

BOOKS OF THE BIBLE CHILDREN'S CURRICULUM

Later Elementary The Prophets





JONAH LEARNS A LESSON

Lesson 1 - Later 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 wasn’t because of the good things we had done. 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
- Bibles
- *The Books of the Bible for Kids, The Prophets*
- Jonah Map (1 copy)
- marker
- Family Page (1 per student)



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 student), Bibles, pencils, colored pencils, crayons, markers
- Option 2: quality art paper, Bibles, 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 (1 per student)

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 students the flip chart.
- SAY: We all are guilty of sin. These are some sins you might be familiar with:
 - 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 aren't crimes that would send you to prison (at least not as a child), but they are wrong. 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; e.g., have you write a letter of apology)
- COMMENT: God is the ultimate judge of our behavior. He has the final say in our reward or punishment. Because he knows about our sin, he sent Jesus to die for us.
- SHOW students the red paint.
- SAY: Here's how God the judge responds to 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 students are able to say the verse from memory. (Note: You also may choose to review last week's Key Verse together.)

Titus 3:5a: "He saved us. It wasn't because of the good things we had done. It was because of his mercy."

PRAYER

- **PRAY** aloud with the students: Heavenly Father, thank you for being a merciful God. We know we have done wrong. We know you have the power and the right to punish us, but because of your great love, you show us mercy. Please help us show that mercy to others. Amen.

STEP 2 | Hear the Story (20 min)

Supplies: Bibles, Jonah Map (1 copy), flip chart with easel, marker

Teacher Prep: Print the Jonah Map. Draw the following table on the flip chart, leaving plenty of room to write in the empty cells.

Prediction		Actual	
Jonah 1:2		Jonah 3:10	
1:3		4:2	
1:15		1:17 2:10	
2:1		2:9	
3:4		3:5-6	

CHAPTER 1

- **HELP** students turn to Jonah 1 in their Bibles.
- **INTRODUCE:** Jonah was a prophet who lived long ago, after King Solomon but before Daniel was thrown in the lions' den. 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 the verses in this lesson or ask different students to stand and read.
- **READ** aloud verses 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, write the general consensus under Prediction next to 1:2)*
- **WONDER:** Why do you think Jonah went in the opposite direction? *(take responses, write the general consensus under Prediction next to 1:3)*



- READ aloud verses 4–15.
- QUESTION: What do you think normally would happen to a person thrown overboard during a terrible storm? (*take responses, write the general consensus under Prediction next to 1:15*)
- READ aloud verses 16–17.
- WRITE *swallowed by a great fish* under Actual next to 1:17.



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, write the general consensus under Prediction next to 2:1*)
- READ aloud Jonah 2:9.
- WRITE *thanked and praised God* under Actual next to 2:9.
- READ aloud Jonah 2:10.
- ADD *spit out on land* under Actual next to 2:10.

CHAPTER 3

- READ aloud Jonah 3:1–4.
- SPECULATE: How do you think evil, sinful people living in a big city would respond to a prophet (who had just been thrown up by a fish) telling them that God will destroy their city? (*take responses, write the general consensus under Prediction next to 3:4*)
- READ aloud verses 5–6.
- WRITE *repented* under Actual next to 3:5–6.
- READ aloud Jonah 3:5–10.
- WRITE *destroy them (but didn't)* under Actual next to 3:10.
- OBSERVE: This is an example of God's great mercy. Instead of destroying the city of Nineveh, which the people deserved because of their sin, he had mercy on them when they repented. Let's see what Jonah thought of this.

CHAPTER 4

- READ aloud Jonah 4:1–3.
- ASK: What was Jonah's real reason for running from Nineveh? (*he knew that if he preached against them and they repented, God would spare them; Jonah didn't think they deserved God's mercy because they had hurt many people*)
- WRITE *didn't want them spared* under Actual next to 4:2.



- **CONCLUDE:** 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 often gives us mercy when we deserve punishment.



