

Jonah 1

The Prophet

Scripture: Jonah 1

Memory Verse: Job 9:4 *“God is wise in heart and mighty in strength. Who has hardened himself against Him and prospered?”*

Lesson Focus: Going back 800 or so years from where the book of Acts left us, we see that God was at work even then sending people out on mission to rescue people from darkness and sin. But nowhere in Acts did we see someone as obstinate as Jonah! As we begin this book today, we hope the kids will be amazed not only at God’s might, but also at how God’s desire to rescue lost people is constant throughout all time, even now!

Activities and Crafts: Jonah Disobeying Coloring Picture, Word Search of different terms from lesson, Find the Treasure Discussion for 3rd – 5th.
Craft for 1st/2nd Grade: Megaphone

Starter Activity: Prophet Challenge

Let the kids know that we are starting a new book of the Bible today, one of the “prophetic” books.

Consider getting the lesson started with an activity that will help the kids better understand what the job of a prophet was. Have 3 or 4 volunteers come up in front of the class who will pretend to be prophets. We will have some fake beards for you to put on each volunteer (consider also grabbing some fabric/cloth from the resource room as a head covering or robe to enhance the effect) and will also give you a cone “megaphone” that the kids can “prophesy” through (to amplify their voice). *

After you have everyone up front and ready to go explain that the primary job of a prophet was to proclaim or speak forth God’s word to others. God would give the prophets a message and they would often begin to tell the people God’s message by saying **“THUS SAYS THE LORD!”**

At this point, have each “prophet” in front of the room take turns proclaiming **“THUS SAYS THE LORD!”** into their little megaphone. To add a little bit of spice, consider having the class vote for the kid that was most convincing and award that kid with a small prize for his excellent performance! Make it fun!

Afterwards, transition into the lesson by mentioning that many of the messages God spoke through the prophets are recorded in the Bible! We are going to start one of those books today! While Jonah was a prophet with a message to deliver, you’ll be surprised to discover that he had a lot of lessons to learn about God too! Let’s take a look!

Background:

Important questions to establish context and background of any book of the Bible.

- 1) **What?:** Jonah is an Old Testament book of the Bible detailing what happened after God commanded him to preach to Israel's enemies (the Assyrians).
- 2) **When?:** The events took place about 750-800 years before Jesus was born.
- 3) **Why?:** This book truly previews and points forward to the grace and mercy of God available to all (even the most vile people) in the person of Jesus Christ. *

Bible Study:

Jonah 1:1: Here we are introduced to Jonah as the son of Amittai and as a prophet who receives a message directly from God. While the Scriptures don't tell us much more about Jonah's background, a little more is described in another book of the Bible.

Read 2 Kings 14:23-25: Jonah's ministry took place during a time of prosperity for the nation of Israel which the Lord had foretold through Jonah. Yet, despite this, the king in Israel was wicked and the nation of Israel was becoming more and more corrupt! *

One interesting side note we learn here is that Jonah was from Gath Hopher which is very close to where Jesus grew up hundreds of years later! *

Jonah 1:2: God commands Jonah to go to the ancient and great city of Nineveh and to warn them to turn away from their wickedness and sin. Except there was a huge problem! Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria, one of Israel's ancient enemies!

WHAT? Go to the capital of the nation that wants to destroy Israel and preach to them? This was certainly shocking not only because Assyria was Israel's enemy, but they were also one of the cruelest and most wicked empires in ancient history. *

Q: How many of you are familiar with the Nazis? A: They were a wicked group under Adolf Hitler who (just 80 years ago) tried to exterminate the Jewish people completely from the earth. Imagine if you were a Jewish religious leader and God told you to go to the capital city of the Nazis and warn them to repent and turn away from their sin! *

Jonah 1:3: WHOA! Check this out! Does Jonah obey God? NO! In fact, he goes the OPPOSITE direction from Nineveh thinking he could hide from God! *

Q: How many of you like to play hide and seek? (**Teachers:** Consider sharing a hide-and-seek story of yours or hide an object in the class and have the kids try to find it!)

Boys and Girls: We need to pause and review something important about God: He is all-knowing and ever-present which means there is NOWHERE you can hide from God!

Read Jeremiah 23:24. In other words, you can never beat God at hide-and-seek!

Jonah should have known better! And as we will see, he will learn his lesson the hard way! The REALLY hard way! *

Jonah 1:4: WOW! Notice that God knew EXACTLY where Jonah was!

Jonah 1:5-6: This was no ordinary storm as these experienced sailors were in a panic.

Q: But where was Jonah? A: Sleeping? The captain couldn't believe it and desperately pleads with Jonah to help by calling upon his God. * Notice these sailors were not believers in the true God as they all cried out to whatever bogus god they believed in. *

Jonah 1:7: The sailors know something supernatural is going on here and figure out that Jonah's sin is the cause of this storm. * So, all eyes are on Jonah! Not only has he lost the hide-and-seek game with God, but now his sin and guilt are evident to all of these sailors!

Jonah 1:8-10: For the first time, Jonah is finally behaving a little bit like a prophet of God: He actually tells them about the one true and living God Who made all things!

Jonah 1:11-12: Double WOW! Q: What did Jonah suggest? A: He knew this was all his fault and appears to be willing to give up his own life to save the sailors. While it's not clear whether he has truly surrendered to God or is still in rebellion, this is the first time we at least see him thinking of someone other than himself!

Jonah 1:13-15: While the sailors tried to save Jonah, they realize this was indeed the only way and reluctantly throw him over and into the sea!

Q: And what happened? A: God immediately stopped the storm just like Jonah predicted!

Teachers: Consider re-reading through **Jonah 1:4-15** but have the kids silently act out the scene. Arrange tables/chairs to make a boat area. Have a sleeping Jonah, a frustrated captain, kids rowing, and come to the climax with the kids dropping Jonah overboard. *

Jonah 1:16: But notice the result of all of this craziness! These men were changed and appear to become believers in the one true and living God! Isn't it a little bit funny that Jonah ran away so he could avoid telling unbelievers about God, but he ended up doing that very thing (and they believed!)? God has a sense of humor!

Q: Who has been in charge throughout this whole story? A: GOD! God's plans cannot be thwarted by Jonah, by you, by the devil, or anyone! And while Jonah doesn't understand this yet, His plans to show mercy to the evil people of Nineveh are GOOD!

Jonah 1:17: Triple WOW! God ain't done with Jonah yet!

Key Point: We finished the "roller coaster" adventure ride of the book of Acts last week only to continue the ride this week in Jonah! All throughout the Bible we see God's good plan to use flawed people like Jonah, Peter, and Paul to get His message of rescue out. As our memory verse (**Job 9:4**) says, it doesn't do any good to resist God and His purposes.

Q: Are you running or hiding from God? A: Turn to Him today! Just as Jonah gave his life to save those sailors, someone far greater (Jesus) came hundreds of years later and gave His life and rose again that you might be saved from the punishment you deserve! * He loves you! The Lord ain't done with any of you yet either! Follow Him and His ways this week!

