



Near and Now

When I Doubt My Calling – Disciples Desert Jesus
By Frieda Mottonen

Warm-up Question

When in your life have you felt the urge to run away?

This could be from certain responsibilities, personal situations, or unpleasant experiences (big or small)



Photo by Alex Radelich on [Unsplash](#)

Discussion Questions

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

Then All the Disciples Deserted Him and Fled

Read [Matthew 26:47-56](#)

Bible Story Reflection

We have reached what some may argue is the climax of the gospel – Jesus’ betrayal and arrest at the hands (or lips, rather) of one of his disciples, Judas. He arrives with an angry mob ready to take Jesus away and ultimately sentence Jesus to death. Jesus knows immediately what Judas is here to do, so he gives him permission to get on with it. All that is occurring has been foretold, so we see Jesus comply with an air of non-resistance. One of Jesus’ disciples reacts violently to his arrest, which he immediately puts a stop to. This is how it must be; there is no sense in adding fuel to the fire.

Jesus points out to the crowd that just days prior he had been teaching in the Temple peacefully, but now there has been a 180-degree shift in the people who have now come to punish him. Still not holding this against them, Jesus is certain that this is how the story is meant to continue according to the fulfillment of the scriptures. When all is said and done, the disciples dip. The person they once so easily dropped everything for in order to follow they now desert once things get too intense. They are afraid of what’s next, not only for Jesus, but also for themselves, so they run away.

When life is easy, it is easy to remain strong in one’s faith and sense of purpose. But the reality of life is that it is not always easy. So, when the going gets tough, it can feel much easier to abandon those things that we have been holding onto. Sometimes, we desert our faith without even knowing it through neglect or just getting too caught up in distractions. We can be just as fearful as the first disciples were.

The hard thing to do is to stay committed during times of challenge. Instead of giving up, we can rise to meet the challenge, holding firm to our foundation and trusting in the greater plan God has for us. This may require us to stop running, to turn back, or to change directions. God is there for us through all of it and we can find new strength through putting our trust in that.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think the significance is of Jesus being betrayed by a kiss?
2. Put yourself in the shoes of the disciples. Would you run away?
3. How do you think the disciples that fled would tell this story? How might Judas?
4. The disciples exhibited choosing flight as a response to fear in this story. Do you tend to choose to fight, flight, or freeze in fear-inducing situations?
5. Describe a time when you overcame a fear. What helped you accomplish that?
6. What kinds of fears do you face on a daily or weekly basis?
7. Think about a child running away from home. When we take it back to that basic instinct, why do you think we feel the need to run away sometimes?
8. How can you combat the urge to run away when times are tough?
9. What can you remind yourself of when it feels like it would be easier to run away?

Activity Suggestions

Make a list of all the fears you can think of. Rank them from the least to the most terrifying. Pick one that is somewhere in the middle and come up with a plan of how you might face and overcome that fear.

Everyone in a group gets three slips of paper. Write down three fears you have, anonymously, and then collect all the slips in one place. Take turns picking and reading out fears. Optional: have people raise their hand if they can relate to the fear that is read. Only add this element if there is a strong sense of group trust already established.

Pick one of your fears to illustrate on a piece of paper. Take time to sit with your fear, take deep breaths, and see how long it takes you to begin to calm yourself in the presence of something that you are afraid of.

Prayer Concerns

Those struggling with fears, people who have run away, maintaining courage in the face of challenge

Closing Prayer

Prayer: Sometimes I give up on you, O God. Forgive me. Restore me, and call me anew. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

