

LESSON 69

Jonah & Nineveh

JONAH



BIBLE TRUTH

GOD'S GRACE EXTENDS BEYOND ISRAEL'S BORDERS

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. **OPENING REVIEW** **5 MIN**
Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.
2. **BIBLE STORY** **10 MIN**
Read Jonah 1—2 from the Scriptures or read story 69, “Jonah and Ninevah,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.
3. **OBJECT LESSON 1** **10 MIN**
You Cannot Run Away from God
SUPPLIES:
✓ a twenty-dollar bill
4. **TEACHING/DISCUSSION** **10 MIN**
5. **OBJECT LESSON 2** **20 MIN**
It Really Did Happen
SUPPLIES:
✓ photos and/or picture books of a large whale or shark
✓ a figure of a man hand drawn to the same scale as the picture
✓ optional: sidewalk chalk
6. **SWORD BIBLE MEMORY** **5 MIN**
7. **ACTIVITY TIME** **10 MIN**
Coloring Activity
SUPPLIES:
✓ coloring page 69—one copy for each child
8. **CLOSING PRAYER** **5 MIN**
9. **BONUS OBJECT LESSON** **10 MIN**
Finding the Ball
SUPPLIES:
✓ penny or other coin

TOTAL 85 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

God calls Jonah—In Jonah’s story, God makes it clear that he controls all things and that while he is a forgiving God, we cannot run away from him, we must obey.

Jonah is a prophet in the kingdom of Israel about sixty-five years before Hezekiah took the throne. God tells Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh and prophesy against the people because they are sinful. Later in the book of Jonah, we are told that Jonah doesn’t want to do this because he hates Nineveh and does not want that city to have the opportunity to repent!

Jonah flees but God pursues—Jonah tries to flee to Tarshish to escape from God and the thing that God has asked him to do. But God stops Jonah from running in a very dramatic and unexpected way. He is first caught in a storm and then swallowed by a giant fish. When Jonah prays inside the fish, we see his heart changing. Jonah understands that God could have easily killed him for his disobedience, but now he realizes that he must obey God.

God reveals his mercy to Nineveh—When the Lord once again tells Jonah to go preach repentance to Nineveh, Jonah obeys. Still, Jonah becomes angry because of God’s mercy toward Nineveh. But in an amazing look into the mind and heart of God, God tells Jonah why he has mercy on the people of Nineveh—because living in that city are 120,000 people who do not know him. (“Persons who do not know their right hand from their left” [Jonah 4:11] means people who have no moral or spiritual understanding.)

WHERE IS JESUS? _____

How does today's Bible story fit into God's greater plan of redemption?

Read Matthew 12:39–40.

Jesus tells us that the three days Jonah spent in the belly of a fish was a picture foretelling the time that Jesus' crucified body would be in the grave before the resurrection.

God had a plan to rescue Jonah from his sin of disobedience. God's plan for Jonah involved three days swallowed up in a fish. Jonah found his salvation in God. In the end Jonah was released and went on to preach repentance to Nineveh.

God has a plan to rescue us from our sin through Jesus. Jesus died on the cross for our sins and spent three days in the grave swallowed up by death. But death could not hold him, and on the third day he rose again. Now the message of repentance and faith in Christ is proclaimed all over the world. The question for us is, will we trust in him?

THE LESSON

OPENING REVIEW

5 MIN

Use last week's lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

BIBLE STORY

10 MIN

Read Jonah 1—2 from the Scriptures or read story 69, "Jonah and Ninevah," from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1

10 MIN

You Cannot Run Away from God

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ a twenty-dollar bill

The object of this exercise is to show the children just how impossible it is to run away from God.

Ask for a volunteer. (Pick a child the same gender as you; you may need to grab or hold the child for this game.)

Explain to your volunteer that you will give them twenty dollars if they can run away from you and touch the back wall of the classroom before you catch them.

