



UNIT 15 | SESSION 1

JONAH WARNED OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

JONAH

KEY PASSAGE:

Psalm 139:13-14

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

What makes people special? People are special because we are made in God's image, as male and female, to know Him.

CHRIST CONNECTION:

God called Jonah to go to his enemies and call them to turn away from their sin, but Jonah refused. Instead, he ran away. Later, God sent Jesus to His enemies to call us to repentance. Jesus willingly obeyed. Jesus died on the cross to rescue us from sin.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION



LEADER Bible Study

If we spend time contemplating what it means to belong to Jesus, the reality is a mystery. How can we who are sinners be forgiven and redeemed? The more we recognize the depth and darkness of our own sin, the greater we understand the magnitude of God’s gift to us. Through His Son, He reached down to display His great love and mercy. Because of Jesus’ wounds, we can have full and forever forgiveness.

The Book of Jonah demonstrates this powerful truth on at least two occasions. One is highlighted in Jonah’s prayer in the midst of his desperation. After running from God and being hurled into the sea, fully expecting to die at the bottom of the ocean, Jonah is swept up and swallowed by a great fish. It is from there that he cries out, “I called to the LORD in my distress, and he answered me” (Jonah 2:2). Jonah, knowing the extent of his own sin and the issue of his own disobedience, cries out in desperation to the Father and finds great comfort in a loving God receiving His desperate plea.

Later, in Jonah 3, we find a similar movement of God’s reaching down and bringing about repentance among the people of Nineveh. In His grace, He relented from the looming punishment they deserved in light of their change of heart.

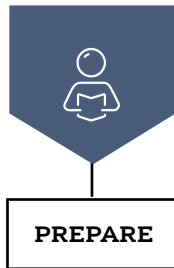
In both instances, the mercy and grace of God to withhold punishment due to vile sinners brought hope, and this hope ought to be ours today as well.

Isaiah 59:1 says, “Indeed, the LORD’s arm is not too weak to save, and his ear is not too deaf to hear.”

Though much has changed in our world since Jonah’s day, the Lord has not changed. He is not too weak nor too distant to save. No matter how far you or someone you know has strayed, no matter how distant the Lord might feel, His arm is not too short to save. His love can reach down to even the darkest and vilest of all sinners. Praise be to God.

PLACES TO KNOW

Nineveh: enemy city to which God called the prophet Jonah in the eighth century BC



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



WELCOME

Activity Page

- "I Refuse" activity page



LEARN

Introduce the Session

- countdown video

Big Picture Question

- Big Picture Question Poster

Review the Timeline

- Giant Timeline

Tell the Bible Story

- "Jonah Warned of God's Judgment" video
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Questions from Kids

- "Unit 15, Session 1" questions from kids video

Missions Moment

- "Sharing Hope" missions video

Key Passage Activity

- Key Passage Poster
- "For It Was You (Psalm 139:13-14)" song
- worship song of your choice (optional)
- plastic or paper cups



LOVE

Review & Bible skills

- Small Group Timeline and Map Set
- world map



LIVE

Activity Choice (Option 2)

- Big Picture Question Poster
- world map

Journal and Prayer

- Journal Page
- "Jonah or Jesus?" activity page



WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

| **SAY** “ Have you ever been warned about something? How did you respond? ”

1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “I Refuse” on the activity page.

| **SAY** “ Have you ever refused to do something? Sometimes we refuse to do things because we don’t like what someone might ask us to do. In today’s Bible story, Jonah refused to go to Nineveh, even though God had told him to go. ”

2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: GO OR STAY?



Direct kids to stand toward the back of the room while the leader stands at the front of the room. Ask a series of questions about particular jobs or tasks the kids would willing do. For example: “Would you mow your neighbor’s yard?” or “Would you clean the school bathroom?” Vary the questions between fun tasks and not-so-fun tasks. Invite kids to take a step forward if their answer is “yes” or stay in place if their answer is “no.”

