

Lesson 97

God Sends Jonah

God used Jonah to show grace to the wicked people of Nineveh.

Studying God's Word

Don't forget! Review the Optional Supplements and determine where you can use them.

Introduction

Have Goldfish crackers, bowls, spoons, and a timer ready for the game.

To start today, I need some volunteers for a game that uses Goldfish crackers! Choose several volunteers or give each student a chance to compete if you have a small class. Place a large pile of crackers in one bowl and an empty bowl next to it. Give each volunteer a spoon. The goal of this game is to move as many crackers from this bowl to the empty bowl using only a spoon held between your teeth to scoop them out. You have only one minute! When your time is up, we'll count how many you got into the empty bowl and award a point for each one. Ready? Let's get started! Have volunteers race one at a time to see how many crackers they can scoop using the spoon in their teeth. No hands allowed! Keep time and give a 10-second countdown as the minute runs out. Encourage students to cheer on the volunteers. Keep track of scores and acknowledge the winner who scooped the most crackers into the empty bowl. You may choose to reward volunteers or the whole class with extra crackers or Swedish Fish as a snack.

You may be wondering why we played this game with fish crackers. Today, we'll see how God used a great fish to stop a disobedient prophet. We have learned about several prophets already.

Refer to the Exodus to Malachi Timeline. We learned about Samuel, the prophet who anointed both Saul and David to be king. We read about Nathan, the prophet who spoke to David when he sinned.

Slide #3

Slide #4

Slide #5

Slide #6

Refer to Lesson 92 Theme Poster. In the last few lessons, we saw how Elijah challenged wicked King Ahab and his false prophets of Baal.

Whom did God choose to be his prophet after Elijah? Elisha.

Refer to Lessons 94–95 Theme Posters. What were some of the miracles Elisha did to show God's power? Allow answers. The widow's oil filled all the vessels she borrowed, the boy was raised from the dead, Naaman was healed of leprosy, and the Syrian army was blinded.

Refer to Lesson 96 Theme Poster. What prophet did we learn about in the last lesson? Amos.

Amos was a shepherd called by God to deliver a message of coming judgment to the people of Israel. The people had ignored warnings God

had already sent, and they continued to sin. God said he would send an enemy to surround and defeat Israel.

Jonah Disobeys

Being a prophet was not an easy job. It was hard to deliver messages from God that people didn't want to hear and often refused to obey. In today's lesson, we'll learn about a prophet God sent to an enemy nation.

You've probably heard about this prophet before. His name is Jonah! Jonah was a prophet in the northern nation of Israel. But he usually is remembered for the part he played in the true account about God, a wicked nation, and a great big fish. Let's find out how it all happened.

Slide #7

Slide #8

Jonah 1:1–3

Refer to the Books of the Bible Poster. Turn to the book of Jonah in your Bibles. It is one of the minor prophets—Amos, Obadiah, then Jonah. Find chapter 1. Who will read verses 1–2 for us? Assign readers.

What did God ask Jonah to do? Go to Nineveh and call out against it.

How did God describe the city of Nineveh? What was it like? Great city, evil.

The city of Nineveh was a very big and powerful city and full of evil. The people there were called Assyrians since they were in the nation of Assyria. They were cruel people and worshipped many false gods. The Jewish people, like Jonah, did not like the people in Nineveh at all.

But God told Jonah to go tell these wicked people (whom he didn't like) that they needed to stop sinning. Do you think Jonah was excited to do this job? No!

So, we shouldn't be surprised at what Jonah did next. Listen to Jonah 1:3. Read the verse.

What did Jonah do? He fled to Tarshish away from the Lord.

Slide #9

Jonah went to the town of Joppa to get on a ship going the opposite direction from where God wanted him to go! Write Joppa on the board then draw a big arrow northeast (up and to the right) and write Nineveh. Nineveh was north of Israel, but Jonah's ship was headed to Tarshish, which was west across the Mediterranean Sea. Draw a big arrow west (to the left) from Joppa and write Tarshish.

Jonah was trying to run from God! God gave Jonah a mission, and Jonah disobeyed by trying to get away. Would Jonah really be able to flee from the Lord? God is omnipotent—all-powerful. And he is omnipresent—everywhere. He can't be fooled!

Jonah Skit

Have the Jonah Skit printed and props ready.

Some of you may already know what God did next. We're going to see this acted out as a skit. I need some volunteers. Follow the instructions in the Jonah Skit to choose volunteers for the parts and to set up the scene. Then follow the script. Continue with the lesson when finished with the skit.

This is an amazing account of God's sovereignty, mercy, and power!

