

**BOOKS OF THE BIBLE
CHILDREN'S CURRICULUM**

Early Elementary
The Prophets





JONAH LEARNS A LESSON

Lesson 1 - Early Elementary

Bible Basis: Jonah 1–4 found in *The Books of the Bible for Kids, The Prophets*, pages 7-11
Key Verse: Titus 3:5a (NirV): “He saved us. It was because of his mercy.”
Key Idea: God is merciful.

Master Supplies List

- flip chart with easel
- red marker
- white crayon
- red watercolor paint
- paintbrush
- Bible
- *The Books of the Bible for Kids, The Prophets*
- Jonah Map (1 copy)
- Family Page (1 per child)

Optional Supplies

You will need the following supplies based on which option(s) you choose in Step 3 | Explore More.

- Option 1: The Story of Jonah game board (1 per pair), large beads or game markers (1 per child), dice or game spinners



- Option 2: quality art paper, Bible, markers, watercolor paints, water, paintbrushes, newspaper
- Option 3: several balloons, traffic cones
- Option 4: audiovisual equipment to play music or project a video
- Option 5: Jonah's Plant skit (3 copies)



STEP 1 | Come Together (10 min)

Supplies: flip chart with easel, red marker, white crayon, red watercolor paint, paintbrush
Teacher Prep: Write the list of sins (below) on the flip chart in red marker. Over the top, write the word MERCY in large, bold letters using the white crayon (it shouldn't be visible).

- SHOW children the flip chart.
- SAY: We all do wrong things sometimes. Maybe you've done some of these wrong things:
 - saying mean words to someone
 - using the Lord's name without respect
 - disobeying parents
 - acting better or smarter than someone else
 - taking something that isn't yours
- EXPLAIN: These all are wrong behaviors, or sins. It is the job of your parents and teachers to keep you from wrong behaviors.
- ASK: How might your parents respond or punish you for each of these behaviors? (take responses; have you write a letter of apology)
- COMMENT: God knows about all our sin. He has every right to punish us, but instead he sent Jesus to die for us.
- SHOW children the red paint.
- SAY: Here's how God sees our sin if we are forgiven through Jesus.
- PAINT the flip chart entirely with the red paint so the red words are obscured but the word MERCY stands out.
- CLARIFY: Mercy is forgiveness we don't deserve. God has the power and the right to punish us, but he frequently forgives us instead. Our God is merciful, and today we'll see a good example of that in the life of Jonah.

KEY VERSE

- INTRODUCE this week's Key Verse. Repeat the verse slowly a few times until the children are able to say the verse from memory or along with the hand motions. (Note: You also may choose to review last week's Key Verse together.)



Titus 3:5a

He saved us.

It was because of his mercy.

(hug self)

(point toward heaven)



PRAYER

- PRAY aloud with the children: Heavenly Father, thank you for being a merciful God. Thank you for giving us mercy instead of punishment when we do wrong. Please help us show that mercy to others. Amen.

STEP 2 | Hear the Story (20 min)

Supplies: Bible, Jonah Map (1 copy)

Teacher Prep: Print the Jonah Map.

CHAPTER 1

- SAY: Jonah was a prophet who lived long ago, after King Solomon but before Daniel was thrown in the lions' den. Jonah was a prophet. A prophet's job was to deliver God's messages to people. During Jonah's lifetime, Nineveh was a huge city that was known for being especially sinful.
- READ aloud Jonah 1:1–3.
- SHOW the Jonah Map, and point out the cities of Joppa, Nineveh, and Tarshish.
- SPECULATE: Why do you think God wanted Jonah to preach against Nineveh? (take responses)
- WONDER: Why do you think Jonah went in the opposite direction? (take responses)
- READ aloud verses 4–5a, 7–12, 15.
- QUESTION: What do you think normally would happen to a person thrown overboard during a terrible storm? (the person probably would drown)
- READ aloud verse 17.
- ASK: What do you think that was like? (painful, scary, smelly, dark)

CHAPTER 2

- CONTINUE: Jonah prayed to God from inside the fish.
- ASK: What kind of prayer do you think someone would pray after being thrown overboard during a storm and swallowed by a fish? (take responses)
- READ aloud Jonah 2:9.
- SAY: Jonah thanked and praised God.
- READ aloud Jonah 2:10.



