

Unit 14 • Session 1

Jonah, Prophet to Nineveh

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Jonah
2-3's Lesson

STORY POINT:

God loves all people.

KEY PASSAGE:

2 Peter 3:9

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

Why should we obey God? We should obey God because He made us, He loves us, and His plans are good.



INTRODUCE THE STORY (30 MINUTES) Opening Activity



Opening Activity Supplies

Construction paper, crayons,
tape

TEACH THE STORY (15 MINUTES) Large Group



Large Group Supplies

Bible, bookmark, Jonah &
fish puppet

EXPERIENCE THE STORY (15 MINUTES) Small Group



Small Group Supplies

Jonah Sequencing Cards, 1
per group, Bible Story
Picture/Story Point, Key
Passage Card, Big Picture
Card/Coloring Page, 1 per
child

LEADER Bible Study

Jonah lived during the time Jeroboam II was king over Israel, mere decades before the Northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed. Jonah was a prophet—and while he is best known as the man who was swallowed by a big fish when he tried to run away from God, his story continues beyond chapter 2 to reveal what Jonah knew all along: God is “a gracious and compassionate God” (Jonah 4:2b).

Jonah’s account centers around the compassion of God, not only for the people of Israel but for people throughout the earth—even Israel’s worst enemies!

Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, and the rulers of Nineveh were notoriously evil and cruel. That was the very reason God called Jonah to go to them: “their evil has come up before me” (Jonah 1:2). God is the Judge of all the earth (Gen. 18:25), and He is sovereign over all the nations.

Jonah discovered that no one can flee from God’s presence. (Ps. 139:9-10) Through a storm and some time in the belly of a fish, God got Jonah’s attention, and Jonah went to Nineveh. For three days, Jonah walked around the city. His message to the Ninevites was brief: “In forty days Nineveh will be demolished!” (Jonah 3:4)

The people of Nineveh immediately repented, and God withheld His judgment. “Jonah was greatly displeased and became furious” (Jonah 4:1). God rebuked Jonah. He left Jonah—and the reader—with a question to consider: “May I not care about the great city of Nineveh?” (Jonah 4:11).

Emphasize to preschoolers that Jesus is greater than Jonah. (Matt. 12:41) Jesus came calling all sinners to repentance. He submitted to God’s will with joy and laid down His own life for our sins. God shows His mercy in the gospel, forgiving those who trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior. God sends us out, like Jonah, to share the good news of salvation.

The BIBLE Story

Jonah, Prophet to Nineveh

Jonah

Jonah was a prophet. One day, God told Jonah, “Go to Nineveh. Tell the people there to stop doing wrong things.”

The people in Nineveh were very mean! So **Jonah did not go to Nineveh** like God told him to do. **Instead, he got on a boat to go far away.**

God sent a storm. The sailors on the boat were afraid! They discovered the storm came because of Jonah, so the sailors asked him, “Who are you? What are you doing here? Where did you come from?”

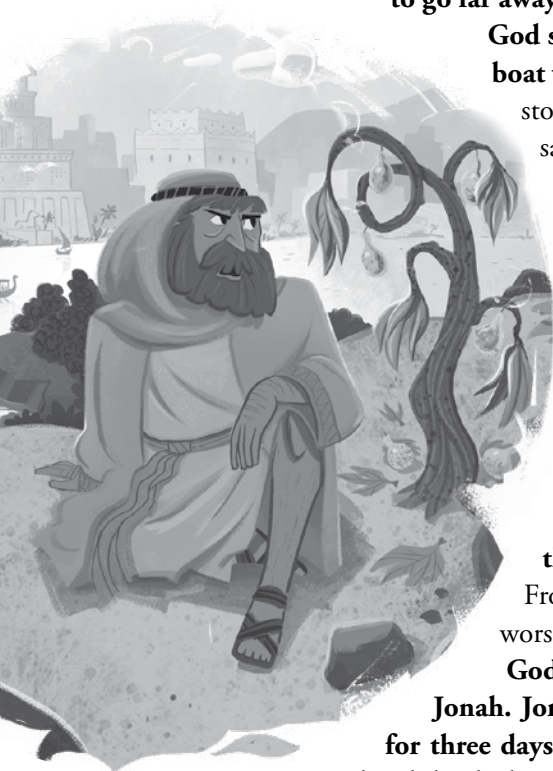
Jonah said, “I worship the one true God who made everything.”

Jonah told the sailors to throw him into the sea so that the storm would calm down. So the sailors picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea and the storm stopped.

From that moment on, the sailors worshipped the one true God.

God sent a big fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. He prayed to God and thanked Him for sending the fish. **Then the fish vomited Jonah onto dry land.**

God said, “Jonah, go to Nineveh. Tell the people My message.” **This time, Jonah went to Nineveh. He walked into the city and**



shouted, “In 40 days, God will destroy Nineveh!”

The people in Nineveh listened. They **stopped doing wrong things**. They showed God that they were sorry, **so God decided not to destroy Nineveh**.

“I knew You would do this!” Jonah said to God. “You are gracious. You do not give people what they deserve. You are slow to get angry, and You love people. **I am so mad!**”

“Is it right for you to be mad?” God asked Jonah.

Jonah went outside to watch what God would do. Then God taught Jonah a lesson. First, **God made a plant to shade Jonah from the sun. Jonah was happy. Then God sent a worm. The worm ate the plant, and the plant died.** Then God sent wind. **Jonah** was so hot, he almost fainted. **He was not happy.**

God asked, “Are you mad that the plant died?”

