
Engage

Almighty God, indeed You are sovereign and eminent, in control of even the seas and the dry land. Forgive us when we doubt or allow our fears to overwhelm us. Grant us the courage to do Your will, the grit to run our races and the stillness of heart and mind in the midst of life's storms. To You we yield and surrender our lives. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.





SERMON SUMMARY

Note to Word Facilitator: The sermon notes below is a summary of the sermon. You may choose to further summarize it according to the needs and context of your CG members. The goal is not just to go through it “verbatim” but to prepare well, allowing members to recall and engage the message in the best possible way.

Run Like Jonah? #1: God Pursues You

Elder Ann Wan Kuan

Jonah 1:1-17

The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.”

But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord.

Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship.

But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. The captain went to him and said, “How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish.”

Then the sailors said to each other, “Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity.” They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.

So they asked him, “Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?”

He answered, “I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” This terrified them and they asked, “What have you done?” (They knew he was running away from the Lord, because he had already told them so.) The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, “What

should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?" "Pick me up and throw me into the sea," he replied, "and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you." Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before.

Then they cried out to the Lord, "Please, Lord, do not let us die for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, Lord, have done as you pleased." Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him.

Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Introduction *1 John 4:10, 19*

This weekend's sermon is the first in the 'Run like Jonah?' series based on the book of Jonah. Jonah 1 begins with God pursuing Jonah. God similarly pursues each one of us today, for He is the initiator, author and finisher of our lives. It is He who pursues us, out of His boundless love for us, even while we were still sinners. It is not up to us to pursue Him. The main character in this book is God, not Jonah. He pursues Jonah to do His Will in saving the people of Nineveh.

Today, some people are running away from God or His calling. Some are giving up hope in God. Some are living in the midst of storms. Many are losing hope: hope for Malaysia, hope in the midst of storms in our lives, be it in our career, health, education or even in relationships with loved ones.

Jonah 1 touches on three categories of people that God pursues.

1. God Pursued the People of the City of Nineveh. *Jonah 1:1-2 Luke 19:11-26*

God instructed Jonah to go to Nineveh, a city which is the heart of civilization, a commercial hub and growing rapidly in population to preach against it because it had become a place of spiritual poverty. The city's people were so busy they had lost focus on God.

DUMC is a city church that should impact and influence the Klang Valley which has the highest rate of urbanisation in our country. In the parable in Luke 19, the employer gives ten, five or one minas to his workers. Likewise, we have been given charge of the 'city' which is the Klang Valley. As a Cell-church that is Christ-centred, we as faithful servants, need to reach out and take the market share.

2. God Pursued Jonah. *2 Kings 14:23-29, Jonah 1:3, 5; 2:3; 4:2*

God pursued Jonah for three reasons by instructing him to go to Nineveh. But Jonah ran away from God because:

- a) Jonah was prejudiced against the people of Nineveh. God wanted to remove this prejudice from Jonah. Jonah only wanted to save the people of God but did not want to save his enemies. He did not want God to forgive them.

= God pursues us to remove us from our prejudice.

- b) Jonah did not respond immediately to God's calling. In fact he ran away from His calling by boarding a ship in the opposite direction, towards Tarshish. Jonah was spiritually complacent.

= God pursues us to awaken us from our spiritual complacency / disobedience.

- c) Due to his complacency, Jonah plummeted spiritually as he sank further down in the ship and was willing to give up his life. God caused a storm to wreck the ship and saved Jonah through the belly of a big fish.

= God pursues us to awaken us from our spiritual complacency.

God does not give up on us in the storms. He is a Pursuing God.

3. God Pursued the Sailors. *Jonah 1:4-5*

The sailors were caught in the storm because of Jonah whom God wants to discipline and bring back to His plan. Sometimes we experience storms because we live in a broken world. Our disobedience can cause storms for others and vice versa. In the midst of our storms, we need to let go and let God as He loves us. Let us be reminded that God is in control and pursues us. Surrender your life to Jesus. Let us step forward and say, "God I need You." Prayer is talking and reaching out to God.

Conclusion *Psalms 46:1, Philippians 4:19, Romans 8:38-39*

We face many challenges in our lives. The Watoto Children's Choir tour group shared how God has saved many of them from poverty and given them Hope for a better life. They shared that there are better days to come in Jesus.

God had given us Jesus to die for our sins so that we may be reconciled to Him. God is a good God. He wants to love us. So DON'T GIVE UP ON GOD!



APPLICATION

Note to Word facilitator:

As you prepare for this session, this is a great time to pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you to use the questions efficiently. You can select, modify or entirely create your own questions, according to the needs of your CG, especially if you feel that there are too many questions than required for the allocated time. The questions below are crafted with a certain flow in mind. You could use these towards the end or insert them in between your own sermon reflection and summary.

