



10

God Sends Jonah

Key Theme

- God uses imperfect people to accomplish His perfect plans.

Key Passages

- Jonah 1:1–5, 1:15, 1:17, 2:1, 2:10, 3:3, 3:10

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe Jonah's response to God calling him to Nineveh.
- Describe how God showed His mercy to Jonah and Nineveh.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Students will complete the Memory Verse Review Sheet. Then, they will recite the verse to each other and/or the entire class.



Activity 1: Order of Events

Students will complete the God Sends Jonah Order of Events Map as you study the lesson.



Studying God's Word

God called Jonah to deliver an important message to Nineveh. Instead, Jonah headed the other direction. After being swallowed by a giant fish, Jonah repented and headed to Nineveh. The whole city of Nineveh repented after hearing God's message. Jonah and Nineveh received God's mercy, and God's will was accomplished.



Activity 2: Jonah's Song

Students will learn a song about Jonah while playing a Jonah version of London Bridge.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- Print the Memory Verse Review Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

- Memory Verse Poster
- Memory Verse Review Sheet for each student
- Pencils



ORDER OF EVENTS

- Print one God Sends Jonah Order of Events Map from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.
- Print one set of six God Sends Jonah Order of Events Illustrations from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

- God Sends Jonah Order of Events Map for each student
- God Sends Jonah Order of Events Illustrations for each student
- Paper clips or envelopes
- Glue sticks



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.
- Print one Jonah Lesson Map from the Resource DVD-ROM.

- Jonah Lesson Map
- Poster putty or tape
- Student Take Home Sheets



JONAH'S SONG

- Print one Jonah's Song Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.

- Jonah's Song Sheet for each student
- Optional: Poster board and markers or chalk to write the lyrics

Memory Verse

1 Chronicles 29:11 Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head over all.

► **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the lesson key passages along with this background.

We serve an amazing God! He continually reveals Himself to us. Time and time again, His Word proclaims His attributes including His patience, mercy, grace, forgiveness, and goodness (Exodus 34:6–7). As we study one of God’s prophets today, we do well to be grateful each day for the grace God has shown in our lives.

Jonah was a prophet of God who was called to prophesy to the 10 tribes of Israel. However, his acclaim doesn’t come from his association with Israel, but rather from his encounter with God, a great fish, and the Ninevites. The capital of Assyria, Nineveh was believed to have been one of the largest cities in the world at the time. The people there were known for godlessness, idolatry, and cruelty. The Jews despised these pagan Gentiles—and Jonah was no exception.

That seems to be why Jonah ran the other direction when God called him to warn the Ninevites of their wickedness and of God’s impending punishment. He despised the Ninevites and did not want God to forgive them (Jonah 4:2). Jonah’s escape route led him to a ship bound for Tarshish (Jonah 1:3). But could Jonah really outrun God? Of course not. God’s purpose will never be subverted.

In fact, Jonah’s rebellion and flight led to a revelation of God’s complete sovereignty and omnipotence over every circumstance and over all of His creation. In pursuit of Jonah, the Lord sent a great wind on the sea. A great storm arose, and the ship headed for Tarshish was about to be broken up (Jonah 1:4). Not only that, but the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah when he was thrown overboard (Jonah 1:17). Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. This is a God that CANNOT be outrun or outwitted! Finally, Jonah prayed to the Lord in humble submission to God’s sovereignty, in sincere repentance, and with an earnest request for God’s mercy and grace. The Lord heard his prayer and spoke to the fish, which vomited the prophet of God out onto the ground (Jonah 2).

God faithfully answered Jonah’s prayer for mercy. God saved him from drowning, preserved him in the fish, and then offered him another opportunity to go to the Ninevites and preach the message of judgment. This time, Jonah obeyed!

Jonah cried out, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” (Jonah 3:4). God again demonstrated His abundant grace and mercy—this time to the sinful, rebellious, and despicable Ninevites. The people of Nineveh—from the greatest to the least—believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth as a sign of their repentance. God saw that they turned from their evil ways, and He relented and did not bring the destruction He had planned (Jonah 3:10).

To review, Jonah had received a clear message from God and knew that he should obey, but instead he chose to sin by disregarding God’s command to go to Nineveh. His sin did not stop God or His purposes. Nor can we thwart God’s plans for us. He will always accomplish what He intends, and He WILL carry out the work He has begun in us to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6).