CHAPTER 3

- READ aloud Jonah 3:1–2.
- SPECULATE: What do you think Jonah will do this time? Has he learned his lesson? (take responses)
- READ aloud verses 3–5, 10.
- SAY: The sinful people of Nineveh actually listened to Jonah. They repented, which means they turned away from their sin. So instead of destroying the city, God had mercy.
- ASK: How do you think Jonah might have felt about this? (take responses)



CHAPTER 4

- READ aloud Jonah 4:1–3.
- SAY: Jonah wasn't happy when God showed mercy for the people of Nineveh. Jonah had seen the people of Nineveh hurt others. But God also showed mercy to Jonah when he disobeyed.
- CONTINUE: We can be like Jonah sometimes. We get upset when things aren't fair. We want mercy for our own wrongs, but we sometimes want justice and punishment for the wrongs of others. But we should thank God that he isn't fair. He gives us mercy when we deserve punishment.

STEP 3 | Explore More

Choose from these activity options to help children explore the lesson further.

Option 1: Jonah Board Game (20 min)

Supplies: The Story of Jonah game board (1 per pair), large beads or game markers (1 per child), dice or game spinners

Teacher Prep: Print and photocopy The Story of Jonah game board.

- GIVE each pair of children a Jonah game board, two beads, and a die or game spinner.
- INSTRUCT children to take turns rolling the die or spinning the spinner to move their marker across the board from Start to Finish.
- INSTRUCT children to stand once someone reaches Finish. If time permits, allow those children standing to swap partners and play again.

Option 2: Jonah's Prayer (20 min)

Supplies: quality art paper, Bible, marker, watercolor paints, water, paintbrushes, newspaper

Teacher Prep: Cover tables or desks with newspaper. Write each verse (or partial verse) of Jonah 2:2–9 on separate pieces of art paper so each child has one to illustrate (use all portrait orientation or all landscape orientation).

Note: If you are unfamiliar with using/teaching watercolor painting, look online for a tutorial, article, or video.

- SAY: The book of Jonah tells us one of Jonah's prayers while he was inside the belly of the fish.



- READ aloud Jonah 2:2–9.
- GIVE each child a piece of paper with a verse or part of a verse on it. Make sure they understand what it says.
- INSTRUCT children to illustrate their verse using watercolors.
- EXPLAIN that repentance, admitting, and turning away from sinful behavior is an important part of receiving God's forgiveness.
- DISPLAY children's artwork once it is dry, or compile it into a class book.

Option 3: Overboard! (15 min)

Supplies: several balloons, traffic cones

Teacher Prep: Divide a large, open play area in half with a row of cones. Blow up and tie the balloons.

- DIVIDE the class in half, with one half standing on each side of the cones.
- SAY: You are the sailors on two different ships during a terrible storm. Your job is to throw cargo overboard.
- DISTRIBUTE the balloons evenly across the play area.
- INSTRUCT children to throw as many balloons as they can “overboard” across the row of cones. Both teams try to get the “cargo” off of their “boat” by returning the balloons that land on their side.
- EXPLAIN after the game that in the end the sailors threw Jonah overboard.

Option 4: Praise and Worship (15 min)

Recommended song: “Mercy Is Falling” by David Ruis

© 1995 by Mercy / Vineyard Publishing (Admin. by Vineyard Music USA)

Potential sources: YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HXip3WshDog> and CCLI #1441760

Purpose for this song: This simple, repetitive song celebrates God's mercy. Have children wiggle their fingers like falling rain as they sing.

Recommended song: “Jonah Was a Prophet” by VeggieTales®

© 2001 by Bob and Larry Publishing (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing)

Potential sources: YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XoYk6CtBEvM> and CCLI #4337269

Purpose for this song: This silly song tells the story of Jonah with favorite characters children are sure to enjoy.

Option 5: Act It Out (20 min)

Supplies: Jonah's Plant skit (3 copies)

Teacher Prep: Print and photocopy the Jonah's Plant skit.

- ASSIGN a strong reader to play the part of Jonah (and another to play the Voice of God if possible). Read the Narrator part yourself.
- ACT out the skit for the rest of the class
- REVIEW today's Key Verse with motions to help the children understand how God shows us mercy.



STEP 4 | Going Home (5 min)

Supplies: Family Page (1 per child)

Teacher Prep: Print and photocopy the Family Page.



