Lord replies, “And when you get there, I have a little job for

you.” The great fish says in response, “What would You have me to do, O God, Maker of all Living Things?” And God said unto the great fish, “Oh, swallow Jonah for Me and keep him safe in your stomach for three days and three nights. Don't digest him, just hold on to him for that time. At the end of the three days and nights, I want you to go to the beach I direct you to, and regurgitate Jonah onto the beach—seaweed and all! I am going to teach him a very important lesson about why it is important not to run from **I AM THAT I AM.**” The great fish ‘smiles’ and begins to swim to the coordinates God provided. And **precisely** as the great fish arrives, here comes Jonah over the side of the ship. The great fish gulps once, and swims away—‘knowing’ that it has served its Maker faithfully. Is this feasible? Absolutely. Who made the Universe?

As you read through the entire Book of Jonah, you will find that the men on the boat with Jonah became very afraid for their lives. They began to call out to their gods and when they realized that Jonah was asleep, they inquired as to who he was and who was *his* God? The men on that boat ran **into** Jonah's God—**I AM THAT I AM.** IN fact, in 1: 16, the Bible says: “Then the men feared the Lord greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.” You see something here? When we run from God, we run into Him. We can't outrun God! He is already everywhere, so where are we going to run? It's like when we see someone we try to avoid (and we are all guilty of this in some form or fashion)—we take the first turn around the first corner to shake them from our domain of self. We think we have lost them until they round their own corner and ... wham! ... we put on a big smile and exclaim, “Hey, how are you!?” Capitulation is written all over our faces until we get out of sight, out of mind. Then we run as fast as we can to avoid running into them again! Shame on us all (this includes me).

It's the same thing when we run from God. He is around every corner, in every situation, at every breath we take—**YOU CANNOT RUN FROM GOD!** Oh, we can delude ourselves and think we can run from Him, but Brothers and Sisters in Christ—you know this is impossible. Even in our sin, do you think God is not still there? We cannot run away. We are good at convincing ourselves that we have run away, but if we look over our shoulder, God is right there—Jesus is standing right there in Plain Spiritual Sight! Ignoring Jesus is an attempt at running away...with consequences too terrible to contemplate in Eternity!

My granddaughter is God's Angel and when that little voice said, "Taterpop, don't run away", it was if I saw myself in God's YouTube of me running away to hide my sin. I promised my Dakota that I would never run away from her again so that her expectation of my being there for her would never be in doubt—ever again. Jonah learned that to run from God was to spend a three day, three night vacation in a place that was quite disturbing. If you read Jonah's account of the event, he even said of the event in Chapter 2, v. 5: "Water encompassed me to the point of death. The great deep engulfed me, Weeds were wrapped around my head." Weeds? When I read this verse, I had this image of Jonah sitting in the belly of the great fish with seaweed stuck to his arms, wrapped all around his head and neck, and he was contemplating his action of running from God. Remember also, God appointed this great fish for this special assignment. If you wonder whether the Lord had a conversation with His great fish, read Numbers 22: 21-39 about the story of Balaam's Donkey. I, for one, believe that God talked to the great fish and gave it precise coordinates, arrival time, gulping directions, non-digestive restrictions, and beach-upchuck guidelines. Never doubt that God's power is limitless.

I also believe that my granddaughter delivered a message to me when she told me not to run away. What message? Within her words, there was the love between us that cannot be broken. The same is true with God, because He is Love. That's who He is, His very essence. If His love is all around us, why do we waste time running from Him? It's like the air we breathe? Ever try running away from the very air you need for life? It just ain't gonna happen for very long! Oh you might hold your breath for a few minutes but at some point you will faint and begin to breathe under normal circumstances, or you will discover the folly of your attempt and reflexively gasp for air. Either way, you cannot escape the air you need to live. So it is with God's love. You can't avoid it or run from God to avoid it—oh, we can tell ourselves we are running from God because of anger, hatred, disbelief, or any other number of reasons. But just as the air surrounds and permeates our lives, so God's love permeates our lives. The problem—we must accept that Love. We must accept air to live, and we must accept God's Love in Christ Jesus to live! Without God, we only exist for a little while (this life and then we will live in Eternal Separation); without air, we only exist for a little while! This is veritas!

Just as my Dakota asked me not to run away, I have to accept her words and take action on them. Now when she wants me to sleep with her and Nana as we talk and share and fall asleep, I am reminded of how much that love between me, Dakota, and Nana means—and what it means. I can't run away from it—but I could reject it and disappoint those I love. When we run from God, or convince ourselves we are doing pretty well at a successful run from God, we fail to realize that God is there before us, behind us, and all around us. Love and air are like the two sides of a coin: you can't live without air and you cannot **LIVE** without the Love of God. Living and existing are the two sides of a coin also. Give me Life with God and you give me Hope; give me a life without God, and *Hope is what I tell myself I have to make me feel better.*

I will remember the words of Dakota for the rest of my life. I will be reminded that I can't run away from God because if He is already there before me, then how silly is it for me to run from God when He is already there when I show up at the place I thought I was safe from God. It's a catch-22 and it is a waste of time and energy. Yet, so many in the world today do just that: they deny God exists; they condemn Christians for believing in a 'story'; they want to stop Prayer in schools; they want Believers to join them in running away from God; they hate anything about Christ Jesus; and, they want to have all people believe as they do because they have run away from God as far as they think they can go and that they are safe. How silly, but how tragic! God was there eons before they arrived in their attempt to run from Him. He is in their midst, yet they refuse His offer of Love and Eternal Life in Christ Jesus. What an eternal tragedy! Running from God is not Heavenly Minded, and it results in things not Earthly Good.

