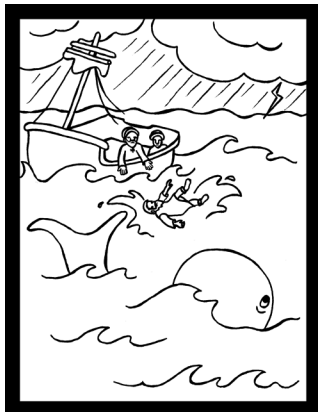




LESSON PLAN

Scripture Texts:

Jonah 1:1-2:3, 7-10

Matthew 12:38-41

Session Theme:

Message

a. Welcome to Class

Teachers should arrive in the classroom well in advance of class. Welcome students as they enter, and inquire about their week. Pass out name tags and record attendance on a classroom chart.

b. Icebreaker: Facing Fears

Bring some napkins and a bag of fish-shaped crackers to class. Pour a few crackers on each child's napkin. Then, go around the room, asking kids to share one thing that scares them for each cracker they eat. Ideas might include things like spiders, earthquakes, the dark, snakes, etc. Point out how many fears they share in common. Fear makes us feel alone, yet we never are.

We all have things that scare us. That's part of being human! In today's Bible story, a man named Jonah was afraid to give a message to a group of wicked people. Yet God called him to face his fears in faith. How did Jonah respond, and what role did a big fish play in his journey? Let's begin our story and find out!

c. Opening Prayer

Dear Lord, we are your hands and feet in this world. Give us the strength and courage we need to go out and share your message with others. Lead us and protect us as we do this. In your holy name we pray. Amen.

d. SEED Video or Song (Optional)

The teacher may introduce the lesson by playing the video clip from the SEED website. This time may also include an opening song or two, using a commercial Sunday School music CD.

Song suggestions for this lesson:

- "Who Did Swallow Jonah?" (children's song)
- "I Love to Tell the Story" (hymn)

e. Brief Bible Background

Read together the introduction to the lessons for the day, and briefly summarize the context and setting:

- Today's Lesson is from the Old Testament
- Scripture Section: Prophets

Over the years, God sent many prophets to speak his Word and warn of coming dangers. But God also promised that he would never forsake his people, but would restore the nation in faith.

f. Communicate the Bible Story

Always keep in mind that the main purpose of Sunday School is to put people in contact with Bible stories. Use a version that is appropriate to the age level.

Upper Elementary: Read the Bible Story and Rhyme

Youth/Adults: Read the Scripture text from the Bible

For Upper and Lower Elementary, use the Storyteller questions to help the students think about the events of the story.

g. Complete the Worksheet(s)

Continue with the handout sheets appropriate to the age level of the students in class:

Upper Elementary: Worksheet and Drama

Youth: Bible Study (Maps, Timelines, Questions)

Adult: Bible Study Sheet (Introduction and Discussion)

h. Craft and Activity Time

If there is time after covering the Bible story, the class may move to craft and activity time, described on the following page. (Do not let the activity time supersede the actual time spent on the Scripture lesson.)

i. Summarize and Review

Before ending class, briefly summarize the day's lesson one last time. If you have not already done so, introduce the Theme Word for the week, providing the definition, and asking how the lesson connects to that theme.

Youth/Adult: Discuss "Reflection for the Week Ahead"

j. Closing Prayer

Close the session in prayer before dismissal:

Upper Elementary: Practice a prayer from memory (e.g., the Lord's Prayer, Luther's Morning Prayer, etc.)

Youth/Adult: Use the ADTRC Prayer format



Bible Study Leader's Guide

The following is a discussion and answer guide for the Youth and Adult Bible Study sheets. For all leaders, it can serve to provide some background on the Bible lesson.

Discuss: Jonah 1:1-2:3, 7-10

1. For what job did God call and send Jonah? What did Jonah do after hearing God's plan for him?

God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach against the city, since the people there had been doing evil things. God wanted Jonah to call the people of the city to repentance. Rather than obeying God, Jonah ran the other direction and got on a ship!

2. Nineveh was the capital of the country of Assyria. Even though the people of Nineveh had been doing terrible things, God still wanted someone to speak to them. What does this say about God?

The story of Jonah is certainly a story of human rebellion and sin, but it is also a story of God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness. Scripture says that is "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

God loves the world, and wants everyone to have a chance to hear his message and be redeemed from sin. Just as he did with the Ninevites, God gave Jonah a second chance after he disobeyed. God is always reaching out to the lost, calling them back. In the same way, God responds to our sin with mercy and forgiveness in Christ.

3. Consult a Bible map. From his starting point in Joppa, in what direction was the city of Nineveh? In what direction was Tarshish?

Joppa, on Israel's coast, was on the farthest eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. Tarshish, a remote outpost in Spain, was on the far western end of the Mediterranean. To get to Nineveh, Jonah should have traveled northeast; he tried to escape by going west.

4. How did God react to Jonah's disobedience? What did the sailors do when they found out Jonah was running from God?

God sent a giant storm upon the sea, and the storm threatened to destroy the ship. After talking to Jonah and realizing he was fleeing from God, the sailors tossed him overboard.

The irony here is that the pagan sailors seemed to take their faith more seriously than Jonah did. They were terrified at the idea that someone would disobey the direct command of God. Even so, they were decent enough men that they did

not want to kill Jonah in their panic. (It was Jonah himself that suggested they kill him, perhaps an indication that Jonah was suicidal.)

5. After being thrown into the sea, what happened to Jonah? Do you think it is possible for this to actually happen? Why or why not?

God sent a large fish to swallow Jonah! He was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. During this time, Jonah prayed to God and thanked God for saving him.

6. Despite the fear Jonah felt while inside the large fish, he still prayed and thanked God. How can being thankful help us when we are afraid?

Focusing on God and on his blessings frees our minds from the grip of fear. Instead of focusing on the negatives we are afraid of, we rest our minds in the positives of God himself. We are reminded of the many times God has helped us in the past, and this gives us courage to face the future. None of us knows how our story will turn out, but we do know that God, but we know who is leading us and guiding us forward.

7. Jonah says: "Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice" (Jonah 2:2). In Hebrew, *sheol* is the place of the dead. Does this mean that Jonah actually died and was brought back by God? What do you think?

Unfortunately, many Christians are unfamiliar with the biblical concept of "Sheol" (pronounced shee-OLL). Sheol is the name given to the place where all the dead go to await the resurrection. This word that appears dozens of times in the Old Testament, and is the basic premise for the biblical concept of death and resurrection. It is comparable to the Greek word "Hades" — which refers not to the fiery Hell of Gehenna, but to the neutral place of the dead.

Some people doubt the story of Jonah because they say that no one could be eaten alive by a fish and survive. But perhaps Scripture is telling us that Jonah didn't "survive" — but rather, he was brought back from the dead when the fish spit him out after three days.

8. Read what Jesus said in Matthew 12:38-41. How does the story of Jonah foreshadow what would happen to Jesus? Does this change your answer to Question 7 above?

When Jesus refers to the "sign of Jonah" that he would fulfill, he is referring to his death, burial, and resurrection on the third day. Giving the comparison Jesus makes, and the fact that Jesus actually *died* on the cross, may be further proof that Jonah effectively died and was given new life by God.

Classroom Craft and Activity Page

Listed below are in-class activities and craft projects related to the theme for the day. Choose one of the following based on the age and capabilities of the students. (Never let the activity or craft time take precedence over the Biblical story.)

Activity 1: “Face Fears with God” Bookmarks

Materials Needed:

- White copy paper
- Colored markers
- Blue card stock
(cut into 2 1/2" x 8 1/2" strips)
- Glue sticks
- Scissors
- Hole punch
- Yarn
- Clear contact paper (optional)



Instructions:

Jonah ran away from God's call and away from Ninevah because he was afraid of the people there. Yet by trying to avoid the things that scared him, Jonah ended up (literally) falling into a scarier situation — the mouth of a big fish!

God wants us to be open to his call, to face our fears, and to trust that he will be with us. In this craft, kids will make a bookmark to remind them of that message whenever they need it.

Give everyone a strip of card stock, a half sheet of copy paper, scissors, markers, and a glue stick.

Invite students to write the words “FACE,” “FEARS,” “WITH,” “GOD” on separate lines of the copy paper. If they want to be especially artistic, they can use different writing styles for each word. Cut out each word, and glue them on the bookmark. (See illustration above.)

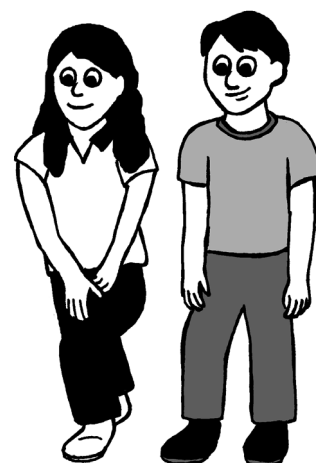
Next, invite kids to draw a small boat in a wavy sea (or a big fish) on the remaining copy paper. Color this with markers, then cut it out and glue it at the bottom of the bookmark.

If you have clear contact paper, cover the front and back of the bookmark with it at this point. Trim away any excess contact paper. Finally, using a hole punch, make a hole at the top of each bookmark. Cut three long pieces of yarn (12”-14”) for every student. Have them thread the yarn through the hole and tie it in a knot at the top of the bookmark to give a decorative look.

Activity 2: “Sailor Overboard!” Game

Materials Needed:

- Large area to play a game
- Four orange cones or two long ropes to mark off “safe” areas



Instructions:

Set up: Create two “land areas” at both ends of the playing field, using either orange cones or long ropes to mark them off.

To play the game:

Choose one volunteer to be the “Big Fish.” Everyone else will be “sailors.” The Big Fish will stand in the middle of the field, while all the sailors will stand on “land” (behind either the cones or the roped off area). These regions are “safe.”

When you say, “Sailor overboard!” all the sailors will run from one safe area across the field (or gym) to the other area. If the Big Fish tags someone, that person has to stop where he or she was tagged and become “seaweed.”

Once everyone has either reached the other land area or become seaweed, you will call out “Sailor overboard!” again. The players will now run back to the other side, again trying to avoid the Big Fish. This round will be more difficult, however, as anyone who has become “seaweed” can also now tag them. The seaweed people cannot run (they are rooted in place), but they can reach with their arms and tag anyone who is running by.

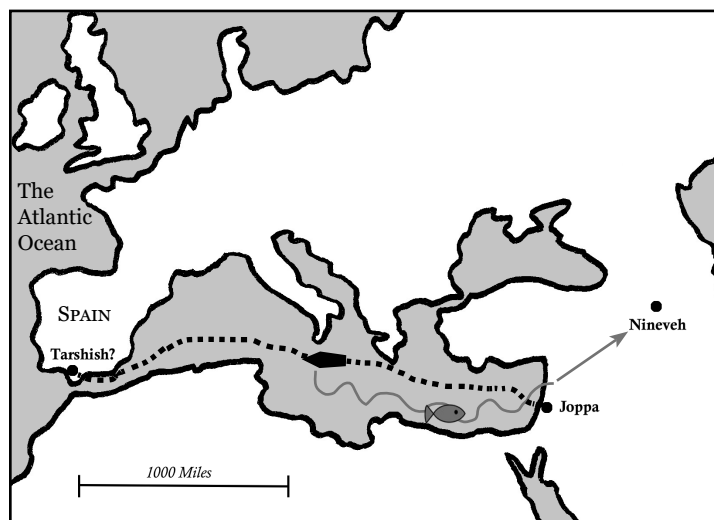
Continue playing in this manner until one person is left. That person can either be declared the winner, or can be “Big Fish” in a second game.