- GIVE each child a copy of this week's Family Page.
- SAY: Give this page to your family when they pick you up. It will remind you to tell your family about our merciful God.
- ENCOURAGE children to practice telling you what they remember about Jonah.
- REVIEW today's story and Key Idea as you wait for the children to get picked up.
- HELP children practice saying today's Key Verse from memory or using the hand motions.
- REMIND children to prepare for next week's lesson by reading *The Books of the Bible for Kids, The Prophets*, Days 6-10, or by doing The Prophets Week 2 in My Bible Story Coloring Book with their parents.
- REMIND each child to take home any activity sheets or craft projects and the Family Page.

FAMILY PAGE

Lesson 1: Jonah Learns a Lesson

Bible Basis: Jonah 1–4 found in *The Books of the Bible for Kids, The Prophets*, pages 7-11

Key Verse: Titus 3:5a (NirV): “He saved us. It was because of his mercy.”

Key Idea: God is merciful.

How to Use This Page

This week, your family can read the Bible Basis passage from pages 7-11 in *The Books of the Bible for Kids, The Prophets* to help your child remember the lesson. Use the Table Talk questions to start a discussion around the dinner table, while driving in the car, or just about anywhere. The Living Faith activity is designed to remind your child of the Bible lesson through a drama or other engaging activity. The Extra Mile idea provides interactive ways for your child to connect with the story.

Table Talk

1. What did Jonah do right?
2. What did Jonah do wrong?
3. What does mercy mean?
4. How can you show mercy to others?

Living Faith

Option 1

Take to the bathtub to act out the story of Jonah. You’ll need some plastic figures, a ship (maybe a plastic food container), and a giant fish (even a washcloth will do). Narrate from the Bible or a Bible storybook as your child acts out the story. Don’t forget to include the important lesson about God’s mercy.

Option 2

Interview Jonah from inside the fish. Help your child crawl inside a sleeping bag or under a table draped with a blanket. Interview Jonah, asking how he got there and how he’s feeling. You might want to try a Day 1 versus Day 3 interview to mark a change in Jonah’s attitude.

Extra Mile

- When were other times when God called people to repent? Read the biblical accounts of David's repentance (Psalms 32; 51), John the Baptist (Matthew 3), Peter (Acts 2:14–41), and the lost son (Luke 15).
- How can your family show mercy? Look for an opportunity to feed the hungry, clothe the poor, or help a widow. Remind your child that it doesn't matter whether a needy person deserves your help. The idea of mercy is to give even when it is not deserved.
- Look for a "teachable moment" when you can refer back to the story of Jonah. It might be a circumstance in which your child disobeys God, receives mercy, is unforgiving, or complains, "It's not fair!" Compare their situation with one from the story of Jonah to reveal a truth about our merciful God.