“Yes,” said Jonah.

God said, “You cared about the plant, but you did not take care of it or make it grow. The city of Nineveh has many people. I made them, and I care about them. There are many animals too. **Aren’t people and animals more important than a plant?”**

Christ Connection: God told Jonah to go to his enemies and tell them to stop sinning. Jonah did not want to go. Later, God sent His own Son, Jesus, to go to His enemies and tell them to stop sinning. Unlike Jonah, Jesus wanted to obey God. He died on the cross to save us from sin.

INTRODUCE the Story



Opening Activities

SESSION TITLE: Jonah, Prophet to Nineveh

BIBLE PASSAGE: Jonah

STORY POINT: God loves all people.

KEY PASSAGE: 2 Peter 3:9

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why should we obey God? We should obey God because He made us, He loves us, and His plans are good.

Intro Music

Welcome time

Play intro music in the background as you greet preschoolers.

Make a megaphone

Guide each preschooler to decorate a piece of construction paper with crayons. Show preschoolers how to roll the paper in a cone to make a megaphone. Tape the edges together.

Lead preschoolers to walk around the room announcing to each other, “**God loves all people.**”

SAY • God told Jonah to go to a city named Nineveh. God loved the people in Nineveh, so He wanted Jonah to tell the people to stop doing wrong things. What do you think Jonah did? We will hear about Jonah’s adventures in today’s Bible story.

Transition to teach the story

Show the countdown video to gain the attention of all the preschoolers to move them to Large Group.

Video: countdown

- Construction paper
- crayons
- tape

TEACH the Story



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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why should we obey God? We should obey God because He made us, He loves us, and His plans are good.

Large Group

[Song: Loud and Joyful Noise](#)
[Song: You are Good](#)

· Bible
· Bookmark
· Jonah & Fish Puppets

[CG: Giant Timeline](#)

[Video: "Jonah, Prophet to Nineveh"](#)

[CG: Story Point](#)

[CG: Bible Story Picture](#)

Worship

It is so wonderful to see all of you here today! Let's stand and sing songs to God and thank Him for loving us.

Introduce the Bible story

Place a bookmark at Jonah in your Bible. Invite a preschooler to open it. Display the open Bible.

SAY • Today's Bible story from the Book of Jonah in the Old Testament is very exciting, but what makes it most exciting is that it is true! All the stories in the Bible are true. The Bible is God's Word. *Point to the Bible story picture on the giant timeline.* Remind children that all the stories in the Bible fit together to tell an even bigger story. The Bible tells us the big story of how God rescues people through His Son, Jesus.

Watch the Bible story

Show the Bible Story video.

SAY • The people in Nineveh were doing wrong things. **God loves all people**, so He told Jonah to go tell them to stop disobeying God. Jonah did not want to go because the Ninevites were enemies of Israel. He finally went and the people stopped disobeying God.

God loved us so much that He sent His own Son, Jesus, to save us from sin. Jesus obeyed God by taking our punishment and now we can be friends with God.

Practice the key passage

Place the key passage marker at 2 Peter 3:9. Invite a child to open your Bible to the key passage. Read the key passage aloud. Create motions for the verse using the key passage song for inspiration. Repeat the verse loudly and softly.

SAY • The Ninevites deserved to be punished for their sin, and so did Jonah, but God was patient. He waited for them to turn from their sin and turn to Him. God is patient with us too. Instead of punishing our sin like we deserve, God sent Jesus to be punished for our sin instead. When we turn from our sin and trust in Jesus, God forgives us.

Learn the big picture question

SAY • Our big picture question is, *Why should we obey God? We should obey God because He made us, He loves us, and His plans are good.* God reminded Jonah that He made the people of Nineveh and He cared about them. God wanted them to love and obey Him.

· Bible
· Key Passage
Marker
[CG: Key Passage](#)

[CG: Big Picture
Question](#)

Pray and transition to experience the story

EXPERIENCE The Story



Small Group

SESSION TITLE: Jonah, Prophet to Nineveh

BIBLE PASSAGE: Jonah

STORY POINT: God loves all people.

KEY PASSAGE: 2 Peter 3:9

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why should we obey God? We should obey God because He made us, He loves us, and His plans are good.

Make storm sounds

Invite preschoolers to sit with you in a circle and repeat what you do. Make wind noises with your mouth, rub your hands together, pat your knees or clap to make rain sounds, and stomp to make thunder. Make the storm louder and quieter.

SAY • Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh, so God sent a storm and a fish to Jonah. **God's plans are good!** God showed mercy to Jonah and the Ninevites. Later, Jesus obeyed God's plan to rescue us.

Sequence the story

Encourage the children to put the cards in order. Retell the portions of the Bible story as necessary to prompt children.

SAY • You remembered the Bible story. God loved the people of Nineveh and wanted them to quit doing things that were wrong. **God loves all people.** God loves us and sent Jesus not only to tell us to quit doing wrong things, but to take the punishment for the wrong things we do. Jesus willingly obeyed. Jesus died on the cross to rescue us from sin.

Circle time (5 minutes)

Show the Bible story picture as you tell the Bible story. Say the story point and gospel gems. Pray for the preschoolers.

Gospel Gems

* Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh.

* God showed mercy to Jonah and the Ninevites.

* God sent Jesus to show us mercy.

Transition

Preschoolers may color the Bible story coloring page. If parents are picking up their children at this time, tell them something that their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session. Distribute the preschool Big Picture Cards for families.