



July's B.i.G. Idea

We believe that we can live and act with love and courage because God is always with us.

July's Bible Verse

The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore. Psalm 121:8

July's B.i.G. Theme

Come, Live the Adventure

Lesson 6 ★ Jonah

Today's Bible Story

Book of Jonah

Objectives

- ★ Children will connect with the biblical story of Jonah and the fish.
- ★ Children will recognize that God's grace is for everyone.

The Book of Jonah is unique from the other Old Testament prophetic books in that it gives the account of a single event in the life of a prophet. The story can be divided into three parts. First, Jonah receives instruction from the Lord and decides to run away rather than obey. There are times when children can identify with Jonah in his desire to flee rather than to follow. Children can go to great lengths to avoid obeying parents or teachers.

Second, after spending some time in the belly of a great fish, Jonah decides he cannot escape God's reach. He then goes to Nineveh and delivers God's message to the Ninevites. To his surprise, the Ninevites heed God's warning and repent of their ways. They begin to live faithfully, and God responds to their faithfulness by offering forgiveness and redemption. Jonah's response to God's compassion for the Ninevites is surprising.

The third part of our story concerns Jonah's anger toward God's compassion. Jonah became sullen and bitter at God's compassion and mercy when the people repented. It was as if his struggles were in vain if God was only to forgive the Ninevites. Where was the fire? Where was the wrath?

Where was the vengeance? Children have a well-established sense of justice. They, too, want to see the wicked get their just sentence. However, God has different plans.

The story of Jonah and the big fish is a classic Bible story for children. Its moral tale, along with the animal story, is a timeless favorite of both children and their parents. As you teach the story today, invite the children to view the story from several points of view: Jonah the reluctant prophet, the joyfully repentant people of Nineveh, and even merciful God.

As you prepare today's lesson, look at this familiar story with new eyes. Try to hear it as if for the first time. Jonah's response to run away when given a difficult task is something with which both children and adults can identify. Jonah's frustration with God's mercy and his corresponding desire to see God's vengeance is also a very human condition. However, God does not leave us alone in our struggles and frustration. Jonah encountered God when the storm ended his flight from obedience and when the fish turned his path back toward Nineveh. Jonah encountered God when he sat and waited for fire and brimstone that would never come. Jonah encountered God when reminded of the preciousness of each human life. Yes, God stands in the way when we run and challenges our selfishness. God helps us to become better people.

Invite them in . . . (15 minutes)

Who Am I?	✓
Big-Fish Word Search	✓
Jonah's Map Quest	✓
Swallowed Up!	

. . . Into the Bible (30 minutes)

Outside In	✓
Paper-Bag Fish	✓
Withered-Vine Memory Verse	✓

. . . Into Life (15 minutes)

At The Station	✓
The B.I.G. Sound	✓
Running Away From God	✓
Closing Worship	✓



TimeSaver
Activities that require little or no planning and only basic supplies.



EcoFriendly
Activities that encourage responsible earth stewardship by providing options to use recycled or repurposed materials.

DVD Summary: The Station

The Station kids are doing their final rehearsal of a scene they're going to perform for Ana's vacation Bible school class. Ethan, who forgot his costume, blames Luke for not reminding him. Luke says he's tired of being responsible for Ethan. Ana compares Luke to Jonah, who didn't want to tell the people of Nineveh that God was going to punish them. Your kids will see that God wants to give us mercy, even when others want us to "get what we deserve."



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Choose one or more activities to introduce your children to the Bible story.

Who Am I?



Supplies: Leader—page 83, crayons, pencils

Prepare

- ★ Photocopy “Who Am I?” (Leader—page 83) for each child.

Do ★ **Say:** God used a special creature to stop the prophet in today’s story from running away. Look at the dots on your activity sheet. See if you can connect the dots to find out what kind of creature God used to turn Jonah around.

- ★ Give each child a copy of “Who Am I?” (Leader—page 83).
- ★ Encourage the children to connect the dots and discover what creature God used in today’s story.
- ★ Have the children color the picture.

Live B.i.G. God used a big fish to help Jonah listen to God.

Big-Fish Word Search



Supplies: Leader—page 81, pencils

Prepare

- ★ Photocopy “Big-Fish Word Search” (Leader—page 81) for each child.

Do ★ Give each child a copy of “Big-Fish Word Search” (Leader—page 81).
★ **Say:** Today we’re going to hear a story about a very big fish and a man who lived inside of the fish! See if you can find some of the words from our Bible story in this big fish.
★ Encourage the children to find the words listed on the page inside of the fish-shaped word search.

Live B.i.G. Words from the Bible story will introduce the children to some elements of the Bible story.

Jonah’s Map Quest



Supplies: Leader—page 82, scissors, gluesticks

Invite them in . . .