What marvelous lessons for us in this small book. We, too, have sinned against God and continue to do so, but He has been gracious in giving us the message of the gospel. He has shown mercy to us in offering His Son on the Cross for the payment of our sins. He has listened to our cries of repentance and held back the punishment that He would be perfectly justified to give us.

We can use the account of Jonah to examine our own hearts in another area. Jonah was hostile toward sharing the gospel with the pagan Gentiles of Nineveh and was displeased that God would indeed save them (Jonah 4:1–2). Similarly, there may be times we feel that certain people don’t deserve to hear the message of the gospel—the message of repentance and faith. Perhaps we believe them to be pathetic, evil sinners—seemingly without hope. We need to guard against any type of self-righteousness in our own salvation and remember that our sins were the reason Jesus suffered and died. He willingly bore our sins, dying on our behalf. Let’s take time to consider the Apostle Paul’s words to Timothy: “And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth” (2 Timothy 2:24–25).

What an awesome truth to meditate on. Throughout the ages, God has used His people to deliver the message of repentance and forgiveness in Christ, and He is still doing so today. Maybe you will be the Jonah for someone in your class today who will hear the message of the hope of Christ and trust in that truth.

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

Jonah was a prophet from the region of Galilee, the city of Gath Hopher near Nazareth (2 Kings 14:25). We know that his father was a man named Amittai, but nothing else about the family is recorded in Scripture. Although some scholars claim Jonah was not a real person, Jesus Himself referred to Jonah. On at least two occasions (Matthew 12:39–41, 16:4), Jesus used Jonah as an example of a call to repentance and as a sign of His death, burial, and Resurrection. Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees that “as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Undoubtedly, Jesus regarded Jonah as an historical figure, and He regarded Jonah’s experiences in the fish and his preaching to Nineveh as real events.

The Assyrians were descendants of Shem’s son Asshur who settled in the North and occupied various places throughout the centuries. Around 1100 BC, Assyria rose to power in Mesopotamia and later declined. During this period of decline, around 800 BC, God sent Jonah to Nineveh. The city was known for its immorality and cruelty, and it is truly a miracle of God’s grace that the people turned from their wickedness—but the repentance didn’t continue in future generations. Later prophecies would be delivered against the Ninevites from Nahum, and God would judge them for their wickedness.

Under the leadership of Tiglath-Pileser III (2 Kings 16:7), Assyria began to influence Israel. Eventually, the Assyrians would conquer the Northern tribes and take them into captivity. After the fall of Samaria in 721 BC, the Israelites lost control of that region for many centuries. The Assyrian kings began to carry the Jews away from their land and brought new leaders from their own culture to Israel. This advanced the practice of the Jews intermarrying with the Assyrians and other foreigners. Because of this intermarrying, they were considered traitors by those who had remained in Judah, causing tension between the Samaritans and the Jews, which continued well past the time of Christ.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Gracious Lord, how many times have I gone the other direction when you’ve called me to do your will? Too many! Forgive me, Lord. Help me to grow in my faith and trust you more. Help me to be obedient the first time. I am awed by your grace and mercy to Jonah in his disobedience. The same grace and mercy falls on me in my disobedience. I am humbled more and more as I come face to face with your greatness. May my students be humbled and awed by you this week, too. Bless them and reveal your truth to them through your Word.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will complete the Memory Verse Review Sheet.
- They will recite the memory verse to another student or the teacher.

This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided an activity sheet on the Resource DVD-ROM for you to use. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



Order of Events

MATERIALS

- God Sends Jonah Order of Events Map for each student
- God Sends Jonah Order of Events Illustrations for each student
- Paper clips or envelopes to hold illustrations
- Glue sticks

INSTRUCTIONS

Print one order of events map for each student. Cut the order of events illustrations before class. Paper clip each set to the sheets or put them into small envelopes. Pass them out at the beginning of class. Students will glue the pictures in the proper place on the map as you teach the lesson.

We will be completing this map as we study the Bible. You'll glue in the pictures as we come to them in the lesson.

After gluing in each picture, review the event with the students. As you move through the lesson, review all the illustrations beginning at #1.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

As we study God's Word today, we will see what happened when Jonah tried to run away from God. We will also see that God always accomplishes His plans.