STEP 3 | Explore More

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

Option 1: Jonah Board Game (20 min)

Supplies: The Story of Jonah game board (1 per student), Bibles, pencils, colored pencils, crayons, markers

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

- GIVE each student a Jonah game board.
- SAY: You've probably played games like this where you use a die or a spinner to advance along the board from start to finish. Sometimes, you land on a space that sends you backward or forward or you lose a turn.
- INSTRUCT students to fill in their game board squares with important events from the story of Jonah in order (they should refer to their Bibles for help). They should write each event as a simple statement in one space. They can add some fun spaces, such as "Stuck inside a fish, lose one turn" or "You obeyed God, go forward one space."
- GIVE students time to create and color their game board.
- ENCOURAGE them to use the game to teach younger siblings or friends the story of Jonah. They will need a die or spinner plus a marker (such as a bead) for each player.

Option 2: Jonah's Prayer (20 min)

Supplies: quality art paper, Bibles, markers, watercolor paints, water, paintbrushes, newspaper

Teacher Prep: Cover tables or desks with newspaper.

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

- READ aloud Jonah's prayer in Jonah 2:2–9.
- DIVIDE the verses among your students in a way that makes sense.
- INSTRUCT students to write their verse in marker on construction paper (all using portrait orientation or all using landscape orientation) and then illustrate it using watercolors.
- EXPLAIN that repentance, admitting, and turning away from sinful behavior is an important part of receiving God's forgiveness.
- DISPLAY student 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: “Jesus Loves Me” by Chris Tomlin

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Potential sources: YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8gKXu6J2wE> and CCLI #7028829

Purpose for this song: Students will think of Jonah as they sing, “I couldn’t run from his presence.”

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

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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 students are sure to enjoy.

Option 5: Act It Out (20 min)

Supplies: Jonah’s Plant skit (1 per student)

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

- SAY: After God had mercy on Nineveh, Jonah became upset. The people of Nineveh had hurt many people. In Jonah chapter 4, God taught Jonah an important lesson, which we’ll act out today.
- DIVIDE the class into groups of three and give each student a skit.
- INSTRUCT students to choose roles within their group and practice the skit.
- ARRANGE to have each group perform their skit to others (such as a younger class or a group of adults) if possible.
- REVIEW today’s Key Verse to help students understand how God shows us mercy.

STEP 4 | Going Home (5 min)

Supplies: Family Page (1 per student)

Teacher Prep: Print and photocopy the Family Page.

- GIVE each student 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 students to practice telling you what they remember about Jonah.



- REVIEW today's story and Key Idea as you wait for the students to get picked up.
- HELP students practice saying today's Key Verse from memory.
- REMIND students to prepare for next week's lesson by reading *The Books of the Bible for Kids, The Prophets*, Days 31-35
- REMIND each student 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 wasn’t because of the good things we had done. 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 is mercy?
2. How does God show us mercy?
3. How can you show mercy to others?
4. What do you think of Jonah’s actions and his attitude?

Living Faith

Option 1

What went on in the belly of that fish for three days? Take on the role of Jonah and record a video diary of your days inside the fish. First, set up a small, dark space such as inside a sleeping bag or under a table draped with a blanket. Take a small light source with you inside (such as a keychain flashlight) so you show up on video. Then record several short diary videos. How does Jonah feel at first? How does his attitude change as the days drag on? Refer to Jonah 2 for some ideas about what Jonah was praying.

Option 2

What did Jonah say to the people of Nineveh? Was he angry and judgmental? Did he plead with them to repent? Write a speech you think Jonah would have used with the people of Nineveh. Give the speech before an audience.

Extra Mile

- When else has 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 student prepare for next week's lesson by reading *The Books of the Bible for Kids*, *The Prophets*, Days 6–10, and encourage your student to respond with journaling.

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



START

FINISH

The maze contains the following items:

- A manatee (top left)
- A starfish (top right)
- A blue tang fish (middle left)
- A scallop (middle right)
- A message in a bottle (bottom right)
- A pair of boots (bottom left)

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.