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World News Network
Reported by Secular Stephens: March 21, 2014, Great Lakes Michigan
"Man claims to have been in belly of whale"

Great Lakes Michigan, 08:45AM. This reporter spent several hours with a man today, Jonah James, President of the Great Lakes Michigan Ministry (GLMM) and a life-time resident of Great Lakes, Michigan. Mr. James, during the interview, claimed that he had been instructed by his God, described by Mr. James as Jehovah, to go to Ninevah, Canada, across the Great Lakes. He stated that he had never truly appreciated the Ninevites and, although he did not like to admit failure in his Faith, decided to do the opposite of what Jehovah has instructed him to do. Mr. James admitted to purchasing a ticket with Great Lakes Cruise Lines headed to the Western Shore, Great Lakes, Michigan, in the nearly opposite direction from Ninevah to avoid the instructions of his Jehovah.

World News Network has uncovered a passenger who had a seat next to Mr. James. This passenger, who remains anonymous for fear of retaliation from Great Lakes Cruise Lines, identified Mr. James as the only passenger on the ship that had fallen asleep on the trip to Western Shore during a violent storm that came up suddenly. This anonymous passenger said that because Mr. James was the only one who could sleep, all the other passengers on board thought this was too coincidental and woke Mr. James up, at which time, Mr. James stated that he was the cause of the storm. The passengers, according to this source, decided to throw Mr. James overboard to calm the storm. They all claim that the storm immediately subsided and that they now also believed in Mr. James's Jehovah.

It has been corroborated with several passengers that many of them saw what they thought was a huge fish swim by the ship and that subsequent to this appearance, Mr. James was no longer seen in the water. Some three days later, Mr. James appeared at the Western Shore Resort suddenly and miraculously with various forms of seaweed and ocean fauna attached to his body. No one can prove the truthfulness of what Jonah James claims. However, Mr. James adamantly declares that his Jehovah delivered him to the Western Shore Resort location as proof of His power.

This reporter has not been able to confirm this wild story. As with many so-called Christians of our modern times, it is unsubstantiated that such an event is likely to have occurred. Mr. James is entitled to his First Amendment Rights; however, without proof, it is skeptical that a great fish actually swallowed Jonah James. Rather, it is highly likely that Mr. James was able to survive the storm and swam through the seaweed just before arriving on the shore at Western Shore Resort. Reporting from Western Shore Resort, Great Lakes, this is Secular Stephens, World News Network.

Heard off camera: "I think I'm going to dig a bit deeper into this story. If it's true, then this Jehova is a mighty God and I want to be a part of that," stated Secular Stephens. His comments have created a 'viral blogfest' on the matter as the non-believers have accused him of being a heretic and blind to the truth.

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A Question of Curiosity:

Are you a Jonah? Remember: the ocean has many great fish, as does life. Run to God and let the great fish swim another day without your ticket for passage. Think about it...

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"Could God have prepared a great fish to be in the vicinity of the foundering ship, to scoop Jonah out of the raging sea, transport him to shore and vomit him up?

Absolutely! If He is the all-powerful Creator God, preparing a fish and timing the whole event was not a great drain on His power or ability. He is in no way limited by what He created."

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My Prayer For You:

Heavenly Father, at times, I have been Jonah in my life. I've run from you by avoiding my Prayer time with you, or by refraining from study in Your Word. There have been times I have felt that my circumstances are the great fish and I am in its belly, being buffeted about by the uncertainty of my choices. Even so, O Lord, you gave me wisdom in the small voice of a child when she said something so simple, yet so utterly profound: Don't run away, Taterpop. I understand what I have done clearly now and I ask your forgiveness and restoration to Fellowship and a Life lived for You. I ask that if someone is reading these words, use my own example to help them understand that when we fail to Pray, Study, or Live our lives for Christ, we are in essence, running from our God. To not be in Your presence in every moment of our life is to be away from You and that is nothing short of running from You—just as Jonah ran from You in following Your will for his life. Forgive us, for we truly do not understand what we do. We make excuses, we look inward, and we fail to go to the Source of all things to make our lives count for You in Christ Jesus. To be outside of Your daily will is to run from you. I Pray that our great fish will not be a part of our lives, but that in Your Grace and Mercy, You will guide us to a life lived for you before a world that doesn't even believe that You have the Power to create a great fish to swallow a man and keep him alive for three days and nights. I believe every word of this event because it is You, O God, that made all things and You have the Power over all things. Help our unbelief and our tendency to run from You instead of run to You. In the Name of Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior, Amen.

Notes:
