

Date: 7.14.24 | Title: Jonah | Scripture: Jonah

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING

Middle School Students

The Bible is God's message about Himself and His salvation plan through Jesus.

God deserves respect, obedience, and honor.

God wants us to live for His glory.

God sent Jesus to be the atonement for our sins.

Jesus fulfills Old Testament prophecies and promises.

High School Students

The Bible is God's message about Himself and His salvation plan through Jesus.

God deserves respect, obedience, and honor.

God wants us to live for His glory.

God is a righteous judge.

God sent Jesus to be the atonement for our sins.

Jesus fulfills Old Testament prophecies and promises.

Jesus gave His life for us on the cross and He is the only way for salvation.



MEMORY VERSE

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways,
God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in
these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.”

Hebrews 1:1-2a

BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

Of all the prophets in the Old Testament, Jonah's story is the most famous, but also the most selfish. Jonah is a minor prophet, though not peaceful, gentle, or cooperative, and God's first foreign missionary. He started history's biggest revival on record- but resisted almost every step of the way. Jonah's story is a classic example of what God can do not only through the words of a prophet, but also in the life of a prophet.

Jonah lived during a time of wealth, expansion, and peace for the northern kingdom of Israel, but the nation was rebelling against the Lord, treating its own people poorly and playing with foreign religions.

God sent Jonah to preach repentance to Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria, a fearsome and dreaded enemy empire that would eventually conquer the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC. God said "Go... cry out against it." (Jonah 1:2) Jonah naturally wanted to see Nineveh destroyed, but Yahweh called Jonah to proclaim judgment on them so that Nineveh would repent. Jonah was disobedient and fled on a boat the opposite way to Tarshish (1:3). Jonah didn't want anything to do with the frightening Assyrians, but he was actually fleeing from God, not them.

God didn't accept Jonah's refusal to disobey and sent a great storm onto the sea (1:4). The sailors aboard Jonah's ship showed more sense than he did, praying to their gods and throwing cargo overboard to try to stay afloat. While the pagans prayed, Jonah slept (1:5). Soon the sailors realized that Jonah was at odds with his God and was the reason for the storm (1:7). Jonah's sin affected those around him.

To Jonah's credit, he took the blame. When the sailors asked him what they were supposed to do with him, he told them, "Chuck me overboard, and the sea will calm down." (1:12) God was glorified not by His own prophet, but because the sailors made offerings and vows to Him (1:14).

BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

Jonah admitted he knew God, admitted it was his fault they were in danger, but did nothing to make things right with God, even when the sailors rebuked Jonah for his disobedience (1:9-10). The sailor's hearts were softened by their circumstances and their consequences, but Jonah's was hardened. By God's grace alone, Jonah ended up in a fish's belly (1:17). God had a job for Jonah to do, so He kept Him from drowning, assigning a fish or a whale of some sort to carry him without digesting him for 3 days. During this time, God humbled his prophet (Jonah 2).

In spite of Jonah's defiance, God redirected his path and brought him to repentance in a unique place: the stomach of a fish. Inside the belly of the whale, Jonah's heart changed. There is no record that Jonah prayed when God called him to go to Nineveh, or when the storm came up, or when he got tossed overboard, or even when he got swallowed, but now, after three days and nights in the belly of a giant fish, "Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the fish's belly." (2:1) Jonah's prayer showed his sincere desire to seek and honor God. His language showed Jonah's clear knowledge of the Scriptures, with phrases from Psalms, Lamentations, and Job. There are nuances from no fewer than 11 different texts of Old Testament scripture in Jonah's prayer. The prophet admitted he had messed up and was being treated justly by God. Jonah had been his own idol. He set his will and agenda above God's, claiming to know God but pushing away what God wanted him to do.

In Jonah Chapter 3, we see the biggest miracle in this book wasn't the giant fish, but the giant revival- the biggest spiritual mass-conversion in recorded history. After Jonah was vomited onto dry land (2:10), God spoke to him a second time, and this time Jonah obeyed. God wanted Jonah to complete the task of evangelism to the Assyrians of Nineveh and gave him a second chance (3:3). As Jonah walked through the city, the largest of its time, he gave a simple, direct message: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." (3:4)

The people of Nineveh repented of their sins and glorified God. God blessed, and "the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them" (3:5). They all turned from evil to God, who "relented from the disaster that He said He would bring upon them" (3:10). Jonah knew Yahweh was "a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster" (4:2). Yahweh's graciousness to him was no different from the graciousness shown to Nineveh.

BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

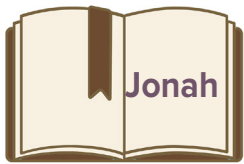
From a historical point of view, the odds against Jonah were high, given the brutality the Assyrians were known for against their enemies, success would have been impossible without God- but with God, it was inevitable. God saw the Ninevites conversion as genuine and held back His judgement, unfortunately the man God used to accomplish the revival didn't rejoice (4:1). Jonah knew God would forgive the Assyrians, and he wanted his enemies punished, not spared. What a contrast between God's nature and Jonah's! Jonah wanted God to give the Ninevites what they deserved- swift, final justice for their hatred of the Jews. He would rather have died than see Assyrians saved (3:3).

God again showed special grace for his angry prophet when Jonah went outside the city limits, sat down and sulked (4:5). Jonah still thought God might let Nineveh have what he thought they deserved, but instead, God gave Jonah a plant to shelter him from the sun. The next day, though, God killed the plant, sending a hot wind and letting the sun beat down on Jonah's head. Jonah quickly shifted back into wishing he was dead. Amazingly, once again, God did not respond to Jonah's anger with his own. Instead, He tried to guide Jonah through the right way to think about the matter (4:10-11).

Jonah was more upset about a soulless plant than 600,000 souls who would all face eternity without God. There is no neat little bow wrapped around the end of Jonah's story; it ends with questions. God's last words to the prophet in the book of Jonah declare His compassion over those who are lost: "Should I not be concerned about the great city?"

In the book of Nahum, we learn that 150 years after the Ninevites had turned to God, they return to their evil ways and are punished with captivity.

LOCATE THE SCRIPTURE & TELL THE STORY



Tell the story: Use the Background Info for Leaders to share the over arching theme of Jonah.

Attributes of God: Use the attributes of God list and determine the characteristics of God that we see in today's story. How can knowing these characteristics of God to be true, change the way we live in Christ?

TELL
THE
STORY



Share the GOSPEL:

Jonah deserved to be judged and destroyed because he disobeyed God's commission to proclaim judgement upon Nineveh, and yet Yahweh had mercy upon him. The large fish that swallowed Jonah became the means of his salvation. He saw that salvation is of the Lord, and that those who call to him in their distress, as he did in the belly of the fish, are saved by the Lord's mercy, and hence the Lord deserves praise and thanksgiving (2:9). Yahweh made his sovereign reign over all things very plain to Jonah by bringing a storm upon the sea so that he could not escape Tarshish (1:4-16), by appointing a fish to swallow Jonah (1:17), by commanding the fish to disgorge Jonah (2:10), by appointing a plant to grant Jonah shade (4:6), and by appointing a worm to destroy the plant (4:7-8). The sovereign Lord is also compassionate, relenting from judgment when people repent (3:5-10; 4:11). Many years after Jonah, God would send another messenger with the same wonderful message- God's Son, Jesus! Like Jonah, he would spend three days in darkness, this time in a tomb. He would be called "The Word" because he himself would be God's message! Sometimes we forget that if God didn't show grace to his enemies, we wouldn't know his grace either.

Read directly from Scripture, use the message, or the summary provided in the lesson

Re-Tell

The Bible Story

Put the events in order, draw a comic strip, build it with blocks or playdough, act it out, etc...

Jesus used Jonah's adventure in the belly of a fish as a sign of His own burial & resurrection (Matthew 12:40). The book of Jonah also shows the great lengths to which God will go to reach the lost & offer them forgiveness. Despite Jonah's unwilling & reluctant heart God still used him to get a message of mercy to an unrepentant people. Hundreds of years later, Jesus would go to even greater lengths to offer salvation to the entire world.

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

ATTENTIVE - God hears and responds to the needs of his children.

COMPASSIONATE - God cares for his children and acts on their behalf.

CREATOR - God made everything. He is uncreated.

DELIVERER - God rescues and saves his children.

ETERNAL - God is not limited by time. He exists outside of time.

FAITHFUL - God always keeps his promises.

GENEROUS - God gives what is best and beyond what is deserved.

GLORIOUS - God displays His greatness and worth.

GOOD - God is what is best and gives what is best. He is incapable of doing harm.

HOLY - God is perfect, pure, and without sin.

IMMUTABLE/UNCHANGING - God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

INCOMPREHENSIBLE - God is beyond our understanding. We can comprehend Him in part but not in whole.

INFINITE - God has not limits in His person or on His power.

JEALOUS - God will not share his glory with another. all glory rightfully belongs to him.

JUST - god is fair in all his actions and judgements. He cannot over-punish or under-punish.

LOVING - God feels and displays infinite, unconditional affection toward his children. His love for them does not depend on their worth, response, or merit.

MERCIFUL - God does not give his children the punishment they deserve.