In today's story, the Big Fish did indeed go after (and catch!) a sailor who had been thrown overboard. That sailor was Jonah! Yet amazingly, that huge fish had actually been sent by God to save Jonah and get him back on track. God can use anyone and anything — even a big fish! — for his good purposes.

Worksheet Answer Key

Shown below are the answers and solution to the children's worksheet for this week's lesson:

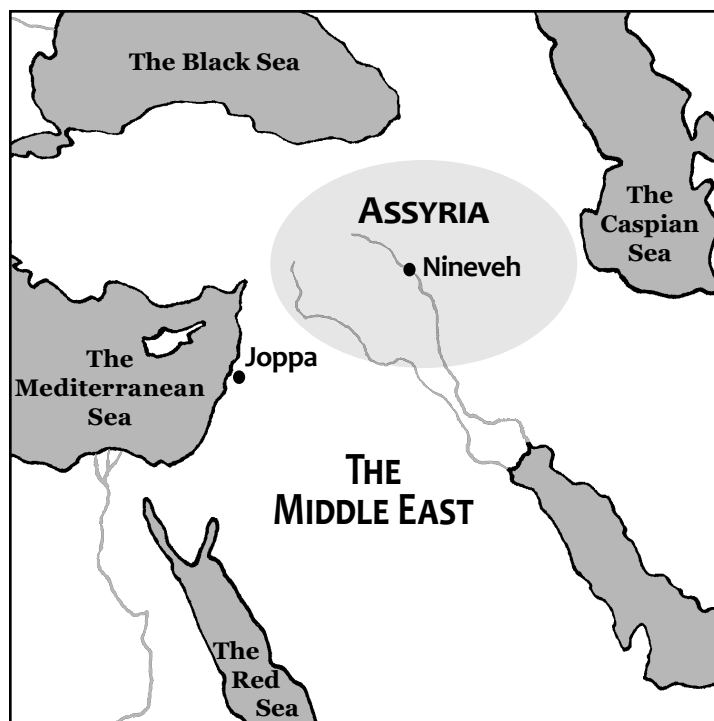
Map: Jonah's Journey



Jonah traveled across the entire width of the Mediterranean Sea to reach Tarshish from Joppa.

The city of Nineveh was in the region of Assyria.

Close-up Map:



Vocabulary Word for the Week:

Teachers may want to introduce the theme word for the week to help expand students' biblical vocabulary:

Message

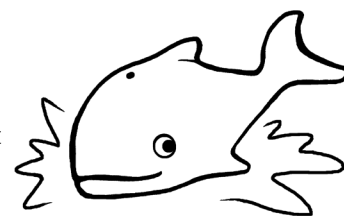
words we bring to others
(can be spoken or written down)

God gave his message to Jonah, so that others would come to believe in the Lord.

Reflection for the Week Ahead

The prophet Jonah was a reluctant prophet. God gave him a message to take to a place called Nineveh, but Jonah didn't like the people there so he didn't want to go. Instead he ran away! But that only got him into trouble.

The message God gave to Jonah was to tell the Ninevites to turn from their sin and be saved by God. Apparently Jonah didn't want the Ninevites to be saved. Eventually Jonah went to Nineveh, but he never was happy about it. The people heard the message and turned from their evil ways and God saved them. Isn't that what we want for all people?



Talk together about what it means to share that same message with other people who don't know God.

Is it hard to share, or easy? Who in your life needs to hear about God's love and mercy? Are you reluctant, like Jonah, to share the Good News of God's love, or are you willing and ready to tell others about him?

If you aren't sure how to speak about God, practice as a family so you'll be ready when the time comes.

The Practice of Prayer

Write a prayer that expresses praise for God's mercy and desire for all people to know him in their lives. Ask God to give you the words to share the message of his love with others.

Practice using the ADTRC Prayer Form: Address, Description, Thanks, Request, Conclusion.