

Jonah

Jonah 1- 4



Jonah is swallowed by a great fish before he carries out the Lord's call to repentance to the city of Nineveh.



The Story

In the days before Jesus came to live on earth, God chose certain men to preach His Word to the people. These men were called prophets. One of God's prophets was named Jonah.

God told Jonah to go to a very large and very wicked city called Nineveh and tell its people that God would destroy them because of their sins and their unbelief. Instead of obeying God and going to Nineveh, Jonah tried to run from God. He got onto a ship sailing to the city of Tarshish, which was very far from the city of Nineveh.

The Lord knew what Jonah was doing, and He made a storm come up which made the water full of waves. The sailors were afraid their ship would sink, so they prayed to their false gods for help. The storm did not stop. The captain of the ship asked Jonah who he was and why he was along. Jonah told the sailors that he was running away from God, and that the storm was because of his sin. God was teaching him not to run away or to disobey Him. Jonah told the sailors to throw him into the sea so that the storm would stop. The sailors threw him over the ship into the water. Immediately the storm stopped.

But God did not let Jonah die in the sea. He loved Jonah and wanted to forgive him and save his life. God caused a large fish to swallow Jonah alive! For three days and three nights Jonah lived in the belly of the fish. Jonah was sorry for his sins and he prayed to God to forgive him. God heard Jonah's prayer and caused the fish to spit Jonah up onto dry land.

God told Jonah again to go to the wicked city of Nineveh and tell them God was angry with them because they did not believe in Him and did bad things. This time Jonah obeyed God and told the people of Nineveh what God had said.

The Lord caused the people of Nineveh to be sorry for their sins. They trusted in God to forgive them and save them. Even the king of Nineveh was sorry and turned to God. God saw their hearts and knew they trusted in Him, and He did not destroy them.

Jonah should have been happy that God forgave so many people, just as God had forgiven him. But instead, he was angry that God did not destroy them. God told him that he should show love and kindness to all people because God wants all people to believe in Jesus and be saved. In the Bible we hear God tell us the same thing. We disobey God, too, just like Jonah did. Yet God loves us and forgives all our sins because of Jesus who died to take our sins away. Now we will want to love others and tell them about Jesus' forgiveness also.

God calls us to deliver the message of repentance to the unbelieving world.

Activity One - Draw a line to match the beginning with the correct ending.

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| 1. God told Jonah to go | ... swallowed Jonah alive. |
| 2. Jonah tried to go | ... God would destroy them. |
| 3. God sent the storm | ... to Tarshish. |
| 4. The big fish | ... to Nineveh. |
| 5. Jonah told the people of Nineveh that | ... were sorry and trusted in God. |
| 6. The people of Nineveh | ... Jonah and to the people of Nineveh. |
| 7. God gave His love and forgiveness to | ... to teach Jonah a lesson. |

Activity Two - Take turns answering these questions out loud.

1. When God told Jonah to go to Nineveh the first time, what should Jonah have done?
2. Why did God let the big fish swallow Jonah?
3. How do you think Jonah felt when he knew he had sinned against God?
4. What did God do when Jonah prayed that he was sorry for his sins?
5. How should we feel when we have sinned against God?
6. What did Jesus do to take away our sins?
7. How should we feel about all the people Jesus died for?
8. What should we tell them about?

Passages

Matthew 4:10b - You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 - God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Psalms 143:10 - Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God.

Hymn - TLH #400 v. 1, 5 (Supplement 2000 #786 v. 1, 5)

Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my will and make it Thine,
It shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart, it is Thine own,
It shall be Thy royal throne.

Prayer

Dear Jesus,

Help me to see my sins and feel sorry for them. Help me to trust in You for forgiveness. Thank You for dying for all people. Help me to love all people and tell them about You. Amen.