

Unit 14 • Session 1
**Jonah, Prophet
to Nineveh**
2nd-3rd Lesson

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Jonah

STORY POINT:

God loves all people and showed mercy to the Ninevites.

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
(10 MINUTES)

Opening Activities



Opening Activity Supplies

Chair, 1 button or small object per class

TEACH THE STORY
(30 MINUTES)

Large Group



Large Group Supplies

Leader attire, Bible

APPLY THE STORY
(20 MINUTES)

Small Group



Small Group Supplies

Key Passage Poster, 2-3 Bibles per group, 1 sheet of paper per kid, markers, Journal/Activity Page per kid

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” (John 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 kids 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

God told the prophet Jonah, “Go to the great city of Nineveh. Tell them to stop doing evil things.” The people of Nineveh were enemies of God’s people. **Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh. So he got on a boat heading the other way!**

God sent a terrible storm, and the sailors were afraid. They cast lots to figure out who caused this trouble. The lot fell on Jonah. **The sailors asked Jonah, “Who are you? What are you doing here?”**

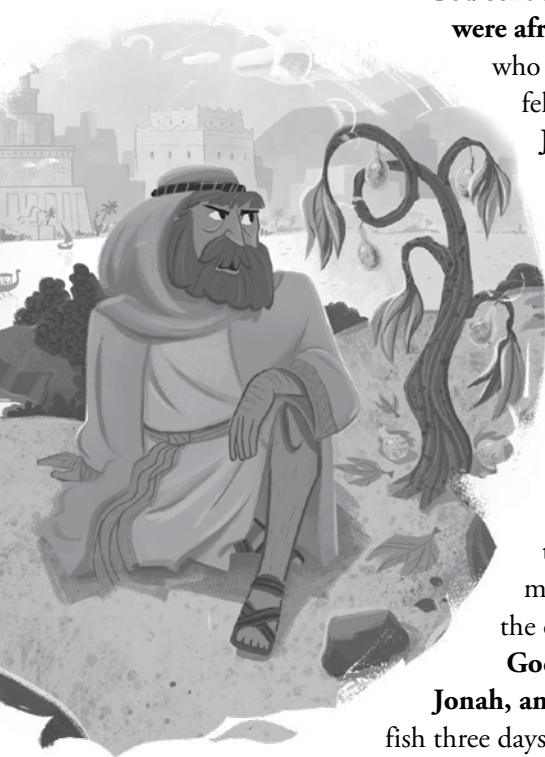
Jonah replied, “I worship the one true God who made everything.”

What had Jonah done to make God angry? **The sailors did not know what to do, so Jonah told them to throw him into the sea to calm the storm. When they did, the storm stopped.** From that moment on, the sailors worshiped the one true God.

God sent a big fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Jonah prayed and thanked God for sending the fish to save him.

Then the fish vomited Jonah onto dry land.

God told Jonah, “Go to Nineveh and preach My message.” So Jonah went. He walked into the city shouting God’s message: “In 40



days, Nineveh will be destroyed!”

The people turned from their evil ways. Even the king repented. God decided not to destroy Nineveh.

“I knew it!” Jonah said. “You are a gracious God. You show mercy to people. You are slow to anger, and You are loving. I knew You would decide to not destroy Nineveh. I am so mad!”

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

Jonah left Nineveh and made a shelter where he could still see the city and what God would do. God taught Jonah a lesson. He provided a plant to shade Jonah from the sun. Jonah was glad to have the plant. But the next day, God sent a worm. The worm attacked the plant, and the plant died. Then God sent a dry east wind. Jonah was so hot, he almost fainted. “I want to die,” Jonah said.

God asked Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?”

“Yes!” Jonah said. “It is right. I’m so angry, I could die.”

God said, “You cared about the plant, but you did not take care of it or make it grow. It only lasted one day. Nineveh is a big city with thousands of people. I created them and care about them. Aren’t they and the animals in the city more important than a plant?”