Prepare

- ★ Photocopy “Jonah’s Map Quest” (**Leader—page 82**) for each child.

Do

- ★ Give each child a copy of “Jonah’s Map Quest” (**Leader—page 82**).
- ★ Have the children cut out the vine, fish, and Jonah symbols.
- ★ **Say:** Find Nineveh on the map. Glue the vine onto Nineveh.
- ★ Have the children glue the vine on Nineveh.
- ★ **Say:** Find the Mediterranean Sea on the map. Glue the big fish on the Mediterranean Sea.
- ★ Have the children glue the big fish on the Mediterranean Sea.
- ★ **Say:** Find Tarshish on the map. Glue Jonah walking on Tarshish.
- ★ Have the children glue Jonah walking on Tarshish.
- ★ **Say:** Each of the places we marked on the map are places where part of today’s story took place. What do you think happened in Tarshish? What do you think happened on the Mediterranean Sea? What do you think happened in Nineveh?
- ★ Encourage the children to imagine things that could happen in cities and on the sea. They should not be expected to have the correct answers, but to use their imaginations to create their own ideas of what today’s story could be about.

Live B.i.G. We can learn about the places where today’s story occurred.

Swallowed Up!



Supplies: gray fun foam, paper blowout party favors (unrolls as you blow into it), craft sticks, wiggle eyes, glue, fine-tip markers, crayons, stapler & staples, scissors

Prepare

- ★ For each child, cut a chubby, open-mouthed fish shape from the gray foam.
- ★ Cut out a 1-by-3 strip of gray foam for each child.

Do

- ★ Provide each child with a big fish, a craft stick, a wiggle eye, and a foam strip.
- ★ Have the children use the fine-tip markers or crayons to decorate the craft stick to look like Jonah. Have the children write their name or initials on the back of Jonah.
- ★ Have the children place the blowout on the backside of the big fish so that the part they blow into is at the back of the fish, and the roll-out part goes past the fish’s mouth.
- ★ Attach the blowout using the 1-by-3 strip of foam. Staple one end of the strip on the fish on top of the party blowout, wrap the strip firmly across the blowout, and staple the remaining-free strip end under the blowout, holding it firmly in place.
- ★ Once the fish and blowout “tongue” are assembled, have the children place the Jonah craft stick in the center of the rolled-up fish tongue. When they blow on the blowout, the fish will spit out Jonah.

Live B.i.G. In today’s story, God rescues Jonah from the inside of a big fish.

LIVE BIG

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Choose one or more activities to immerse your children in the Bible story.

Outside In



Supplies: Leader—page 80; large appliance box, dark closet, or table covered over by a dark blanket; flashlight

Prepare

- ★ Prepare the space with either the appliance box, blanket-covered table, or have a closet cleaned out and ready to hold children.
- ★ Photocopy “Jonah and the Ninevites” (**Leader—page 80**) for each child.

Do

- ★ Invite the children to sit with you inside the prepared space.
- ★ **Say:** Jonah spent three days and nights living in the belly of a fish. Let’s imagine that we are living inside a fish right now.
- ★ Close the door, cover the table, or close the box.
- ★ Use the flashlight to illuminate your face as you talk to the children.
- ★ **Ask:** If we are in the belly of a big fish, what does it look like? (*dark*) What do we hear? (*tummy rumbles, muted sounds from outside*) What does it smell like? (*seaweed, salty water, rotten food*) What other things do we see? (*fish parts, trash, ribs*) Let’s go to the storytelling area and learn more about someone who spent time inside the belly of a fish.
- ★ Read “Jonah and the Ninevites” (**Leader—page 80**).
- ★ **Ask:** Why did Jonah run away from God? What did God do? Did God give up on Jonah? Had God given up on the Ninevites? Does God ever give up on us?

Live B.i.G. We should take good care of what God provides for us.

Paper-Bag Fish



Supplies: old newspapers, paper lunch bags, large rubber bands, scissors, construction paper, glue, poster paint, markers, glitter, sequins, paintbrushes

Do ★ **Say:** God used a big fish to show Jonah that God wouldn’t give up on him. Let’s make a big fish to remind us that God won’t give up on us.

The fish take some time to dry, so if time is an issue, paint the bags early in the session and come back to them after another activity. Use thin paint to limit drying time.

- ★ Completely cover the work area with newspaper.
- ★ Have the children take some sheets of newspaper and wad them up. Have them stuff the paper into the lunch bag loosely to help it stand up.

