

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** **15 MIN**
My Sin Too
SUPPLIES:
 - ✓ six-inch high letter S’s cut from red paper (two for each child in the class)
 - ✓ tape
 - ✓ markers
4. **TEACHING/DISCUSSION** **10 MIN**
5. **OBJECT LESSON 2** **10 MIN**
Reliving the Story
SUPPLIES:
 - ✓ coffee stir sticks (one for each child)
6. **SWORD BIBLE MEMORY** **5 MIN**
7. **ACTIVITY TIME** **15 MIN**
Jonah and the Fish
SUPPLIES:
 - ✓ colored pencils, crayons, and paper
8. **CLOSING PRAYER** **5 MIN**
9. **BONUS OBJECT LESSON** **10 MIN**
God Can Wipe Our Sins Away
SUPPLIES:
 - ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase markers and an eraser (If you don’t have a whiteboard you can use whiteboard markers and a large glazed white plate.)

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.)

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Lots

Casting of lots was a method of determining the will of God in both the Old and New Testaments. Proverbs 16:33 says that “the lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.”

The bottom line is that God controls everything. In the desert, Aaron cast lots to choose the goat for the scapegoat (Leviticus 16:7–10), and the sailors on Jonah’s ship cast lots to determine who was responsible for the storm. In the New Testament, the soldiers cast lots for Jesus’ clothing (Matthew 27:35), and the disciples cast lots to determine who would replace Judas (Acts 1:26).

Although the disciples used lots in this way, there is no indication that it was a common practice in the church after that time, nor are we instructed to determine our behavior by casting lots.

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 15 MIN

My Sin Too

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ six-inch high letter S's cut from red paper (two for each child in the class)
- ✓ tape
- ✓ markers

The object of this exercise is to help the children identify with Nineveh in this story.

Prior to class, tape half of the letters to the classroom wall.

Read through the most significant parts of the story. You can actually read the entire book of Jonah to your class or, prior to class, choose parts to read and parts to paraphrase in order to save time.

Explain to the children that the letters on the wall represent Nineveh's sin. Then ask them how many of them have sinned. Of course, they will all respond and say they have sinned.

Pass out red letter S's to the children and ask them to write down one of their sins. Collect the letters and then tape them in a group on the wall next to the group representing the sins of Nineveh.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- **Can you see any difference between our sins and the sins of Nineveh?**
(No, there is no difference.)
- **Does God call us to repent and follow his Word just like Jonah told Nineveh?**
(Yes, God's Word calls us to repent of our sins and follow God, just like Jonah told the people of Nineveh.)
- **Which group needs God's mercy more?**
(We both need God's mercy equally.)
- **How has God shown us his mercy?**
(God sent his son, Jesus, to die on the cross for our sins so that we might be forgiven.)

TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN

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

OBJECT LESSON 2 10 MIN

Reliving the Story

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ coffee stir sticks (one for each child)

Before class cut one coffee stir stick so that it is one-half inch shorter than all the others (to be used when demonstrating the casting of a lot).

Use the following activity for practical application and discovery of this lesson:

Reenact the storm on the ship by asking each person to take a straw. The one with the shortest straw is designated to be the cause of the trouble (Jonah). Have the children sit down and take turns reading through Jonah's story one paragraph at a time.

After each chapter and/or section, ask the children to tell you where they see God at work behind the scenes; e.g., controlling the casting of lots, the waves, and the fish.

Draw the children out as to how they see God at work in their own lives. Ask for a volunteer to share how God pursued them or how God spoke to them.

Review the following Scriptures and talk about how they help us to understand the scope of God's control over all things.

- Psalm 147:4
- Proverbs 16:9
- Romans 8:28
- Colossians 1:16–17

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

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

ACTIVITY TIME 15 MIN

Jonah and the Fish

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ colored pencils, crayons, and paper

Have the children draw a picture of Jonah being swallowed by a great fish.

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

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

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 10 MIN

God Can Wipe Our Sins Away

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase markers and an eraser (If you don't have a whiteboard you can use whiteboard markers and a large glazed white plate.)

This exercise demonstrates how God can wipe our sins away.

Prior to class ask for a few volunteers to fill the board by writing different sins over and over again. They can write words like jealousy, hate, disrespecting parents, etc. They can also simply repeat the word sin over and over again. The idea is to completely cover the board.

As you talk about the sins of Nineveh, point to the board. Then at the end of the story where the Ninevites repent and are forgiven, use the eraser to wipe the board clean. Use this as an opportunity to introduce the gospel to the children. There is only one way God could overlook our sins instead of judging us—someone had to take the punishment we deserve. That someone is Jesus. One day, we will see that some of the people of Nineveh are in heaven. It will only be because they trusted in the saving plan of God. That plan of course was to send the Son of God to die on the cross for the sins of the world.