Jonah 1:4-5

Slide #10

Slide #11

Let's review what happened when Jonah tried to sail to Tarshish. Will someone read Jonah 1:4-5? Assign readers.

What did the Lord do? He hurled a great wind upon the sea.

What did this great wind cause? A mighty tempest on the sea.

What is a tempest? Allow answers. A violent storm.

Tempest: a violent (fierce, raging) storm

This storm was so strong, the waves could break the ship into pieces.

Even the mariners, or sailors, who had sailed for years were afraid and realized that this storm was caused by a god. They didn't know the true God, so they prayed to their false gods for help. But, of course, that didn't do any good.

What did the sailors do to try to lighten the ship? Look at verse 5. They threw the cargo overboard.

The cargo was all the things the ship was carrying to the next stop. These items were important because the crew would not be paid until they delivered the cargo to Tarshish. So throwing it overboard showed how desperate these men were. They didn't care about getting paid during this storm—they just wanted to survive!

What was Jonah doing all this time? He was fast asleep.

The Bible tells us that the captain of the ship went to get Jonah. He and the sailors realized that this storm was all Jonah's fault because Jonah had tried to run from the Lord. God was causing this storm on purpose. He knew where Jonah was, hiding down inside the ship.

Jonah told the crew to throw him overboard so the storm would stop. They didn't want to do that and be responsible for his death, so they tried to row the ship to dry land. But the storm was too rough. The men finally realized they would have to do what Jonah said and throw him into the raging sea.

Slide #12

Slide #13

Show the Lesson Theme Poster. Here's Jonah being thrown overboard. He probably thought this was it—he was going to die. But when he hit the water, the storm stopped!

What did God have waiting in the water? What do you see in the poster? A giant fish!

Jonah 1:17

You probably know what happened next. Someone read Jonah 1:17. Assign a reader.

What happened to Jonah? A great fish swallowed Jonah.
How long was Jonah in the fish's belly? Three days and three nights.

Jonah deserved to be punished for his disobedience. God had called Jonah to do something important for him, but instead of obeying, Jonah tried to run away! But God had a plan to use Jonah, and his plan would not be stopped. God is omnipotent—all-powerful—and he used that power over creation to give Jonah a second chance. By controlling the weather, the seas, and the creatures in the sea, God would not allow Jonah to run 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.

Jonah 2:1 & 10

Slide #14

Slide #15

Slide #16

Slide #17

What did Jonah do from inside the fish's belly? Look in Jonah 2:1. Prayed to the Lord his God.

That's right. Most of Jonah chapter 2 is Jonah's prayer. And what did the Lord do when he heard Jonah's prayer? Look in verse 10. The Lord spoke to the fish so that it vomited Jonah onto dry land.

That was quite an experience Jonah had—nearly drowning, being swallowed by a giant fish, and then vomited onto dry land! Yuck!

Pass out the Class Notes.

Let's start our Class Notes. You will circle whether the sentence is true or false. But if it's false, you need to explain what really happened.

Who will read #1 and give us the answer? Choose a reader. True. Have students complete #1.

And #2? Who will read that? Choose a reader. False—a ship. Have students complete #2.

How about #3? What did God send to stop Jonah from running away? Choose a reader. False—a storm. Have students complete #3.

Now #4, who will read that? Choose a reader. True. Have students complete #4.

Who will read #5 about what swallowed Jonah? Choose a reader. False—a great fish. Have students complete #5.

And #6? What happened after Jonah prayed? Choose a reader. True. Have students complete #6.

How long did Jonah stay in the fish? Someone answer #7. Choose a reader. False—3 days and 3 nights. Have students complete #7.

Jonah Obeys

Jonah was alive and back on dry ground. God gave him a second chance to obey, and this time Jonah did! He headed to Nineveh.

Slide #18

Slide #19

Jonah 3:3–5

Who will read Jonah 3:3–5? Assign a reader.

Jonah started walking through the city of Nineveh. It was a big place—it took 3 days just to go from one end to the other.

What message did God have Jonah tell the people there? He says something about 40 days. Jonah 3:4. In 40 days the city will be overthrown.

Yes. God was warning the people of Nineveh to repent and turn from their sin before it was too late! God had plans to destroy the entire city in 40 days unless the people changed their ways. Jonah preached this message to all the people in the city.

How did the people respond? Did they listen? The people believed God, called for a fast, and put on sackcloth.

This is amazing how the people of such a wicked city believed Jonah's message. They feared God's judgment and showed their repentance by calling for a fast, which is not eating food, and putting on sackcloth, which is an uncomfortable, itchy fabric people wore to show sorrow. Even the king of Nineveh believed Jonah's message. He commanded the people to call out to God and to turn from their evil and violence.

