

Jonah

This page has been designed for you to photocopy and place in your Bible as a ready reference.

You may wish to read from God's Word the Scripture verses listed.

Scripture:

Jonah 1—4.

Memory verse:

Review 1 John 3:1.

Central truth:

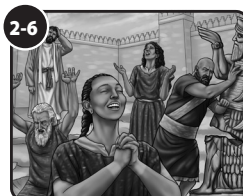
God loves to forgive.

Application for unsaved:

Turn to Him and be forgiven.

Application for saved:

Tell everyone—even those you think don't deserve His love and forgiveness.



I. INTRODUCTION

Can you follow instructions?

II. PROGRESSION OF EVENTS

- A. God tells Jonah to go to Nineveh (Jonah 1:2)
- B. Everyone knows how mean and cruel the Ninevites are (Ecclesiastes 7:20) **CT**
- C. Jonah thinks the Ninevites don't deserve God's love—he boards a ship for Tarshish **CT**
- D. God sends a great wind and Jonah tells the sailors to throw him overboard
- E. The storm stops and God sends a great fish to swallow Jonah (1 Peter 3:18a) **CT**
- F. After three days inside the fish God speaks to the fish and it vomits Jonah onto dry ground
- G. God again tells Jonah to go to Nineveh (Jonah 3:2, Mark 16:15) **CTS**
- H. Jonah delivers God's message to the people of Nineveh

III. CLIMAX

God does not punish the people of Nineveh

IV. CONCLUSION

The people of Nineveh are thankful for God's love
Jonah goes outside the city and feels sorry for himself **CTU**

The following resources for this lesson can be found in the digital Resource Pack:

- **Memory Verse Visuals**
Pages 3-5
- **Memory Verse Tokens**
Pages 6-8
- **Central Truth Visual**
Page 14
- **Lesson Extras**
Pages 15-20
- **Review Game**
Page 21

CT



LESSON

INTRODUCTION

Can you follow instructions? Are you good at obeying commands? (*Ask the children to stand up and obey your instructions, eg reach up high, fold your arms, stand on one leg.*) I wonder could the man we're going to learn about today follow commands?

PROGRESSION OF EVENTS

The man's name was Jonah and we read about him in the book of Jonah in the Bible. Jonah was a prophet which means he spoke for God. One day God told Jonah to go and speak for Him in a place called Nineveh. (*Show the Tarshish/Nineveh signpost with "Tarshish" covered.*) God said (*have a helper read Jonah 1:2 from your Bible*), "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me." God told Jonah to "Go to Nineveh." What did God tell Jonah to do? (*Show the speech bubble and have the children say, "Go to Nineveh".*)

Flashcard 2-1

Everyone knew how mean and cruel the Ninevites were. They had conquered many other people around them and were enemies of God's people, the Israelites. The people of Nineveh were known for their wickedness and, most importantly, God knew about the wrong things they were doing.

The Ninevites aren't the only ones who do wrong. The Bible says (*read Ecclesiastes 7:20 from your Bible and hold your Bible as often as possible throughout the lesson*), "For there is not a just [perfect] man on earth who does good and does not sin." Everyone has sinned, including you and me. We are born knowing how and wanting to sin. When we think or say or do something that God says we shouldn't (*show your Bible*), or when we don't think or speak or behave the way God says we should, we sin against God. God knows all about the wrong things you do and He knew all about the wicked things the Ninevites were doing.

That's why He was sending Jonah to warn them about their sin. What had God told Jonah to do? (*Show the speech bubble and have the children say, "Go to Nineveh."*) Would Jonah obey God's command? Put your thumbs up if you think Jonah obeyed; put your thumbs down if you think Jonah did not obey. (*Allow response.*) Jonah disobeyed. He didn't want to give the Ninevites God's warning because he knew that God was also giving them the opportunity to turn away from their sin and be forgiven. Jonah thought the Ninevites didn't deserve God's love and forgiveness, but **God loves to forgive** those who turn to Him. (*Show the central truth visual and together say, "God loves to forgive."*)

God wants you to turn to Him too. He knows about the hateful things you and I can think and the unkind things you sometimes say and do. Because God is perfectly good, sin separates you from Him—but that's not what God wants. God is full of love for you. Even though it would be right and fair for you to be separated from God's love and goodness for ever, God wants to forgive you. **God loves to forgive.**

(Show the visual and say the central truth with the children.)