- ★ Have them open the bag up all the way and stand it on its open end.
- ★ Have the children paint the entire paper bag the color they want their fish to be. They can add glitter, if they wish, while the paint is still wet.
- ★ Have them mash the newspaper into the bottom half of the bag. Pull the open end of the bag together and tie it off tightly with the rubber band. Then fan the top of the sack to make the tail of the fish, and lay the bag down on the table.
- ★ Using the construction paper and scissors, cut out a large fin for the fish's back and then cut out two smaller fins for the sides. The large fin is called the dorsal fin and the smaller fins are the ventral fins.
- ★ Next, have them make half-inch folds along the bottoms of all three fins. Have them glue the folded edges of the fins to the top and sides of the fish, and let dry.
- ★ Using poster paints, markers, glitter, sequins, and their creativity, have the children paint their fish with an imaginative design, being sure to include eyes and a mouth.
- ★ Allow the fish to dry completely.
- ★ **Say:** God loves you and wants you to obey, but even when we don't, God doesn't give up on us. Set this fish someplace in your room so you will remember that God will never take God's love away.

Live B.i.G. We cannot run away from obeying God. God is with us wherever we are.

Withered-Vine Memory Verse



Supplies: construction paper, banner paper, markers, scissors, tape

Prepare

- ★ Draw a long winding vine on the banner paper.
- ★ Cut large leaves out of the construction paper. Write one word of the memory verse on each leaf: *"The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore"* (Psalm 121:8).
- ★ Be sure to include the Scripture reference as well.
- ★ Tape the banner on the wall so the vine is at about the children's height.

Do

- ★ Have the children tape the leaves to the vine in order so they can read the verse.
- ★ Say the memory verse several times and invite the children to say it with you.
- ★ Have the children turn around and face the other direction.
- ★ Remove one of the leaves and ask the children to face the vine again.
- ★ **Ask:** Which word is missing? Allow them to respond.
- ★ The children may take turns removing a word leaf from the vine and trying to stump their classmates.
- ★ **Say:** Jonah depended on a vine to shade him from the hot sun. Our vine helps us remember the memory verse. Jonah's vine withered and he had to face the hot sun without it. But God was with Jonah. Let's see how much of our vine we can remember without the leaves.
- ★ Remove all the word leaves and see if they can say the verse without the leaves.
- ★ **Say:** When we take God's Word with us, we don't need material things to help us know that God is always there.

Live B.i.G. God is always with us and provides the help we need in any situation.



The B.i.G. Idea

We believe that we can live and act with love and courage because God is always with us.

Choose one or more activities to connect your children's lives to the Bible story.

At The Station



Supplies: DVD, DVD player, television

Prepare

- ★ Preview The Station (DVD).

Do

- ★ Watch The Station (DVD).
- ★ **Ask:** Why was Luke mad at Ethan? (*because Ethan was being irresponsible*) How was Luke's anger at Ethan like Jonah's anger at the Ninevites? (*Luke wanted Ethan to be punished for his irresponsibility by not being able to be in the play. Jonah wanted the Ninevites to be punished for not listening to God.*) We all do bad things—whether they're kind of bad, like forgetting our costume; or really bad, like hurting other people and not listening to God. But when we do bad things, God gives us grace, which is like forgiveness. God says, "Even though you've done something really wrong, I still love you and will give you another chance to do things right." No matter how many times we mess up, God always offers us grace.

Live B.i.G. No matter how many times we mess up, God never stops loving us.

The B.i.G. Sound



Supplies: DVD, DVD player, television

Prepare

- ★ Preview The B.I.G. Sound (DVD).

- ★ **Say:** Following God can sometimes lead us to new adventures. Let's hear a song about some of the adventures we're learning about this month.
- ★ Play The B.I.G. Sound (DVD). Sing and dance along with the cast.
- ★ **Ask:** Do you think Jonah's story was an adventure? Is it an adventure that you'd like to have? Trying to ignore God and running away would be a scary thing. When we follow God and listen to what God wants, our adventures are a lot more fun because God is on our side!

Live B.i.G. We praise God for our adventuresome lives.

Running Away From God



Supplies: large open area to play game

- Do** ★ **Say:** People sometimes run away when asked to do something they think is too difficult. Sometimes, they even try to run away from God. We can ignore God and act like God isn't there, but whenever we're ready to run back to God, we realize that God was there with us all along, even when we were trying to ignore God. Let's play a game where we determine if people are running away from or toward God.
- ★ Have the children stand in a horizontal line in the center of the room, with the teacher standing against one wall.
 - ★ If the children believe the person is running away from God in the situation, they are to take three steps away from you.
 - ★ If they think the person is listening and obeying God, they move three steps toward you.
 - ★ Read the situations below, one at a time.
 - Lily knows God doesn't want her to lie. Even so, she lies to her teacher because she doesn't want to get into trouble. (three steps away from teacher)
 - Jack knows God wants him to listen to his parents. Jack cleans his room when his mom asks, even though he would rather play outside. (three steps toward teacher)
 - Katie knows God wants her to say a prayer before she eats. She is embarrassed at school because she thinks her friends will laugh at her, so she skips praying before lunch each day. (three steps away from teacher)
 - Olivia knows she is to show God's love by sharing. One day she gives up her turn with the video game, even though she would really like to play some more. (three steps toward teacher)
 - ★ **Ask:** Who did all the moving in our game? (*children*) Did I move or did only the children move? (*children only. Point out to the children that you never moved, only they did.*)
 - ★ **Say:** God does not move away from us. When we run away from God, it's usually because we don't want to obey what God has told us. Jonah ran away because he did not want to go to the Ninevites, like God asked him. Even so, God forgave Jonah, and God will also forgive us when we make mistakes.

