

13. Jonah and the Fish (Book of Jonah)

“Your word is a lamp before my feet and a light for my journey.” (Psalm 119:105)



PLAN

Session Outline

1. Gather

Greeting
Puzzlers
Must I?
Transition to Explore

2. Explore

Sacred Conversations
Hear and See the Bible Story
Interact with the Bible Story
Say the Bible Verse
Transition to Respond

3. Respond

Lantern
Whales
Loving God, Loving Neighbor
Transition to Bless

4. Bless

Inviting
Praising
Blessing
At Home with God

Supplies

Basic Supplies: Pencils | Scissors | Yarn | Clear tape

Gather: TV/DVD player

Explore: TV/DVD player

Respond: Clear plastic cups | Clear glue | Red, orange, and yellow tissue paper squares | LED tealight for each child | Internet access | Images of whales | LED candle | Tablecloth | Tent | Flashlight

Bless: LED candle | Tablecloth | Tent | Flashlight

Before You Teach

This week we explore another Bible story that may be familiar to the children—Jonah and the fish. In this story, God has asked Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach to the Ninevites and warn them of God’s displeasure and the impending destruction of their city. God saw that there was evil going on there. Jonah was tasked with going there to help get them on the right path. However, Jonah did not want to go and judged the people there unworthy. So Jonah ran away to Tarshish on a ship. Unfortunately for Jonah, he underestimated God’s ability to find him. The ship was caught up in a great storm, the men from the ship called out to God for mercy, and the sailors asked Jonah what he had done to cause such turmoil. Jonah confessed that he was the cause of the chaos they were experiencing and suggested that they toss him overboard. They did, and God sent a large fish (or whale) to swallow up Jonah and protect him. The storm stopped.

Jonah was afraid when he was in the fish. He did not understand that God sent the fish for his good. In Jonah’s time, the sea was a source of great mystery and danger along with the creatures in it. For Jonah, being swallowed up by a sea creature was a terrifying fate. While Jonah was there, he prayed to God. The fish vomited Jonah up onto dry land, and God asked Jonah to go to Nineveh again. Jonah reluctantly went to preach in Nineveh. Once Jonah obeyed God and delivered God’s message to Nineveh, the wickedness in Nineveh stopped, and the city was spared from destruction. However, Jonah was still not happy because he did not think the Ninevites were deserving of God’s mercy.

The significant messages for children to take away from the session are the importance of obeying God and that God gives us second chances. This is also a place to explore prayer and God’s care and mercy for us even when we are in unfortunate circumstances or when we behave poorly.

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GATHER

Greeting

Before class: Display your choice of “Attendance Chart” (Class Kit—pp. 15 & 18, or 16–17) at eye level.

- Play “God’s Stories” (Adventure DVD), as you welcome each child.
- Show the children where to place their offerings on the worship table.
- Have each child mark the “Attendance Chart.” For the “Community Attendance Chart,” the children can write their first names or initials on the building marked #13.

SAY: Our Bible story is about a man named Jonah who did not want to do what God asked him to do.

A—Puzzlers (Activity Sheets)

Before class: Tear out the Session 13 Activity Sheets for each child.

- Give each child a copy of “Jonah” (Activity Sheets—p. 27). Let them complete the puzzle.
- Allow them to work on the “What’s Wrong With This Picture?” activity (Activity Sheets—p. 28).

SAY: Today’s Bible story reminds us that God gives us second chances.

OR

B—Must I? (Game)

SAY: In our story, Jonah made excuses for not doing what God asked. Doing this got Jonah nowhere. Today, we’re going to play a game that reminds us that doing what God asks of us helps us meet our goals. This game works sort of like Mother, May I, but in reverse. In this game, the Mother will give a command such as, “take two steps forward.” The child will then say, “Mother, must I?” and add an excuse. For example, “Mother, must I? I have a sore foot.” The mother will reply, “Yes, you must.” Then the child will complete the action. If the child does the thing the Mother has commanded without asking the question, “Mother, must I?” or does not respond right away or fails to pay attention, he or she must return to the starting position. The goal is to reach the Mother first and take her place.

- Play as your time permits or until the children tire of the game.
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Transition to Explore

- Encourage children to bring chairs or to sit on the floor in a carpeted area.
- Invite children to form a circle on the floor.

TIP: *Transitions are a useful way to help children easily move from one activity to the next.*

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EXPLORE

Sacred Conversations

- Encourage children to join and sit in the circle.
- Demonstrate a listening position for the children.
- Ask wondering questions.

ASK: I wonder:

- Have you ever been asked to do something that you really did not want to do?
 - Did you do it, or did you disobey?
 - If you did it, was it as bad as you thought?
 - If you did not do it, what were the consequences?
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Hear and See the Bible Story

- Read the Bible story together (*CEB Deep Blue Kids Bible*—Book of Jonah).
- Watch the Adventure DVD Session 13.

SAY: Today, we’re learning about a man named Jonah who disobeyed God, but got a second chance.