Slide #20

Jonah 3:10

Who will read Jonah 3:10? Assign a reader.

What did God do when he saw the change in the people of Nineveh? He did not destroy Nineveh because they had turned from their sin.

God showed mercy and grace to Jonah and to the people of Nineveh. Who will read the definitions of merciful and gracious from the Attributes of God Poster? Assign readers.

Jonah offered a humble prayer to God from the belly of the fish and asked for forgiveness. He begged God for mercy. God did show grace and mercy to Jonah by giving him a second chance to obey. He caused the fish to vomit Jonah out on dry land. And Jonah finally went to Nineveh to preach, just as God had asked him to do. Then when the people of Nineveh heard Jonah's message, they turned from their sins and turned to God.

See how God showed his grace to Jonah AND to Nineveh? God spared Jonah and gave him another chance to obey, and God did not destroy the people of Nineveh.

Sounds like a happy ending, right? But not quite. You would think that Jonah would be happy to see the people turn to God when they heard his preaching. After all, God showed mercy to Jonah, so he shouldn't be surprised that God would show mercy to the people of Nineveh also.

Slide #21

Slide #22

Jonah 4:1–3

But let's see how Jonah felt when God spared Nineveh. Who will read Jonah 4:1? Assign a reader.

How did Jonah feel? Displeased and angry.

What?! After all the people listened to Jonah's message, now he's angry? Many people skip this last chapter in Jonah, and they miss an important lesson. Follow along as I read verses 2–3. Read the verses.

Why did Jonah say he didn't want to go to Nineveh in the first place? Why did he flee to Tarshish? Allow discussion. He knew God is gracious and merciful and would relent from punishing Nineveh if they repented.

This is very interesting because Jonah tells us why he tried to flee from God in the first place. Remember, the Assyrians who lived in Nineveh were enemies of Israel. Jonah knew God would not punish the people if they turned to him, and he didn't want God to be merciful to his enemies. He only wanted God's mercy to be shown to him and the people of Israel.

Jonah was so upset, what did he want God to do? Take his life!

Wow! Is that the right attitude for a follower of God to have? Should we get angry because people we don't like are shown mercy?

Do you think we may be like Jonah today? Are there some people we are afraid to share the gospel with? Are there some people we think are too mean to ever repent and turn to Jesus? Allow discussion or share a personal example of individuals or people groups we may be reluctant to talk to.

Slide #23

Slide #24

Let's answer the rest of the Class Notes. Who will read #8 and give us the answer? Choose a reader. True. Have students complete #8.

Who will read #9 about the people's response? Choose a reader. False—they listened to him. Have students complete #9.

What attribute did God show in #10? Choose a reader. True. Have students complete #10.

Who will read #11 about Jonah's reaction to God's mercy toward his enemies? Choose a reader. True. Have students complete #11.

And the last one, #12? Choose a reader. False—God loves all people. Have students complete #12.

Application

Slide #25

Refer to the Lesson Theme Poster. God called Jonah to do a special job, but Jonah did not want to obey. He ran the other way! He rejected God's call and tried to flee to Tarshish. After God sent a terrible storm and a large fish, Jonah finally did obey. He went to Nineveh and preached to the people, telling them to repent of their sins. Because the people listened and turned to God, he did not destroy the city. But then Jonah was angry that God showed mercy. God had to correct Jonah so that he would understand how God's love and mercy is for all people.

We might think Jonah wasn't a very good prophet since he didn't want to obey God. But how many times do we disobey because of our own feelings? Jonah hated the people of Nineveh and didn't care about them. He followed his own feelings instead of following God's instructions.

But where did that get him? Where did Jonah end up because he didn't obey? Tossed in the sea and swallowed by a fish.

God was merciful to Jonah and gave him a second chance to obey. Just think how much better it would have been if Jonah had obeyed in the first place. The whole account would have been very different. Jonah wouldn't have had to go through so much awful stuff.

It's the same with us. God may allow us a second chance, but he expects us to obey him the first time. For example, God's Word says we should obey our parents.

Have you ever disobeyed your parents because you didn't feel like doing what they asked? Or have you wanted to do something your own way, so you didn't pay attention to them? How did that work out for you?
Allow discussion.

As we've learned from Jonah, if we choose to sin by disobeying what God has told us to do in his Word, it will just lead to trouble. God is merciful, but he would rather we obey the first time, the right way.

Lesson Review

We all learn best with review and repetition! We encourage you to play a lesson review game.

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