Prepare for Next Week

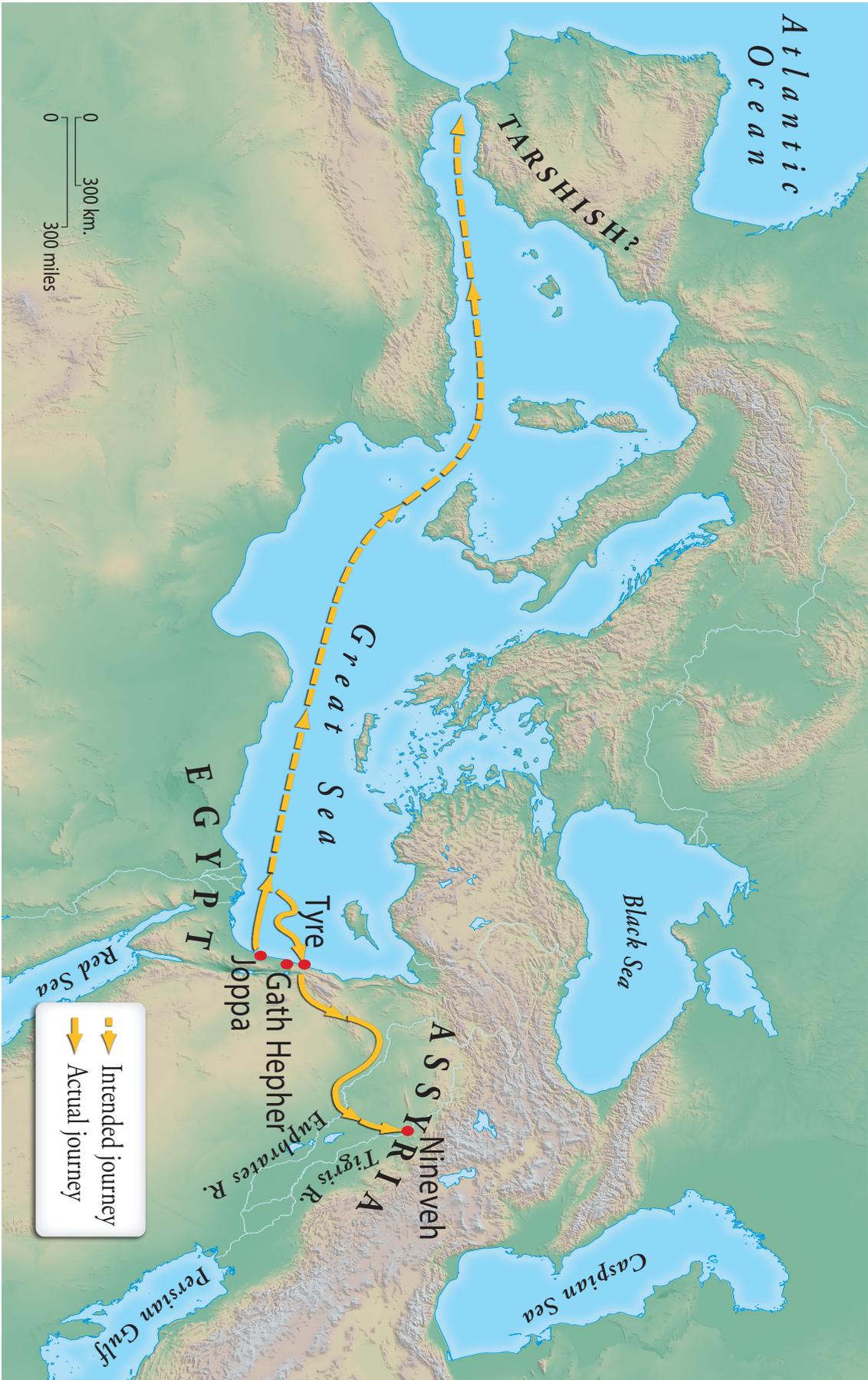
Help your child prepare for next week's lesson by reading together and encouraging your child to respond with coloring or journaling:

- For early readers, *My Bible Story Coloring Book*, *The Prophets Week 2*
- For older readers, *The Books of the Bible for Kids*, *The Prophets*, Days 6–10

