

The Book of Jonah- Lesson 1
Jonah And The Great Fish

Jonah 1



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Jonah And the Great Fish [Chapter 1]

Note to servants: -

Always review the introduction Lesson at the beginning of each new chapter in the form of question and answers with the children/refer to the Introduction lesson and its content.

MEMORY VERSE: for Upper Elementary.

MATTHEW 12:40

“For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

Memory Verse for Jr. Elementary

Jonah 1:17

Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah.
And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A “Big Fish” template for each child, color tissue paper cut into small triangles (light colors), glue, poster board, crayons, and/or markers

Activity; Game The Big Fish: Age appropriation; Servants use your discretion

Set boundaries for your class. Each wall will represent a shore, and the center of the room is the ocean. Choose one volunteer to be the big fish. Have kids line up around the shore. When the big fish yells, “swim” all players must “dive” into the ocean and move toward another shoreline. The big fish tries to tag players as they run. Anyone who’s caught before getting to another shoreline must drop immediately to the ocean floor.

Play the game again. This time, though, the captured swimmers from the previous round join the big fish to catch more swimmers. Play continues until only one swimmer remains. That child then becomes the new big fish.

Lesson Goal:

Always Obey God

LESSON TIME!

In the Book of Jonah, God wants us to know Some important facts:

- That the prophets were not of a different nature but were people "with a nature like ours" (James.5:17), having weaknesses, shortcomings and faults, and it was possible for them to fall like us. The only thing was that the grace of God worked in them and gave them power. It was not their power but the power of God working in their weakness, that the power may be of God and not of us, according to the Apostle's words (2 Cor. 4:7).
- God is Always in the search for People and wanted all to repent, He does not want any to Perish.
- God's Forgiveness is great and inclusive if we repented and returned to Him
- Never escape or abandon the mission you are entrusted with.

In this short book, we find quite a few lessons about the character of God and walking with Him. In today's lesson, we learn to **Always Obey God.**

Have you ever been asked to do something and you hesitated? Maybe it was something that you didn't feel like doing. Maybe you even refused to do what you were asked to do and got into trouble. It does not make parents happy when their children refuse to do what they are asked to do. It does not make God happy when we refuse to do what He asks us to do. Jonah learned the hard way that it's a good idea to obey God when He asks us to do something. God's plan for us is the very best we can imagine. **Always Obey God.**

Jonah 1:1-6

1 Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me." 3 But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

4 But the Lord sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up.

5 Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.

6 So the captain came to him, and said to him, "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish."

Nineveh was a great city ruled by the Assyrians. It had a large population, possibly even a million people. It was a wealthy city protected by a great stone wall around the city so wide that two chariots could race on top of it! The city was very strong militarily. In their self-sufficiency and pride, they did not acknowledge the true and living God. Instead, they were wicked people who worshipped many idols.

They stood condemned. God noticed them the way He noticed Sodom and Gomorrah. He was ready to rain down judgment, but in judgment, God always remembers mercy. He decided to give them one more chance to turn from their ways; God determined to send his servant Jonah to warn them.

God wanted to use Jonah in a great way, to bring His warning that judgment was forthcoming to the unrepentant city; but Jonah did not want to be used. Jonah was a Jew from Israel and Assyria was a Gentile nation. The Assyrians had a reputation for great cruelty to the conquered people of other nations, and they had no love for the Jews. Yet, God loved them and desired to see their salvation. To avoid what he did not want to do, Jonah decided to run away! So, Jonah boarded a ship going to Tarshish, the opposite direction of Nineveh.

It was a unique calling. For the first time a prophet was called to a pagan nation, not to condemn it but to call it to repentance so that the anger of God would not descend upon it. Any prophet could not accept such a mission, not out of hatred of the Gentiles, but out of love for his own people.

As aforementioned the salvation of the Gentiles is realized through the falling of the Jews, and the faith of the world through the ungratefulness of the Jews (Rom. 11:11). However, although Jonah, with his human level of thinking, could not accept the calling and he fled, yet God, who knows the purity of Jonah's heart, used his fleeing to bring about his Divine goals for the Gentiles.

Why did Jonah want to "Flee ... from the presence of the Lord" instead of going to Nineveh?