Continue playing until a kid is the first to reach the leader. Invite that kid to now ask similar questions for the other kids. Play as time allows.

| **SAY** “ Some of the tasks were fun, and some tasks were things you didn’t want to do. In today’s story, God told Jonah to go to Nineveh, a place where his enemies lived. Jonah didn’t want to go. Let’s read our Bible story to learn why God called Jonah to Nineveh. ”

OPTION 2: WHO IS THE ENEMY?

Lead kids to play charades acting out “bad guys” and “good guys”: pirates, thieves, evil king, teacher, doctor, etc. Invite a kid to start the game and give her a character to act out.

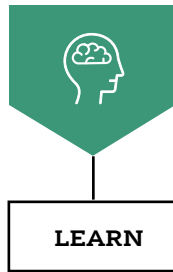
Direct the other kids to guess the character she is acting out. Provide hints if kids have trouble answering correctly. Invite other kids to act out other characters.

Consider having two or more kids act out multiple roles at once such as a pirate and an innocent sailor.

| **SAY** “ The ‘bad guys’ are enemies of the ‘good’ characters. It’s easy to dislike them because they are mean or hurtful. In today’s Bible story, God told Jonah to go to his enemies and tell them to repent. We will also learn that Jesus came to die for His enemies. ”

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**





THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

INTRODUCE the Bible Story

1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

SAY “ Hi, my name is [your name]. I’m so excited that you’re here today! If you brought your Bible, we’re going to open them together to the Book of Jonah. [Provide Bibles for any kids who need one.] The Bible is God’s Word and because it comes from God, we can trust that it is true.

Throughout Scripture, God asks His people to obey Him. Some obeyed immediately, some hesitated, and some resisted. In today’s story, God called the prophet Jonah to obey Him by going to Nineveh. But Jonah refused. Let’s read the Bible story to learn why God called Jonah to go to Nineveh. ”

2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

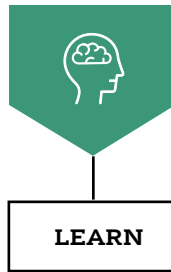
SAY “ Over the next few weeks, we will be answering the question, **What makes people special?** What do you think makes people special? [Allow responses.] God’s Word tells us that, **People are special because we are made in God’s image, as male and female, to know Him.** Isn’t it amazing that the God of the universe, who created us, wants us to have a relationship with Him? God made that possible through His Son, Jesus.

Let’s say our big picture question and answer together. **What makes people special? People are special because we are made in God’s image, as male and female, to know Him.** ”

3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

SAY “ The Bible is one big story about who God is and His plan to rescue sinners. When God made Adam and Eve, He made them in His image. All people are made in His image. But because of sin, we don’t reflect God’s image very well, and we became enemies of God. God sent Jesus to take our sin on Himself so that we could be made right before God. Jesus died for His enemies. In today’s Bible story, we will learn that God cares for all people. Let’s read our story to learn how God sent Jonah to warn his enemies to turn to God. ”



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LEARN the Bible Story

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Jonah. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Jonah Warned of God’s Judgment.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

JONAH WARNED OF GOD’S JUDGMENT

“ God told the prophet Jonah, “Go to the great city of Nineveh. Tell them to stop doing evil things.” But Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh. The people of Nineveh were enemies of God’s people. So Jonah got on a boat heading the other way.

God sent a terrible storm. The sailors cast lots to figure out who caused this trouble. The lot fell on Jonah. The sailors asked Jonah, “Who are you? What are you doing here?”

Jonah replied, “I worship the one true God who made everything.” **Jonah told them to throw him into the sea.** When they did, the storm stopped. From that moment on, the sailors worshiped the one true God.

God sent a big fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. Jonah prayed and thanked God for sending the fish to save him. Then the fish vomited Jonah onto dry land.

God told Jonah, “Go to Nineveh and preach My message.” So Jonah went. He walked into the city shouting God’s message: “In 40 days, Nineveh will be destroyed!”

The people turned from their evil ways. Even the king repented. God decided not to destroy Nineveh.

Jonah was so mad. “I knew it!” he said. **“You are a gracious God. You show mercy to people. You are slow to anger, and You are loving. I knew You would decide to not destroy Nineveh.”**

“Is it right for you to be angry?” God asked.