➤ Because of the age and ability of 1st and 2nd graders to read and comprehend, we encourage you to read the Scriptures to the students. However, if you have strong readers, by all means have them participate by reading God's Word.



Studying God's Word

➤ Use the History of Israel Poster included with your teacher kit to show your class where the biblical accounts you study chronologically fit into this timeline.

➤ Refer to the Jonah Lesson Map up on the board or make it visible to the students.

Jonah 1:1–3

➤ Encourage students to bring their Bibles each week and find the verses in their own Bible as you read them and teach the lesson.

READ THE WORD

As we study the Old Testament, we hear about men called prophets. God used prophets to tell the people what He wanted them to know. Remember, they didn't have the Bible then. God spoke through prophets to teach the people His truth, send warnings, and tell the people about things that were going to happen in the future. *Refer to the Roles of the Prophets Poster.*

Today we are going to talk about someone I think you may have heard of before. But you may not have known he was a prophet of God. His name was Jonah! Jonah was a prophet to Israel. *Refer to Israel on the Jonah Lesson Map from the Resource DVD-ROM.* But he isn't always remembered for that. He usually gets remembered for the part he played in the true account about God, a sinful nation, and a great big fish. Sound familiar? We can read about Jonah in the book of Jonah in the Bible. We're going to read some of that today. Even though you may know about Jonah already, pay close attention. You just might hear something new. God told Jonah to go to Nineveh but Jonah decided to go the opposite direction! Listen as I read Jonah 1:1–3. *Read Jonah 1:1–3 enthusiastically. Emphasize the answers to the questions you will be asking below.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? Who was speaking to whom? *Jonah 1:1. The Lord spoke to Jonah.*
- ? What did the Lord ask Jonah to do? *Jonah 1:2. Go to Nineveh and cry out against it.*
- ? What do you think that means? *Allow discussion.*

Let me explain. The city of Nineveh was a mean and wicked city. The people did not worship the one true God but worshipped many false gods. Jonah did not like the people in Nineveh. And yet God told Jonah to go and cry out against them—against their sin. God wanted Jonah to tell the people to repent and turn back to the true God! These people were wicked. This doesn't sound like a great job to me. But this is what God called Jonah to do. Jonah was in Israel. God told him to go to Nineveh. *Refer to the Jonah Lesson Map.*

- ? Now find picture #1 of Jonah. I want you to glue it on your sheet over the #1. Who can read #1 for us? *Assign a reader. God called Jonah.*
- ? God called Jonah to go to the wicked people of Nineveh and tell them to stop sinning. Does that sound like a fun trip? *No!*

- ? No it doesn't. And I don't think it sounded like much fun to Jonah either. Listen again and tell me what Jonah did. *Re-read Jonah 1:3. What did Jonah do? He went to Joppa, got on a ship, and tried to run from the Lord to Tarshish.*

Refer to these places on the map. Have the students find the places on their maps as well. So, Jonah was here in Israel. God called Jonah to go here to Nineveh. But, Jonah thought "no way!" So he went to Joppa, got on a ship that was sailing way over here—to Tarshish! Jonah was running the other way! He was headed for Tarshish, not Nineveh. Find picture #2 of the ship. Glue that on your sheet near Joppa where Jonah got on the ship.

- ? Who can read #2 for us? *Assign a reader. Johan disobeyed God and ran away.*

Discover the Truth

God gave Jonah a job to do, and Jonah got on a ship that was headed in the opposite direction! Would Jonah really be able to run away from the Lord? Of course not. God is omnipresent—He is everywhere. Jonah could not get away from God. And God would show that to Jonah in a very real way! Let's keep reading and see how God responded to Jonah's disobedience.



READ THE WORD

Some of you may already know what God did next. Remember, Jonah was on the ship sailing across the Mediterranean Sea to Tarshish—AWAY from Nineveh where God told Jonah to go! Jonah was not obeying God. What did God do? Let's read it right from God's Word in Jonah 1:4–5. *Read Jonah 1:4–5.*

Jonah 1:4–5

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? What did the Lord send? *Jonah 1:4. God sent a great wind, tempest, storm.*
- ? What shape was the ship in? *Jonah 1:4. About to be broken up!*
- ? What was happening on the ship? What were the sailors or mariners doing? *Jonah 1:5. They were afraid. They cried out to their gods. They threw the ship's cargo into the sea.*

This was a very bad storm God brought. The sailors were afraid and started to throw everything overboard to keep the ship from sinking.

