

Jonah

A Study in Obedience and Attitude

Lesson 4



Mission Arlington/Mission Metroplex Curriculum - Summer 2008

Created for use with young, unchurched learners • Adaptable for all ages including adults

Lesson 4

Prayer in the Fish

Scripture References

Jonah 2:1-10

Lesson Goals

Understand that God is merciful
See the need to seek forgiveness when we sin
Learn to pray

Memory Verse

If we admit that we have sinned, He will forgive us our sins. 1 John 1:9 (NIRV)

We saw in our last lesson that Jonah the prophet, the son of Amittai from Gath-hepher, was actually the same Jonah who had been swallowed by a big fish. Jonah received a message from God to go to Nineveh. Did he go? No! Where did Jonah go? He ran the opposite direction to Tarshish, Spain. Jonah tried to run away from God. Did he succeed? No! God knew exactly where Jonah was and sent a storm. When the sailors on the boat realized Jonah was the cause of the storm, they threw Jonah overboard. Jonah should have died in the wild ocean. Jonah had disobeyed God and he had almost gotten others killed with his selfishness.

“But the Lord sent a huge fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights” (Jonah 1:17 NIRV)

This probably isn't a new story for you, but have you ever thought about the big fish? God sent it, you know! God is Lord, not just in our lives when we allow Him to be, but Lord over all. God is Lord over the wind. God is Lord over the waves. God is even Lord over big fish. The big fish was in just the right part of the sea at just the right time. Not only that, but the Bible doesn't say that the big fish ate Jonah, it says that the big fish swallowed Jonah. The big fish didn't chew and the big fish didn't digest. The big fish simply swallowed this disobedient prophet.

What do you think Jonah did for three days inside that big fish? We don't really know how much space there was inside of the fish, it could have been really cramped or Jonah might have been able to walk around. We are pretty sure, though, that it was dark. It might have even been smelly! Jonah could have complained. And he could have cried. Jonah could have even tried to get out. What did he really do, though?

“From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the Lord his God.” (Jonah 2:1 NIRV) We have Jonah's prayer recorded for us in Jonah chapter 2. This is what Jonah prayed.

“Lord, when I was in trouble I prayed to You. You answered me! I was in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea; I was drowning. I cried

Application

All of us can relate to Jonah. "How?" Jonah was disobedient and deserved death in the Mediterranean Sea.

You and I are sinners, every one of us. The Bible says that we deserve death for all our sin. Just as Jonah was as good as dead in the sea, you and I are as good as dead—in our sin. So, what can we do about it? Romans 5:8 says, "But here is how God has shown His love for us. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." You and I cannot clean ourselves up, but Jesus became sin for us, dying in our place, to make a way for us to be His friend. If you believe, placing your trust and confidence in Jesus, and if you give Him control of your life, you can be saved from death by sin.

And if you do belong to Jesus, what do you do when you know that your attitude is wrong, when you've disobeyed? Do you pray like Jonah did? Sin separates you from God. Will you run to Him right now? "If we admit that we have sinned, He will forgive us our sins." 1 John 1:9 (NIRV)



out for help and You listened. I had almost drowned. The waves were all around me. Seaweed was wrapped around my head. I was sinking fast! I thought I was dead. My life was almost over, then I remembered You. My prayer reached You in heaven. Some people worship gods that aren't really gods at all. I'm worshipping You, God. You saved me. Thanks!"

Jonah realized that he had almost died. Jonah knew that under the water of the Mediterranean Sea he was as good as dead. And Jonah knew who to call out to. Jonah called out to God and God saved him.

Then, the Lord spoke to the fish and it spit Jonah up onto dry land.

Review Questions:

- How long was Jonah inside the big fish? (Three days, three nights)
- What did Jonah do there? (He prayed)
- What did Jonah pray? (That God listened to him and saved him when he was in trouble)
- Did Jonah die in the fish? (No!)
- What happened to Jonah? (The fish spit Jonah onto the beach)

Preparing for Lesson 5

Second Chances
Jonah 3:1-10

Learning Activities

- Open and hide a few cans of tuna or sardines in your Bible study area. Refer to the smell as you talk about Jonah's accommodations in the big fish.
- Make prayer journals. For the cover, use cardstock, foam, or construction paper. Insert paper and fasten with yarn or staples. Be sure to organize the prayer journals with space for the date, the prayer request, God's answer, and the date He answered. Help your students begin to use their prayer journal in class. Encourage them to continue using them at home. For accountability, suggest that your students bring their prayer journals to Bible study.
- Make origami whales to represent the big fish that swallowed Jonah.
- Make a windsock that resembles a fish. Suspend Jonah in the middle of the fish. Write the memory verse on the streamers.
- Provide a sensory experience for your students. Play "What's in Fish's Stomach?" In advance, prepare a large, paper grocery sack to look like a big fish. Paint the sack, cut an opening for the mouth, and tie the end to form the tail. Before class, place several objects inside the fish (bag). Include items like seashells, an old shoe, a sticky toy, etc. - but be creative! Be sure to include a human figure to represent Jonah. In class, encourage your students to insert their hand into the fish's mouth. Instruct them to touch one item and guess what they have found before removing it.
- "Then God spoke to the fish, and it vomited up Jonah on the seashore." (Jonah 2:10 MSG) Many of your students may have never seen the beach. Bring a jar of sand and seashells to class and allow your students to feel the sand.
- **A Deeper Look** - Take a look at the Lord's prayer. (Matthew 6:7-15, Luke 11:1-4) Be sure to stress Matthew 6:7; the Lord's prayer is not so much about meaningless repetition as it is about a model of how to pray. Practice praying with your students, modeling the elements in the Lord's prayer.

Memory Verse



If we admit
that we have sinned, He
will forgive us our sins.

1 John 1:9

Word Fun

Look at the pictures and fill in the blank with the first letter of each word.

If we



that we have sinned,

He will forgive us

our sins.

1 John 1:9

Prayer in the Fish

T E R R A N M E D I P S V W A
I N W O R D S E A W D E E N D
D E E R T H R P H S I Y A R P
A N L O W E V Y E S E E R H T
W A A D J O V A L S N O J T H
H I E H R E E W V A E S P R Y
T I P S E A L O R D R Y L A N
D G N I N W O R D I R F I S Y
N A H F R E E Y R D L O E A S
D S E V I T A W Y E H V W V A
R A Y P I S H A L E A N M E D
O R D D R Y R V A W H T Y A R
W A E V S O J O N A H E I R R
N M E D T E R I D E M T E D A
R O L H R E V A S S E A W E E

fish

Lord

pray

spit

Jonah

waves

save

three

seaweed

dry land

drowning

Mediterranean

Prayer in the Fish

T E R R A N M E D I P S V W A
 I N W O R D S E A W D E E N D
 D E E R T H R P H S I Y A R P
 A N L O W E V Y E S E E R H T
 W A A D J O V A L S N O J T H
 H I E H R E E W V A E S P R Y
 T I P S E A L O R D R Y L A N
 D G N I N W O R D I R F I S Y
 N A H F R E E Y R D L O E A S
 D S E V I T A W Y E H V W V A
 R A Y P I S H A L E A N M E D
 O R D D R Y R V A W H T Y A R
 W A E V S O J O N A H E I R R
 N M E D T E R I D E M T E D A
 R O L H R E V A S S E A W E E

fish

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