Tell the volunteer to stand right in front of you and to run away as soon as you say the word “Go.” As soon as you give the signal, wrap your arms around the child and hold them. Remember, it is supposed to be impossible for the child to get past you in order to represent the ease with which God caught Jonah. After three such attempts, ask for another volunteer. Sooner or later the class should begin to object, saying that it is impossible to run away. When that happens, you can end the game to talk about the lesson.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- What was Jonah’s response to God’s command to bring a word to Nineveh?
(Jonah tried to run away from God by sailing to Tarshish.)
- What would be easier, to win the twenty dollars by running away from me or running away from God?
(It would be easier to run away from the teacher than to run away from God.)
- When do we try to hide or run away from God?
(Often children do not think they are avoiding God, but they do avoid being accountable to their parents. That is basically the same thing because parents are God’s delegated authority in the lives of children. When we pretend we do not hear parents call us, we are essentially trying to avoid them.)

TEACHING/DISCUSSION

10 MIN

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

OBJECT LESSON 2

20 MIN

It Really Did Happen

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ photos and/or picture books of a large whale or shark
- ✓ a figure of a man hand drawn to the same scale as the picture
- ✓ Optional: sidewalk chalk

The book of Jonah is often mythologized, and there are many who say it never happened. You can help the children understand just how plausible it is for a fish or whale to have swallowed Jonah by making a scale model of a person based on the average size of the species of whale (such as a sperm whale, blue whale, or a whale shark). When the children see how comparably small a man is, they will be able to visualize that Jonah was actually swallowed by a big fish. One fun way to do this is, with sidewalk chalk draw the outline of a blue whale (ninety feet long and twelve feet wide) on your parking lot. Then have a person lie down in the middle of the belly of the whale and trace their outline. The children will be amazed to see just how small the person is compared to the whale.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- **What does it mean that the Lord “appointed” a great fish to swallow up Jonah?**
(The same word is used in Jonah 4:6, 7. The fact that the Lord “appointed” the fish means that God designated, determined, or commanded the actions of the fish. God controls all things. What an amazing demonstration of the sovereignty of God.)

- **In what other ways did the Lord demonstrate his control over nature?**
(God sent the storm to the ship and then calmed the sea. God also controlled the plant and the worm in chapter four. Another example of God’s control over all things showed when the sailors cast lots and the lot went to Jonah.)

WORD BIBLE MEMORY

5 MIN

Take time during the class to review the WORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITY TIME

10 MIN

Coloring Activity

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ coloring page 69—one copy for each child

While the children are coloring, engage them by asking the following questions:

- **Where is Jonah in the picture?**
(in the belly of a huge fish)

- What lessons did Jonah learn while he was in the belly of the fish?
(He learned that God is all powerful; God controls the sea. God is all knowing; God knew where Jonah was. God is merciful and loving; Jonah did not drown but was rescued by the fish. Jonah also learned you can't run away from God.)

- What would you do if you were caught in the belly of a fish?
(Elicit that one should pray.)

- How are we like Jonah?
(We are sinners in need of a Savior. We depend on God to help us. We need to obey God.)

CLOSING PRAYER

5 MIN

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day's scripture passages.

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 10 MIN

Finding the Ball

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ penny or other coin

Tell the class that Jonah made a mistake when he thought he could hide from God. Use this object lesson to demonstrate.

Give the ball to a child volunteer. Tell him that the ball represents Jonah and you will play the role of God. Tell him to try to bounce the ball someplace in the room where you can't catch up to it before it stops. Have them bounce the ball, but grab it before it stops rolling. Give several children a chance to bounce the ball in the same way. Then ask the class why the ball is like the real Jonah in the story. The answer, of course, is that there is no place in the world Jonah could go to get away from God. Similarly, there is no place in your classroom where the ball could get away from you. Just as you could see the ball bounce away, so God saw Jonah run and board the ship.

LESSON 69 - JONAH AND NINEVEH