Jonah made a shelter outside the city and waited to see what God would do. God taught Jonah a lesson. First, God provided a plant to shade Jonah from the sun. But the next day, God sent a worm. The worm attacked the plant, and the plant died. Then God sent a dry east wind. Jonah was so hot, he almost fainted.

God asked Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?”

“Yes!” Jonah said. “I’m so angry, I could die.”

God said, “You cared about the plant, but you did not take care of it or make it grow. It only lasted one day. **Nineveh is a big city with thousands of people. I created them and care about them.** Aren’t they and the animals in the city more important than a plant?”

STORYTELLING TIPS

Call for active listening: Instruct kids to listen for the word “Nineveh.” Every time they hear it, they should put their hands to their mouth to act like they are declaring God’s message.

Use light and sound effects: Turn the lights on and off during the telling of the storm. Instruct kids to tap their legs rapidly to simulate heavy rainfall.



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

Christ Connection: God called Jonah to go to his enemies and call them to turn away from their sin, but Jonah refused. Instead, he ran away. Later, God sent Jesus to His enemies to call us to repentance. Jesus willingly obeyed. Jesus died on the cross to rescue us from sin. ”

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ God will always accomplish His will. Even when Jonah refused to go to Nineveh, God showed Jonah that he cannot escape Him. God was gracious to Jonah. How did God show grace and save Jonah? [Allow responses.] God didn’t let Jonah drown in the storm. He sent a great big fish to save Jonah. Can you imagine what it would have been like to be inside the belly of a large fish for three days?

Look at Jonah 1:2. [Choose a volunteer to read aloud Jonah 1:2.] Why did God want Jonah to go to Nineveh? [Allow responses.] God wanted Jonah to warn the people of Nineveh to turn from their wicked ways. The people of Nineveh obeyed God and repented.

Jonah didn’t like the people of Nineveh. They were Israel’s enemies. Why did Jonah become mad after God didn’t destroy Nineveh? [Allow responses.] Jonah knew God was a merciful, gracious God who is willing to save anyone who turns to Him in repentance.

God shows mercy and grace to us too. Through faith in Jesus we can be saved from God’s judgment. We are no longer God’s enemies. Jesus makes us a part of God’s family. ”

3 CHRIST CONNECTION

SAY “ God called Jonah to go to his enemies and call them to turn away from their sin, but Jonah refused. Instead, he ran away. Later, God sent Jesus to His enemies to call us to repentance. Jesus willingly obeyed. Jesus died on the cross to rescue us from sin. ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.)

4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 15, Session 1” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. Should we care about people we may not like?
2. Why should you rejoice when any person, even an enemy, believes in Jesus?

5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

SAY “ Some people are unable to use their ears to hear. These people are known as Deaf people. Many Deaf people use their hands to talk through sign language. One form of sign language is known as American Sign Language (ASL). ”

Point out that Deaf people matter to God and are created in His image. Emphasize that Deaf



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

people use other ways to communicate along with or instead of their voices.

SAY “ Pastor Mason Fenner, and his wife Bonnie, were born deaf. The Fenners felt God was calling them to start a church for Deaf people in Cleveland, Ohio.”

Show the missions video. After the video lead the kids to pray for the Fenners and the Oakwood Deaf Community Church.

6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Before the session begins, place the cups upside down and write a word of the key passage on each cup.

Show the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Psalm 139:13-14 together.

Lead kids to stack the cups into a pyramid shape. Kids should begin the verse on the bottom layer of the pyramid and work their way to the end of the verse on the top of the pyramid. Play again as time allows.

