

SHORT TALK 1:

God wanted Jonah to go to Nineveh. Nineveh was the capital of a country called Assyria and Assyria in those days was the superpower of the region. The Assyrians were also Israel's arch enemies. (By the way that's where Jonah came from).

So Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh. Instead he went in the opposite direction and hopped on a boat to Tarshish. But it wasn't because he was afraid to face his powerful enemies. It wasn't that he was scared to give them this message from God about repenting and turning from their evil ways. Jonah wasn't worried his enemies would laugh at him, make fun of him, or even attack him. No, what Jonah was worried about was that the people of Nineveh **would** listen to him, **would** repent and **would** be forgiven by God. He hated his enemies, and he didn't want them to have a second chance. So he ran in the opposite direction.

And through it all, God was with Jonah, even though Jonah went the wrong way. God looked after Jonah even though he had totally disobeyed Him. God protected Jonah even when he lied. God listened to Jonah's prayers even at the bottom of the sea in the belly of a fish.

The apostle Paul who, incidentally, was from Tarshish- the place Jonah was dashing off to (Tarshish became Tarsus under Roman rule) said this in a letter to his friend Timothy.

'If we are unfaithful, he (God) remains faithful, for he cannot deny who he is.' 2 Timothy 2:13 (NLV)

SHORT TALK 2:

God goes to a lot of trouble to show the Israelites that He is with them fighting their battles and bringing them victory. He picks Gideon to lead the army. The angel of the Lord found him hiding from enemy forces in a wine press threshing wheat. He was hardly the heroic type! Having recruited the weakest man in the county as leader, God goes on to bring the Israelite army down to size.

[Use the congregation as a visual aid.]

Let's say you are all the army that Gideon started out with – 32,000 men. First God directed Gideon to send home the ones who were frightened. Two thirds of the men went home. In our congregation of X people that leaves us with an army of Y.

[e.g., if there are around 100 in the congregation, start with everyone as the army, then cut the numbers by 2/3 to about 33. Point out to everyone what section of the church is now the whole army].

Next, God cut the numbers again depending on how the men drank at the river and so the army was reduced to just 300 – 1% of its original size! So, for us, that would leave us with an army of just Z.

[If the original number is cut to just 1% -with a congregation of 100 that would be just 1 person – bring the remaining army up to the front or ask them to stand up to help everyone visualize the size of the army Gideon was left with.]

How do you think Gideon and his army would have fared against the mighty Midianites if God had not been with them?

After all God had done, there was no way that the Israelites could claim that the victory over the Midianites had come from their own human skill or courage, or to the size of their army. All the glory for the victory went to God and it was a lesson to the Israelites about God's power to save and his faithfulness to them. And Gideon had learned that one plus God is always a majority.