Christ Connection: God called Jonah to go to his enemies and call them to turn away from their sin, but Jonah refused. Instead, he ran away. Later, God sent Jesus to His enemies to call us to repentance. Jesus willingly obeyed. Jesus died on the cross to rescue us from sin.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: Jonah, Prophet to Nineveh **Opening Activities**

BIBLE PASSAGE: Jonah

STORY POINT: God loves all people and showed mercy to the Ninevites.

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.

Welcome time

Play intro music and greet each kid as he or she arrives. Help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to talk about a time they chose to disobey. Why did they choose disobedience?

SAY • We all are born with sinful hearts. That means we are separated from God, and we choose to do wrong things sometimes. Today we will learn about a time one of God's prophets chose to do the opposite of what God told him to do. Why would a prophet disobey God? We'll learn more soon.

Hide the button (optional)

Invite the kids to sit in a circle. Select one kid to sit on a chair in the middle of the circle. Place a button under the chair and instruct the kid sitting in the chair to close his eyes. Quietly select a kid to sneak to the chair, take the button, and hide it in her hands behind her back. All kids should place their hands behind their back as though hiding the button. Then the kid in the center will open his eyes and try to guess who actually has the button. Play additional rounds with new kids in the center.

SAY • Hiding a button from a friend can be tough; hiding our actions from God is completely impossible! God knows everything. Today we will learn about a time one man tried to run and hide from God. Why do you think he wanted to hide from God?

Intro Music

• Chair
• Button or small object

This activity is a way to connect with kids before large group

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



SESSION TITLE: Jonah, Prophet to Nineveh

Large Group

BIBLE PASSAGE: Jonah

STORY POINT: God loves all people and showed mercy to the Ninevites.

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.

[CG: Countdown video](#)

Countdown

Show the countdown video as you transition to the Large Group game.

Large Group Game: Simon Says

LEADER • Hello everyone! Welcome to KidCity. Before we get started I want to let you know that today is baptism day! Some of our friends here at church have decided to follow Jesus and they want to share that with everyone. Does anyone here have a sticker with a water drop on it? If so, celebrate with applause. Either way, encourage everyone to go outside right after they get picked up to watch baptisms.

Okay, let's play a classic game. It's called Simon Says. You all know how to play it, yes? Well in case you don't, the rules are very simple. If I tell you to do something like touch your head but I don't say Simon Says first and you do it, then you're out! You only do what Simon Says to do.

Play Simon Says until there's one winner. Make sure to have the Small Group Leaders help referee the game as well.

Optional Variant: Play the Donnie the Elf video(s) on the screen instead. Donnie is very good at leading this game!

[Song: This](#)

[Little Light](#)

[Song: O Taste](#)

[& See](#)

• Room decorations

[CG: Theme Background](#)

• Leader attire

Sing

LEADER • Let's take some time to worship our merciful, loving God, who waits patiently for us to love obey Him.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

Leader enters wearing a rain poncho.

LEADER • Well hello there! My name is Captain [your name] You'd better be careful around here; commercial fishing can be very dangerous. Especially when there are storms brewing.

My boat, The Daring Duchess, is one of the most successful saltwater fishing vessels on the entire East coast. We fish mainly for herring, but occasionally will seek out larger fish too. I once took a crew out to catch bluefin tuna. Some species of bluefin can weigh a thousand pounds or more! But you know, that's nothing compared to the size of fish that Jonah faced. He was swallowed whole by a fish! Some tuna are bigger than people, but none are that much bigger. I'll tell you all about it.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Before we dive too deep into the story, we need to discuss our big picture question. Big picture questions help us frame Bible stories so we know what to focus on. So here it is: ***Why should we obey God?*** We talk a lot about the importance of obedience, but we want to explore the reason behind it. If you don't know why you should obey, it can be much harder to actually do so.

[CG: Big Picture Question](#)

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

LEADER • As we learn about the reasons we obey God, we will be studying a time in the history of God's people when almost no one chose to obey Him. The kingdom of Israel had split in two. The kingdom to the north was known as Israel, and most of the tribes were part of that kingdom. That's the kingdom we will be focusing on for the next few weeks. This week, we are focusing on Jonah, a prophet from Israel whom God called to another place. Our story this week is called "Jonah, Prophet to Nineveh."