St. Jerome notes that Jonah could not get himself to go to Nineveh and bring salvation to them at the expense of his people Israel; so, he disobeyed God not out of hatred in his heart but rather out of jealousy for his people

St John Chrysostom says, [It is true that he (Jonah) fled from the seashore, but he did not escape God's wrath. He escaped from land to bring on himself the tempest at sea¹⁰.] He should have fled to God rather than away from God, because in Him alone does the believer find peace and safety. [Fr. Tadros Yacoub Malaty]

Jonah knew for sure that God was merciful and compassionate, and that He would forgive the city if it repented. Here is the root of the problem!

He was honest with the Lord in revealing his inner feelings. For when the Lord braided him up afterwards, he said: "Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, One who relents from doing harm" (Jon. 4:2).

To such an extent was Jonah self-centered! He was not able to abnegate himself for the sake of people's salvation. His reverence, honor and word were more important to him

than the salvation of a whole city! [Pope Shenouda 3rd]

Application: [Quick small discussion with the Children]

Goal is:- Obedience to God

Have you ever heard the Lord instruct you and you ran away? How do we hear Him? (Most often, through His Word.) What has God told you to do with your life? Pray and read the Bible? Obey your mom and dad? Be kind and gentle with others...? Is it wise to do the opposite of what God wants us to do? Did we ever not do what He asked us to do? **Always Obey God.**

The ship going to Tarshish encountered a great storm. Who sent the storm? Jonah was certainly foolish to feel he could run away from God. Jonah went down below in the ship and fell asleep. Have you ever been on a boat during a storm? Jonah must have been feeling pretty miserable in heart and mind to be able to sleep in those conditions! But he did not sleep for long. The captain woke him up to pray. It seems, in those days, everyone had a god to call on, and the captain wanted every god's attention to help him. Everyone on board the ship had to be praying--they thought they were going to lose their lives. So, the captain woke Jonah up. Jonah was to experience the consequences of his disobedience.

A quick Comparison here to see the difference between a Man of God who flees from God and gentile people who flee to God and pray!

How amazing **that sin cost Jonah both money and effort**; he paid the fare for the journey to accomplish his sin. As for grace, we obtain it free.

It is amazing that we toil for our own hurt, expending money and effort. Perhaps it would have been a blessing to Jonah if he did not have the money at the time to help him travel and disobey.

When Jonah paid the fare of the ship, he suffered a double loss. He lost his money, his obedience and purity of heart.

This is a glimpse of Jonah's faults when he fled and disobeyed.

Fish Net Game: Optional

Depending on the size of your class, choose one or more sets of three students to be fishnets. Other students will be the fish. Game is played within pre-established boundaries. Fish "net" group must hold hands and move in a line to try to surround a "fish" (student). Students on ends of fish "nets" clasp hands to complete a circle around the fish to capture them.

Jonah 1:7-17

7 And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 Then they said to him, "Please tell us! For whose cause is this trouble upon us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?"

9 So he said to them, "I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."

10 Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, "Why have you done this?" For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them. **11** Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?"—for the sea was growing more tempestuous.

12 And he said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me."

13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them. **14** Therefore they cried out to the Lord and said, "We pray, O Lord, please do not let us perish for this man's life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O Lord, have done as it pleased You." **15** So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. **16** Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly and offered a sacrifice to the Lord and took vows.

17 Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Two thousand years ago there was not very much navigational or weather knowledge. The Greek and Roman cultures worshipped hundreds of gods; whenever something uncomfortable or painful or dangerous or sad was going on in their life, it was blamed on "the gods being upset." Thus they held to the superstition that they must labor to "keep the gods happy." Thus, the sailors did the only thing they knew how to do--try to find out which god was mad and which person he was mad at.

God used the sailor's superstition to deal as He desired in Jonah's life. For when they cast lots, the lot fell on Jonah. The sailors started asking him questions. From the conversations, they knew he was a man of God who was fleeing from the presence of his God. Would you ever tell a group of strangers that you were trying to get away from God? Yet, God used even the stubbornness of Jonah to be a witness that He was almighty, the creator of the heavens and the earth.

Application

Jonah was honest; he was a man of God, he did not lie, he simply told the truth; Would you tell the truth if you were in the same situation among strangers? Also, the sailors had patience and were gentle in dealing with Jonah; they were merciful and tried everything first, they were not quick to judge, or cast anger at him, Let us also as the children of God have some of those good attitudes and virtues

If it was through Jonah's obedience that the people of Nineveh were to be

saved, it was through his disobedience that the mariners would be saved.