ASK: When has someone given you a second chance?

Interact with the Bible Story

- Assign parts and act out “Jonah and the Fish” (Bible Story Sheets—Session 13).
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Say the Bible Verse

Before class: Display the “Unit 3 Bible Verse” poster (Class Kit—pp. 10 & 23).

- Read the memory verse to the children: “Your word is a lamp before my feet and a light for my journey” (Psalm 119:105).
 - Have the children repeat the verse after you.
 - Have the children close their eyes and pretend to be in the dark insides of a whale and try to say the verse from memory.
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Transition to Respond

- Encourage children to put away their chairs and/or get back to their places.

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RESPOND

Lantern (Craft)

Before class: Photocopy “Lantern” (Leader Guide—p. 84) for each child. Gather two small clear-plastic cups per child; scissors; yarn; red, yellow, and orange tissue paper squares; clear glue; clear tape; and a LED tealight for each child. The teacher should prepare the cups beforehand by cutting two notches on opposite edges of the bottom of one cup of each pair.

SAY: This lantern will remind us of our memory verse, “Your word is a lamp before my feet and a light for my journey” (Psalm 119:105), and also to let God be our guide, as Jonah had to learn to do.

- Give each child a copy of “Lantern.” Let them follow the instructions to create a lamp.

SAY: Now you have a reminder of the Bible verse and a reminder of God’s guidance.

OR

Whales (Science)

Before class: Gather some images of whales from the internet to share with your kids. Add facts to the ones below if you would like.

SAY: Jonah spent the night inside of a fish. The fish in our Bible story is often thought of as a whale. Whales are very interesting animals. Let’s see if you can guess the answers to the following questions.

ASK: What is a whale’s blowhole used for? (*to breathe*); Can whales breathe under water? (*No, they don’t have gills*); What do you call a baby whale? (*a calf*); What are groups of whales who live together called? (*a pod*); True or False, whales can be found in every ocean around the world? (*True*); True or false, whales eat a lot when they are migrating? (*False, they do not eat at all when migrating. They only eat during the summer months*); True or false, whales sleep at the bottom of the ocean? (*False, they sleep at the surface of the water so that they can breathe through their blowholes.*)

- Show pictures of whales after your discussion, or as you go through the questions, or after.

ASK: Is there anything about whales or their appearance that surprises you?

Loving God, Loving Neighbor

ASK: Being part of a community sometimes means doing things that are required of you that you may not want to do, like Jonah.

ASK: What are some ways that we can embrace the tasks assigned to us, even when we want to run away from them?

- Have a discussion and let the children share their thoughts.

Transition to Bless

- Ring a bell to announce the transition.
- Create a worship center on a small table with a tablecloth, an LED candle, and a tent.

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BLESS

Inviting

Before class: Display “Unit 3 Bible Verse Signs” poster (Class Kit—p. 31) on a wall or bulletin board.

SAY: Let’s learn to sign today’s Bible verse.

- Gather the children around the “Bible Verse Signs” poster. Have the children read the Bible verse.
- Teach the children to sign the verse.
- Have each child sign to two other children as a reminder that God gives us second chances to get things right.

PRAY: Thank you, God, for your guidance and your second chances. Amen.

Praising

SAY: Today, we learned one of God’s stories about how God gave Jonah a second chance. Let’s celebrate the end of this unit and God’s second chances with song and dance.

- Play “God’s Stories” (Adventure DVD), and let the children sing along and dance.
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Blessing

Before class: Set up a tent and have a flashlight on hand, or if you made the lantern craft in the Respond section, use your lanterns.

SAY: Today, we learned about how God sent a fish to swallow up Jonah to protect him. Still, this was a scary thing for Jonah, and he called out to God in prayer while he was in the fish. Let’s pretend this tent is a giant fish.

- Let each child, one at a time, take the flashlight and go inside the tent to have a few moments for personal prayer, while the rest of the class waits quietly.
- After each person has had a turn, gather around the worship center, light the candle, and pray this prayer for the children.

PRAY: God, thank you for being with us no matter what the circumstances and for giving us second chances when we disobey. Thank you for being a light for our journey. We pray that you will go with each person here and bless all of us, wherever life takes us. Amen.

At Home with God

SAY: What is one thing that you learned today about Jonah and the fish? What is one thing that you learned about second chances? Can you share what you learned with your family?

- Send Bible Story Sheets, Session 13, and the Unit 3 Song Sheet home with each child.

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Lantern

1. Use scissors to cut a length of yarn about sixteen inches in length.
2. Thread the yarn through the two notches that the leader previously cut in the bottom of one of your two cups, and tie the ends together to form a hanger. This will be the top cup.
3. Tear or cut the tissue paper squares to look like flames and glue to the sides of the bottom of the other cup.
4. Place the LED tea light in the bottom cup, and turn it on.
5. Tape the top cup to the bottom cup by placing a piece of clear tape on each side to join the cups.