Jonah didn't want the people of Nineveh to have the opportunity to be forgiven. Instead of saying "yes" to God and going to Nineveh, he found a ship that was travelling as far as possible in the opposite direction, to a place called Tarshish. *(Show "Tarshish" on the signpost.)*

Perhaps Jonah thought, "Phew, now I don't have to go to Nineveh!" He went to the bottom of the ship and fell asleep.

Flashcard 2-2

God knew all about Jonah and the Bible says that God sent a great wind. *(Show the "great wind" visual.)* A huge storm started and the sailors were very afraid! *(Have three helpers ready to jump up and read.)*

Sailor 1: The ship is going to break in pieces!

Sailor 2: We're going to drown!

Sailor 3: Throw things overboard to make the ship lighter!

Let's pretend to panic and throw things overboard. *(Do this with the children.)*

When the captain woke Jonah, Jonah told them he was one of God's people and that he was running away from God. The sailors believed in false gods, not the one true God. They were even more afraid. "What are we going to do?" they said. Let's say that together with a worried face and voice. *(Do this with the children.)*

Jonah said, "Throw me overboard and the storm will stop. The storm is here because of me."

The sailors didn't want to do that but when nothing else worked they agreed. *(Have the children stand up and pretend to hold Jonah's legs while you hold his arms. Count to three together, then pretend to swing Jonah and throw him overboard.)*

Flashcard 2-3

When they threw Jonah into the sea, the storm stopped! The sailors were amazed and worshipped the one true God.

What about Jonah? Was that the end of him? No! God knew all about Jonah and the Bible says God had prepared a great fish *(show the "great fish" visual)* to be there when Jonah was thrown overboard. The giant fish came and swallowed Jonah whole!

CT

God didn't want Jonah to drown. He didn't want Jonah running off to Tarshish. God wanted Jonah to warn the people of Nineveh about their sin.

God wants you to hear the warning about your sin and, because God loves you so much, He has made it possible for you to be forgiven. God sent His perfect Son, Jesus, to earth. Jesus allowed men to hurt Him and nail Him to a cross. *(Read 1 Peter 3:18a from your Bible.)* "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust ..." Jesus is perfect (just) and He died for those who are not perfect (the unjust). Only the death of the perfect and powerful Son of God could make it possible for you to be forgiven. Jesus' death shows how much God loves you. Jesus proved He is stronger than sin and death by coming alive again on the third day! Right now Jesus is alive in Heaven. God wants you to listen to the warning about your sin. He wants you to turn from living your own way and be forgiven. **God loves to forgive.** *(Show the visual and say the central truth with the children.)*

Flashcard 2-4

Imagine being swallowed by a giant fish! What do you think the inside of the fish was like? *(Allow responses and, if possible, allow the children to smell some seaweed or a dead fish.)*

Jonah had a lot of time to think. He thought about God and praised Him. He was in the fish for three days. He may have wondered if he would live or die, but God knew all about Jonah. The Bible says that God spoke to the fish and the fish was sick *(show the "fish being sick" visual)*—it vomited Jonah up onto the dry ground.

Then God spoke to Jonah again. *(Have a helper read Jonah 3:2.)* "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you." What did God tell Jonah to do? *(Show the speech bubble and have the children say, "Go to Nineveh".)* What do you think Jonah did this time? Put your thumbs up if you think Jonah obeyed; put your thumbs down if you think Jonah did not obey. *(Allow response.)* This time Jonah obeyed! He knew he needed to tell the Ninevites God's message.

CTS

(If you are teaching in an evangelistic setting you may wish to omit this paragraph.) If you have already turned from your sin and been forgiven, God wants you to tell others about Him, even if you think they don't deserve His love and forgiveness. God's command to you is *(read Mark 16:15 from your Bible)*, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Every creature means everyone. It means the people you don't like, the people who look or sound different to you and even the people who are mean. Maybe someone has hurt one of your friends and you feel angry at that person. God can forgive people who are mean and cruel, just like the Ninevites.