[CG: Giant Timeline](#)

Watch the Bible story (10 minutes)

Show the Bible story video "Jonah, Prophet to Nineveh."

LEADER • Raise your hand if you have heard that story before. It sounds like an unbelievable tale, but it's true! Everything in God's Word is true.

When God called Jonah to take a message to the people of Nineveh, Jonah didn't want to go. Why? [Allow kids to respond.]

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

[CG: Bible Story Picture](#)

The Ninevites were enemies of God's people. Everyone knew that the Ninevites were cruel, evil people. Were they so evil that God could not save them? (No.)

But Jonah got on a ship going the other way. Can people get away from God? (No.) God sent a storm, and what happened to Jonah? (He told the sailors to throw him overboard.) And then what happened? Did God let disobedient Jonah drown? (No, God sent a fish to swallow Jonah.) Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights. How did he get out? (The fish vomited him onto dry land.) Then Jonah obeyed God, and he went to Nineveh and warned the people of God's coming punishment for their sin.

Did the people ignore Jonah? (No! They turned from their evil ways and repented.) God loves all people and showed mercy to the Ninevites.

CG:
Story
Point

Christ connection

LEADER • God called Jonah to go to his enemies and call them to turn away from their sin, but Jonah refused. Instead, he ran away. Later, God sent Jesus to His enemies to call us to repentance. Jesus willingly obeyed. Jesus died on the cross to rescue us from sin.

Everyone who believes in Jesus is called to share that message with people who are still lost, who are living in sin and spiritually dead. It can be tempting to want to see sinners punished, but we must remember that we all start out as sinners. Only God can rescue us, give us new life, and transform us into new creations who love and obey God.

God loves all people and desires to see everyone repent and believe the gospel. ***Why should we obey God? We should obey God because He made us, He loves us, and His plans are good.***

Key passage

Show the key passage poster. Lead the kids to read 2 Peter 3:9.

LEADER • At times, it may feel like the whole world is only getting worse and worse. We may think about how long ago Jesus went back to heaven and wonder if He is ever coming back. Our key passage is a beautiful reminder that God is faithful. He isn't wasting time, He is patiently waiting so more people have opportunities to turn from sin and trust in Jesus.

CG: Key
Passage

APPLY the Story



Small Group

SESSION TITLE: Jonah, Prophet to Nineveh

BIBLE PASSAGE: Jonah

STORY POINT: God loves all people and showed mercy to the Ninevites.

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.

Key
Passage
Poster
2-3 Bibles
per group

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

Read the key passage with the kids and help them say it with you. Then pass out a few Bibles to your group and help them find the key passage in the Bible. Show them the table of contents, the book name, big chapter number, and small verse number. Help them say the verse with you while you read the key passage from the Bible one more time.

SAY • Great work! Our key passage comes from the New Testament. Peter was a disciple of Jesus who reminded the church that Jesus was coming back. Though it feels like we have to wait a long time, God wants a relationship with everyone. He wants all people to hear about how Jesus died for their sin and rose from dead. When we believe in Jesus and what He did for us, we want to obey Him.

Heroes and villains

Provide kids with paper, pencils, and markers. Invite the kids to draw two pictures. In the first picture, kids should draw a villain; the villain can be an evil character from a TV show or movie, or a character the kids create. Then ask them to draw a hero who might fight the villain.

SAY • You all have some great art skills. We often think about the world as being filled with good people and bad people. But the Bible teaches that we all disobey God. That means that we are born as “villains!” Jonah was angry that God would show mercy to the Ninevites because he did not think they deserved mercy. But Jonah did not deserve mercy either! None of us do. ***God loves all people and showed mercy to the Ninevites.*** No one deserves the wonderful salvation God gives. It’s a free gift that we cannot earn. God saves us because He is good and loves us, not because we have done good things to earn salvation.

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

What does this story teach me about God?

What does this story teach me about myself?

Are there any promises in this story to remember?

How do they help me trust and love God?

Who can I tell about this story?

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the activity page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

Send
home the
activity
page, 1
per kid