OMNIPOTENT/ALMIGHTY - God holds all power. nothing is too hard for God. What He wills He can accomplish.

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

OMNIPRESENT - God is fully present everywhere.

OMNISCIENT - God knows everything, past, present, and future - all potential and real outcomes, all things micro and macro.

PATIENT/LONG-SUFFERING - God is untiring and bears with His children.

PROVIDER - God meets the needs of his children.

REFUGE - God is a place of safety and protection for his children.

RIGHTEOUS - God is always good and right.

SELF-EXISTENT - God depends on nothing and no one to give him life or existence.

SELF-SUFFICIENT - God is not vulnerable. He has no needs.

SOVEREIGN - God does everything according to His plan and pleasure.

TRANSCENDENT - God is not like humans. He is infinitely higher in being and action.

TRUTHFUL - Whatever God speaks or does is truth and reality.

WISE - God knows what is best and acts accordingly. He cannot choose wrongly.

WORTHY - God deserves all glory and honor and praise.

WRATHFUL - God hates all unrighteousness.

QUESTIONS TO REBUILD THE STORY

“Storying” Questions: As you ask these questions, have your students find the answers in the actual verses of scripture instead of recalling them from your re-telling of the story. We always want to encourage all of our students to go directly to God’s Word over a commentary on or summary of scripture.

1. Why do you think Jonah was so offended by the mission God sent him on?
2. How would you respond if God told you to go to an enemy city by yourself, stand in the public square, and preach His impending judgment?
3. Have you ever wanted to flee from God? Why? When is it hard for you to obey God? What are the consequences when we do not?
4. Why do you think God was so concerned for Nineveh, a city that has oppressed His people?
5. When Jonah rejected God’s assignment, God gave him a second chance. How relentlessly do you think God pursues us when we reject His purposes? Do you think He ever gives up on us and gives our assignment to someone else? Why or why not?
6. In what ways did Jonah change? In what ways did he not?
7. Why do you think Jonah was angry when Nineveh repented?
8. What does the book of Jonah teach us about God’s compassion?
What implications does this message have for our lives today?
9. In what ways does God want us to share His heart? How does He teach us His thoughts and impart His vision to us?
10. How does God see our enemies? How does He expect us to treat them? What modern-day enemies can you think of that God’s people might be reluctant to love?
11. Do you think God sends people on a mission to great cities today? If so, in what ways can we join Him in His mission?



THE PROPHETS

PRAYER PROMPTS

God thank you for constantly pursuing your people! We do not deserve Your relentless love! You are merciful and gracious and never give up on us! Help us to follow You and love You with our thoughts, desires, and actions.

IF TIME ALLOWS:

Help the students in your group practice memorizing the books of the Bible:

- Torah: Genesis-Deuteronomy
- History: Joshua-Esther
- Poetry: Job-Song of Solomon
- Major Prophets: Isaiah-Daniel
- Minor Prophets: Hosea-Malachi
- Gospels: Matthew-John
- Paul's Letters: Romans-Philemon
- General Letters: Hebrews-Revelation

MISSIONS EMPHASIS:

The book of Jonah illustrates that no one is beyond the offer of our forgiveness because no one sits outside God's offer of forgiveness.

REVIEW UNIT VERSE:

Work on memorizing this weeks verse with the students in your group. You can use the first letter of each word in the verse to help with this. For example, the unit verse would look like this:

LAAMTAIMWGSTOFBTPBITLDHHSTUBHS - Hebrews 1:1-2a



Application Questions

LOOK UPWARD



- How does this story apply to your relationship with God?
- What does it teach you about Him- His will and His heart?
- What aspect of His character is He inviting you to experience and enjoy?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your relationship with God?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in your relationship with God?

LOOK INWARD



- How does this story apply to your heart and your own spiritual growth?
- What does it teach you about yourself, your needs, or your goals in life?
- In what aspects of your personal life is God inviting you to grow and mature?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story inwardly?
- How will those around you benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to allow these truths to help you grow spiritually?

LOOK AROUND



- How does this story apply to your relationship with others?
- What does it teach you about how to see others and relate to them?
- What is god inviting you to do differently in your relationships?



Application Questions

LOOK OUTWARD

- How does this story apply to your ministry and mission in life- to your role in God's kingdom, in society, and in the world?
- What does it teach you about God's purposes for the world?
- What part of His mission is He inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your ministry?
- How will the world benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in the world?

LOOK FORWARD

- How does this story apply to your future, both in this age and in eternity?
- What does it teach you about God's plan for your life, now and forever?
- What aspects of eternity is God inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit in the future by applying these truths now?
- How will God's kingdom benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to impact eternity now with these truths?