SAY “ What does our key passage say about us? [Allow responses.] We are wonderful and remarkable because we were made by God! What does it say our response should be to God? [Allow responses.] We should praise God! His works are wondrous! ”

Lead kids to sing “For It Was You (Psalm 139:13-14).” You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

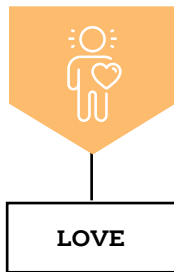
7 PRAY (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

SAY “ Lord, Your Word tells us that You are rich in mercy. We know that to be true because You showed us mercy by sending Jesus to die on the cross for our sin. Thank You for loving us and for making a way for us to be forgiven through Christ. Amen. ”

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**





THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE God by Applying the Story

1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and display the Old Testament Mediterranean Map. Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to Jonah 1. Explain that God called Jonah to go to Nineveh to warn the people to turn from their sinful ways. Remind kids that Jonah went to Joppa to find a ship headed toward Tarshish. Point to Nineveh (E11) on the map.

Consider comparing the Old Testament Mediterranean Map to a modern-day map to help kids understand where these stories took place. (Tip: Locate the areas in and around modern-day Nineveh.)

Choose a volunteer to read aloud Jonah 1:1-3.

SAY “Jonah disobeyed God and ran in the opposite direction of Nineveh. Joppa is about 400 miles from Nineveh and Tarshish was over 2,500 miles from Nineveh. Eventually, God’s mercy saved Jonah and Jonah went to Nineveh. The people of Nineveh repented and were saved from God’s judgment.

God sent Jesus to preach and call people to repent and believe in Him. Unlike Jonah, Jesus perfectly obeyed God. Jesus willingly laid down His life for His enemies. Everyone who repents and believes in Jesus will be saved.”

2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

| **SAY** “Did Jonah deserve God’s grace and mercy? Why not?”

Lead kids to understand that Jonah was not deserving of God’s salvation. Like all people, Jonah was a sinner. Remind kids that just as God showed mercy and grace to the wicked people of Nineveh, He also showed mercy and grace to Jonah. God shows grace and mercy to us through Jesus.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Rom. 9:15-16.)

| **SAY** “Should we get angry when God is kind and forgiving to people we don’t like? Why not?”

Expand on the answer above by reminding kids that no one deserves His grace or mercy. Remind kids that Jonah was wrong to become angry over God’s mercy to Nineveh. Help kids understand that God’s forgiveness toward our own sin should lead us to rejoice when others repent.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Luke 15:7.)

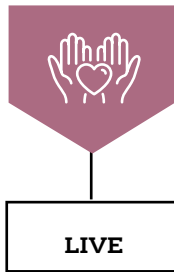
| **SAY** “How is Jesus better than Jonah?”

Discuss the similarities between Jonah and Jesus such as God sending them to their enemies and three days inside the fish vs. the tomb. Explain how Jesus is better because He perfectly obeyed God and willingly laid down His life to save His enemies. Only Jesus can save.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Luke 11:32.)

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





THE MISSION OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE the Mission

1 ACTIVITY CHOICE (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: JESUS LOVES YOU



Lead kids to practice the American Sign Language (ASL) signs to say “Jesus loves you.” Follow these directions to teach the ASL signs: Jesus—use the middle finger to touch the opposite palm of each hand; loves—cross both arms with hands fisted across the middle of your chest; you—point in front of you as if pointing to the person you are talking to.

Practice the signs a few times. Then ask the kids to find a partner and tell them “Jesus loves you” in sign language. Tell kids to switch and let the other partner sign the phrase.

SAY “ASL is a wonderful way to communicate with people in the Deaf community. We can share the good news of Jesus in many different ways.”

OPTION 2: GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD



Display a world map. Form kids into small groups of three or four and provide each group with paper and pens. Instruct the groups to look at the world map and write as many names of people groups or countries as they can. As an extra challenge, ask kids to also list the languages spoken in the countries.

Invite each group to share the names of the countries, people groups, or languages they were able to list. Point out the countries on the world map as kids list them. Read John 3:16.

SAY “There are many different people groups, countries, languages, and cultures around the world. While there are differences between us all, there is one thing we all have in common. What makes people special? [Allow responses.] People are special because we are made in God’s image, as male and female, to know Him.”

2 JOURNAL AND PRAYER (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page. As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas.

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God’s glory and my good?
- Are there promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

Review the gospel and encourage kids to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions. Then pray, thanking God that Jesus died for us and willingly laid down His life. As time allows, lead kids to complete “Jonah or Jesus?” on the activity page.