- ? But what was Jonah doing all this time, during this terrible storm the Lord had brought? *Jonah 1:5. He had gone down below and was fast asleep.*

Jonah was sleeping during this horrible storm! The Bible tells us that the captain of the ship went to wake Jonah up. Then the men on the ship realized the storm was Jonah's fault because he had tried to run from God!

- ? Can we run from the Lord God? *No!*

► Re-read the verses if necessary as you ask the questions.

Jonah 1:15

We can't run from God. God is omnipresent. He is everywhere. We can't hide from Him. Jonah couldn't hide either. The men on the ship knew that Jonah couldn't run from the true God! They asked Jonah what they could do to calm the storm that the Lord had brought on them.

Jonah told them to throw him overboard and the storm would stop. And although they didn't want to do it, they finally realized they had to. Listen to what they did to Jonah. *Read Jonah 1:15.*

- ? What did the men do to Jonah? *Jonah 1:15. They threw Jonah into the sea.*
- ? What happened once Jonah was off the ship? *Jonah 1:15. The storm stopped.*

Jonah 1:17

Jonah was off the ship in the water. But he wouldn't be there for long! You probably know what happened next. Let's read Jonah 1:17 and find out for sure. *Read Jonah 1:17.*

- ? There was a great fish. Who had prepared that great fish to be right there at the right time? *Jonah 1:17. The Lord prepared the great fish.*
- ? And what did God prepare that fish to do? *Jonah 1:17. Swallow Jonah.*
- ? And how long did God keep Jonah in the fish? *Jonah 1:17. Three days and three nights.*

Find picture #3 and glue it on #3 on your sheet. Jonah went overboard. God had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah right then! This happened in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. *Refer to the Mediterranean Sea on the map.*

- ? Will someone read #3 for us? *Assign a reader. A great fish swallowed Jonah.*

Discover the Truth

Instead of obeying God, Jonah tried to run! But God would not allow that. God stopped Jonah in a very crazy way! God had a plan to use Jonah. God is omnipotent—all-powerful—over the weather, the seas, and the creatures in the sea. And God is omnipresent—He is everywhere. We can't hide from Him. We can't outrun God if He wants to use us as part of His plan. And Jonah wasn't able to outrun Him either. *Refer to the Attributes of God Poster.*



OMNIPOTENT
OMNIPRESENT

(Refer to Attributes Poster)

READ THE WORD

Jonah 2:1

So, we have a very powerful God and a prophet who realized he could not run from God! What happened next? Turn to Jonah 2. I'm going to read verse 1. *Read Jonah 2:1 aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? Can you imagine this happening? What would you do if a great fish came and swallowed you? What did Jonah do from the fish's belly? *Jonah 2:1. Prayed to the Lord his God.*

That's right! Jonah prayed to God from inside the fish! Find picture #4. Jonah was praying. Go ahead and glue that onto #4 on your sheet.

- ? Jonah prayed. What did the Lord do after hearing Jonah's prayer? Listen as I read. *Read Jonah 2:10. The Lord spoke to the fish and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.*

God spoke to the fish. God told the fish to vomit Jonah up onto shore. God is truly omnipotent—He is a powerful, mighty God in control of everything! And God wanted Jonah back on dry ground. Find picture #5 and glue the picture where it belongs.

Wow! God showed Jonah mercy. Jonah could have drowned in the sea, or been killed by the fish, and that would have been the end of Jonah. But God gave Jonah a second chance to obey. So God told Jonah again to go to Nineveh and preach to the people. Hmmm. What do you think Jonah did this time? Let's see! *Read Jonah 3:3.*

- ? Now, where did Jonah go? *Jonah 3:3. To the city of Nineveh.*

That's right! Jonah learned to go where God called him and do what God asked. Jonah went and preached God's message to all the wicked people in the city. He warned them to stop sinning. He told them to turn back to God. If they didn't listen, God would destroy the entire city.

Find picture #6, the city of Nineveh. Glue that in the right place on your sheet.