When Jonah disobeyed the Lord, he went down into a ship where there were people belonging to the Lord, whom the Lord loved and sought to save. They were gentiles like the people of Nineveh and were likewise in need of salvation. Let their salvation be through Jonah's disobedience. Jonah was an instrument in the hand of the Lord by which He conquered, with its obedience and with its disobedience [Pope Shenouda 3rd]

The Sailors came to know God the Lord:

The men were terrified; They Acknowledged and honored the Lord; the God of Jonah and His authority over nature; God used Johnah to save those sailors and have them be presented to the faith in God.

They wanted to make God happy in order to spare their lives, but they did not like the idea of throwing a man overboard, nor did they have any guarantee that throwing Jonah overboard was going to make the storm cease. They had already thrown the ship cargo into the raging sea, so first they tried plan B: rowing "hard" to land. It did not work! And they had to throw Jonah into the sea. Their actions were filled with love, wisdom and gentleness towards Jonah even after they knew he was the reason for all their losses and the reason their life was endangered.

"What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us? For the sea was growing more tempestuous." Verse 11

St. Jerome says, [As though they were saying that Jonah told them that he caused the wind, the waves and the turbulence at sea, i.e., he told them of the cause, and they expected him to tell them of the cure too. [Fr. Tadros Malaty]

The Prayer of the Sailors:

An Amazing prayer from simple men; who just got introduced to the Almighty and His power; showed their faithfulness and weakness; they did not want to be found guilty of hurting an innocent man if he was truly innocent, and did not want God to punish them if they were not suppose to throw Jonah into the sea, through their prayer God Showed Jonah an introduction to the interaction with gentiles and that they also can return to God. A small lesson that Jonah learned was that the People of Ninevah could also repent and be saved.

Now, God knew He was sending the big fish to swallow Jonah, but Jonah did not know. Jonah acted as if he would rather be dead than obey God! How foolish!

Always Obey God.

Ponder on how the nature obeyed God; the wind and the sea, then the Whale but His own man; His own prophet did not!

Application:

St. John Chrysostom sees in throwing Jonah overboard a symbolism of throwing out sin from the ship of our life so that we retrieve the true peace, which was taken away from us by our sins. He says: [The city was disturbed because of the sins of the people of Nineveh, and the

ship was disturbed because of the disobedience of the prophet; so when the sailors threw Jonah to the depths, the ship was secured. Let us also throw away our sins so that our city would be in perfect peace¹⁴.

Ask the Children, what do we need to get rid of so that we can have peace in our life?

Answer should be: - Sin

Ask them for examples [According to their age]:

Anger, jealousy, bullying, hatred, Lying, Selfishness. Bad mouthing, bad words.....etc

[For servants: you may pick one or two and elaborate more based on your experience with you kids.]

Exercise:

- **What were some of the virtues the sailors had?**

Patience, gentle, not quick to judge or case anger, prayerful, trying to save others even if it would cost them their cargo [belongings, what is theirs] and obedient to God.

- **Why did Jonah escape his mission?**

- **Did Jonah lie when the sailors ask him what have you done? And why?**

- **Why did the sailors ask Jonah what to do even after knowing he was the reason for their suffering?**

- **What did the sailor do to avoid throwing Jonah into the sea?**

- **What is the most important lesson you have learned from today's chapter?**

- **What would be a theme for this Chapter?** [ea.: Running from God]

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to pursue rather than run from God's will, Ask God to put in our hearts to be obedient to Him.

Email to Parents:

Dear Parents,

This week are studying Chapter 1 of the book of Jonah, we have learned to always be obedient to God; Jonah did not obey God and escaped Him, while on the opposite side God showed him a sample of the gentile people and how they can come to God by exposing him to the experience of the sailors praying and being gentle with him at the ship.

Please read chapter 1 with your kids and ask they what have they learned this week.

Activities:

<https://calvarycurriculum.com/pdf/Curriculum/Original/Curriculum/CURR161.PDF>

Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOSadLyqshg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V5BEvqr9cVs>

Optional Song:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jmNJzD9jMPg>