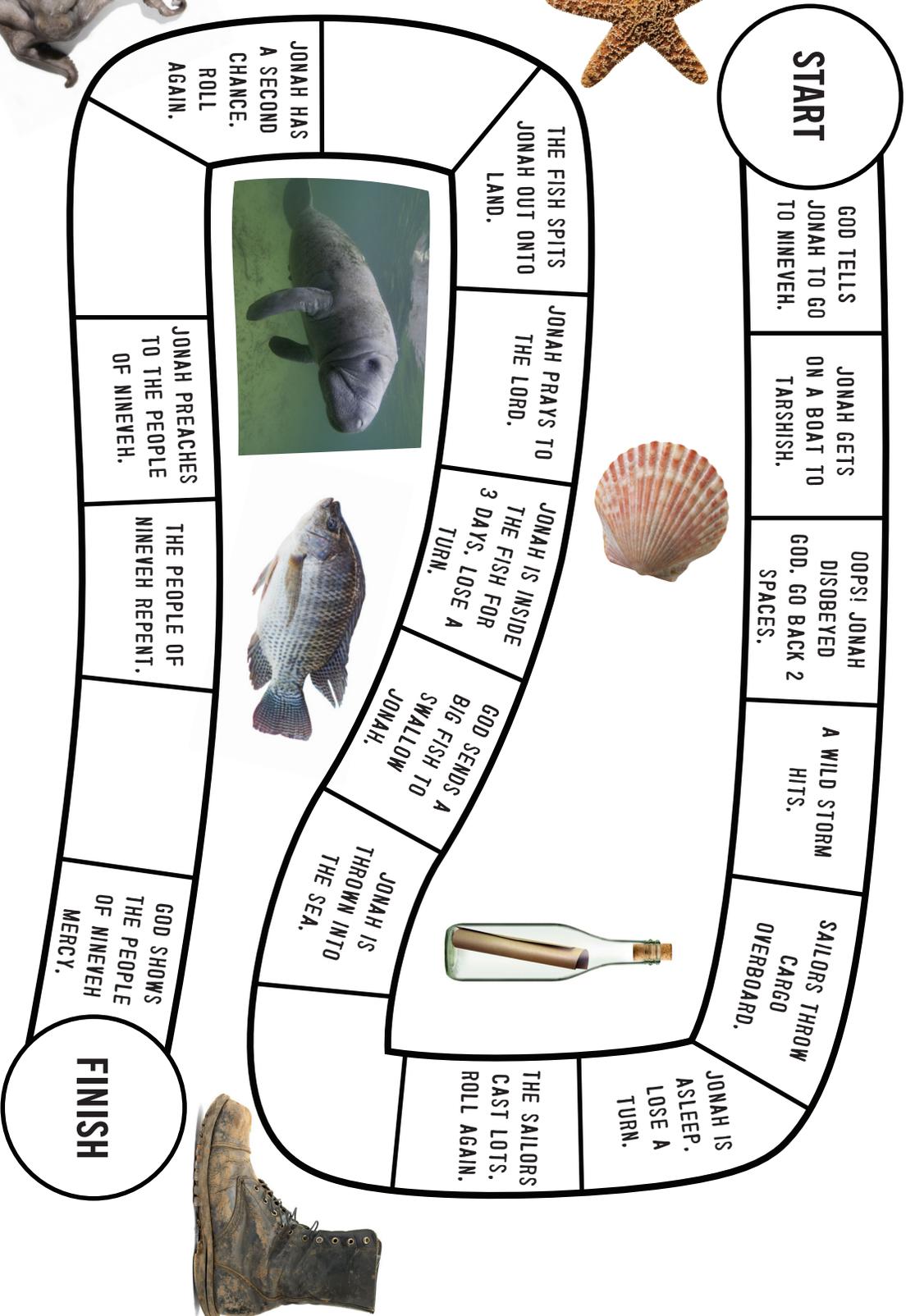
If you are reading *The Books of the Bible*, *The Prophets* with your small group, you are discussing your questions and insights with them from week to week. Include your family in the conversation about this week's reading, using the following discussion-starters:

- What did you read that you never knew about before?
- Was there anything you wondered about?
- What did you learn about loving God?
- What did you learn about loving others?

JONAH MAP



THE STORY OF JONAH



SKIT: JONAH'S PLANT

Characters

Narrator

Jonah

Voice of God

Narrator: Jonah the prophet went to Nineveh to preach against the people's sins. The people of Nineveh listened and repented of their sin. So God did not destroy the city.

Jonah: What? That does not seem right! They deserve to be punished! I'm really angry about this.

Narrator: So Jonah prayed to the Lord.

Jonah: Lord, I knew this would happen! That's why I tried to run away. I knew you are kind and full of love. You are a God who takes pity on people. You don't want to destroy them. Lord, take away my life. I'd rather die than live.

Narrator: The Lord answered Jonah.

Voice of God: Is it right for you to be angry?

Narrator: Jonah left the city. He sat down and put some branches over his head. He sat in their shade. He waited to see what would happen to the city.

Voice of God: I'll send a leafy plant and make it grow up over Jonah to give him more shade for his head.

Narrator: This made Jonah more comfortable. Jonah was happy he had the leafy plant. But before sunrise the next day, God sent a worm.

Voice of God: I've sent a worm to chew the plant so much that it dries up. Now I'll send a burning east wind.

Narrator: The sun beat down on Jonah's head. It made him weak. He wanted to die.

Jonah: I'd rather die than live.

Voice of God: Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?

Jonah: It is. In fact, I'm so angry I wish I were dead.

Voice of God: You care about this plant. But you did not take care of it. You did not make it grow. It grew up in one night and died the next. Shouldn't I care for the great city of Nineveh more than you care for this plant? The city has more than 120,000 people.

Narrator: And so, Jonah learned a lesson of God's mercy. God saves us from our sins even though we don't deserve it.