Suggested Icebreaker Activity/Questions

- Divide the CG into two teams to play a game of “Jonah vs Solomon”. Each member must do an action or give a description that depicts either foolishness or wisdom. Then, the team members must guess whether the action or description fits “Jonah” or “Solomon”.



Photo taken by an Engage writer.

- The word 'Jonah' in the Hebrew language means 'dove' - a silly or senseless animal (ref: *Hosea 7:11*). Share an action that you have come across which was silly or senseless to you.

Suggested Word Introductory Questions

- The theme of the 2025 Watoto Children's Choir is "Better Days". How have the children's testimonies and the sounds of Africa impacted you? What do you hope will turn out for the better?
- Which category of people do you identify with the most: The people in the city of Nineveh, Jonah or the sailors? Why?

Suggested Questions linked to the Sermon:

- Are there people whom you think and feel that they do not deserve to know the Gospel? How did this sense of prejudice come about and what practical steps would you take to overcome these prejudices?
- Are you in the midst of a storm? Are you a contributing factor to the storm or are you helping to ease the situation? How far would you go to solve the issue at hand? What do you think God is saying to you in this situation?
- Often those who are at fault are slow to admit their errors or incompetencies causing us to bear the brunt of the subsequent consequences. How would you manage through those situations? What advice would you give to those who are facing similar backlash or struggles?

Question Bank *(Extra questions that you can use to bring your discussion further as you see fit):*

- Are you constantly doing things that you know you should not do? How can you set boundaries and guard yourself from doing them again?
- Are you at a crossroad in making decisions about your career, finances or a relationship? Besides praying to God and asking Him for wisdom and guidance in your decision-making, who else do you seek help from? Why?
- Is there a time when you felt that God has abandoned you as you sought His help earnestly in prayer for someone's life? How have you overcome this?

To know more about the Watoto Children's Choir, click [here](#).



SERMON REFLECTION



Photo by Lex Photography on Pexels

Looking back in life, I would say that there are many instances when I was like Jonah.

I recall the time when I was first posted to work in a high profile primary school when my family had shifted to stay in my present home. It was a drastic move from a suburban location to a competitive township. I was being taken out from a comfort zone into a new challenging environment, starting afresh. In fact there was no one to turn to and so I had only God to depend on. But truly God was present as He sent a colleague who is kind and helpful during times when I was giving up on the challenges I faced with the head of the school. I wanted to quit yet was unable to due to financial commitments and the education needs of my children.

God not only provided a friend but sisters-in-Christ to pray alongside with me while facing the storms of work. Yes, I was caught in a few storms as a result of favoritism by the head of the school over other teachers. I had to bear with challenging tasks which others do not wish to do such as going for a continual 2-year programme to teach Mathematics in English when I was only a trained English teacher. But as I went through the storm, I came out better in my skills not only in Mathematics but also in using IT to teach.

So perhaps it was God's intention for me to undergo the storm in order to serve Him better now as I am more IT savvy and able to serve with the Engage Writers to encourage others.

God is good all the time and He is ever present in my time of need. So do not give up on God as He never gives up on You.

Contributed by Michelle Chuah



MISSIONAL

Note to CGL: Inspire and encourage the Cell Group members to participate in the activity suggested below (from our CrossFields, Missions department) together to cultivate a culture of being a missional church.



CrossFields

**MISSIONS CANDIDATES'
PREPARATION PROGRAMME 1**

26 - 27 April 2025 

(2 days 1 night stay-in training)

 bit.ly/mcpp1_apr2025

Missions Candidates' Preparation Programme 1 (MCPPI)

 Discover God's heart for the nations

Understand His deep love and desire for every nation, tribe, and tongue to know Him

 Learn what missions is about

Dive into the purpose of missions and how it fits into God's global plan

 Equip yourself with practical tools

Gain hands-on training to be His witness wherever He calls you—whether near or far, in your community or across the world.

No matter where God is calling you, this training will prepare and empower you to step out in faith. Don't miss this chance to be part of something bigger than yourself. Come and find your place in His story!

 Sign up here: bit.ly/mcpp1_apr2025



PRAYER

Note to CGL: You (or someone you assign this portion to), may lead by praying OR reading these prayers together as a CG during worship.

Lent Corporate Prayer

Dear God, thank you for Your mercy and love for us. We come before You with a contrite heart, acknowledging that we have sinned against You. By the power of the Holy Spirit, strengthen us so that we may live a life that is pleasing to You.

Create in us a pure heart, and renew a steadfast spirit within us. Restore to us the joy of our salvation and give us the perseverance to run this race until the end. Shine Your light in us and through us so that we may make a difference wherever You have placed us.

May we behold Your beauty, goodness, and truth and find our delight in You. Help us to fix our eyes on our Saviour, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.