- ? How do you think the people in Nineveh responded to God's message? Do you think this big, wicked, sinful city listened to God's one prophet? Did these people turn from their wicked ways? *Allow for answers. Let's see. I'm going to read Jonah 3:10. Read Jonah 3:10.*

- ? What did God see in this verse? *The people had turned from their wicked ways.*

Yes. The people of Nineveh turned from their evil ways and because they listened, God did not destroy their city. They deserved to be punished and destroyed but God held back and gave them a second chance. God showed Nineveh His mercy and grace.

Discover the Truth

After being swallowed by a fish, Jonah prayed to God and asked for forgiveness. God showed grace to Jonah by giving him a second chance to

Jonah 2:10

Jonah 3:3

Jonah 3:10

MERCIFUL

(Refer to Attributes Poster)

obey. The fish vomited Jonah out and Jonah went to Nineveh to preach, just as God had asked him to do. The people listened to God's Word and repented of their sin. God showed His mercy to Nineveh, just like He had to Jonah, by not destroying their city and giving them a second chance!

? Our God is merciful. Can you find that attribute of God on the Attributes of God Poster? What does it mean? *Assign one student or have the class read the definition together.*

When we say God is merciful, we are saying that He does not punish even when we deserve it. Because we are all sinners and disobey God, like Jonah and the people in Nineveh did, we deserve to be punished for our sin. But God is merciful and patient. Just as He did with Nineveh and Jonah, He forgives us when we turn to Him. He gives the gift of forgiveness and salvation to all who will listen to Him, repent of their sins, and believe in Jesus Christ for forgiveness. God is merciful and gracious. He offers forgiveness and gives us second chances through Jesus.



Jonah's Song

MATERIALS

- Jonah's Song Sheet for each student
- Optional: Poster board, chart paper and markers, or chalk to write the lyrics for the students to read

INSTRUCTIONS

If you have time before class write the lyrics on poster board or the board.

Sing Jonah's Song while playing a Jonah version of London Bridge and/or using the hand motions described on the song sheet.

To play, have two students be the bridge. Line the students up. As you sing each verse have the children run through the bridge. At the end of each verse, have the bridge fall down on someone. That student can then be the bridge.

We're going to sing a fun song about Jonah. It will help us remember what happened to Jonah in the Bible. Let's sing it a couple

of times. I'll show you some fun motions to help you remember it. Then we are going to play a version of London Bridge—Jonah style! *Sing the song several times or as long as the students show interest.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

After Jonah ran away from God and was swallowed by a great fish, he eventually obeyed and went to Nineveh. When the people of Nineveh heard Jonah's message from God that their city was about to be destroyed they believed it was true. They turned away from their sin and called out to God. God was merciful to them. He forgave the people of Nineveh and spared their city. And He forgave Jonah by giving him a second chance to obey and go to Nineveh.





Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

As we recap what we learned today, follow Jonah's path on your sheet. First, # 1: God called Jonah to give a message to the people of Nineveh. But Jonah did not want to do what God had asked. He said "No way!" to God's call. Go to #2: Jonah got on a ship and went the other way. Remember, no one, including us, can ever outrun God. Go to #3: God prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. Go to #4: Jonah prayed to God from inside the fish and asked for forgiveness. Go to #5: God told the fish to vomit Jonah back onto land. Go to #6: God commanded Jonah again to go to Nineveh. This time Jonah obeyed God. Jonah preached God's message. The people listened, turned to God, and God did not destroy their city.

God showed His mercy and grace to Jonah and to Nineveh! God listened to Jonah's prayer from inside the fish and gave him a second chance to obey. God showed His mercy to Nineveh by warning the people through Jonah, forgiving them, and saving their city.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

Is this a true account? Did this really happen? Many people don't believe it. How could a man live inside a fish for three days? How could a wicked city turn back to God? These are good questions. If you ever get asked questions like these, I want you to remember that every word of God is true. I can tell you this, too. When Jesus was on the earth, He talked about Jonah. We read that in the book of Matthew in the New Testament. Jesus mentioned Jonah, the storm, the great fish, and the city of Nineveh. If Jesus believed it, we can, too! We can always trust Jesus and God's Word to tell us the truth.



➤ Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the children to practice the memory verse this week.



MEMORY VERSE

1 Chronicles 29:11 Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head over all.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

- Praise God who gives us His mercy and grace even when we don't deserve it.
- Thank God that we can never run where He can't find us.
- Ask God to use us to tell the truth of His Word to others.