Live B.i.G. God is always ready to forgive us.

Closing Worship



Supplies: DVD, DVD player, television

Prepare

- ★ Preview the sign language for this month's Bible verse on the Teacher Tips **(DVD)**.

Do ★ Teach the children the signs for this month's Bible verse **(DVD)**.

- ★ **Say:** We believe what our Bible verse tells us—that our help comes from God. Anytime we're in trouble, even if we're in trouble with God, God is there to help us and to be with us and comfort us. God loves each of us very much.
- ★ Lead the children in saying the Bible verse in sign language as a closing prayer.

Live B.i.G. No matter what, God loves us and is always there for us.

Jonah and the Ninevites

(Based on the Book of Jonah.)

Jonah was one of God's prophets. God told Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh and tell them to stop sinning. Instead of listening to God, Jonah decided to run away. He did not like Nineveh.

Jonah got into a big sailboat that was headed out across the sea. But God had other plans. God caused a big storm to come across the sea, and the wind blew and blew. The boat tossed and rocked. The sailors were afraid the boat would sink.

Jonah felt bad about not listening to God. He said to the sailors, "God sent this storm because of me. Throw me into the water and the storm will stop."

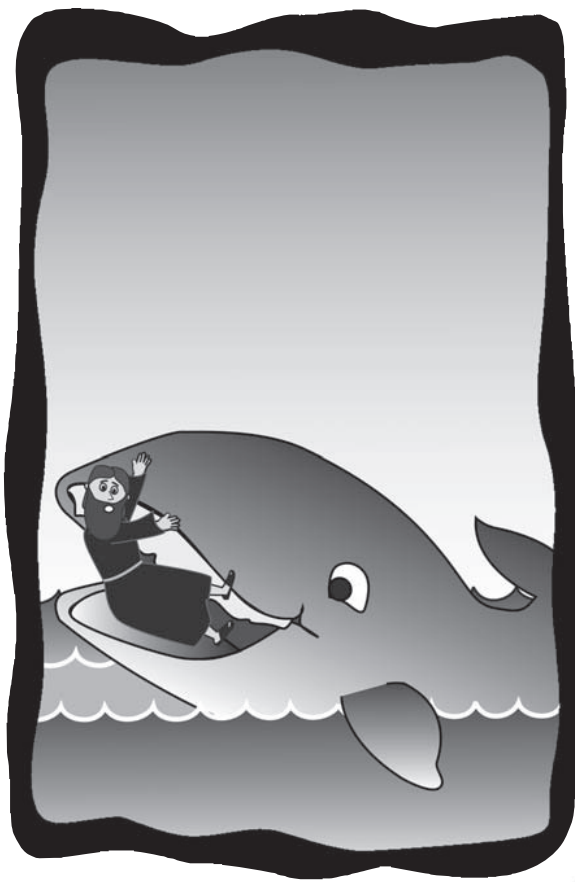
And so they did. The sea became calm and the boat sailed steady. As Jonah sank into the sea, a big fish swam up and swallowed Jonah whole. For three days and three nights, Jonah was inside the big fish. He prayed and asked God to forgive him for not listening.

God gave Jonah another chance. God told Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh and tell them to stop sinning. This time, Jonah did as God told him. He went to Nineveh and told them what God wanted them to do. The people listened to what Jonah said and they praised God.

Jonah got angry when the people changed and praised God. Jonah wanted to see God's anger. Jonah wanted to see God's fire. Jonah wanted to see the Ninevites get what was coming to them. Remember, Jonah did not like the Ninevites. But God loved even the Ninevites.

Jonah went out on a hill to pout. A vine grew up and gave him shade as he sat, but soon the hot sun made the vine dry up, and Jonah had no shade.

Jonah got angry again. God said, "Jonah, Jonah, why are you so angry? If you could care about this little vine, why not care about the people of Nineveh?"



Big-Fish Word Search

NINEVEH
PREACH
JONAH
RUIN
PROPHET

PRAYER
FLEE
SEA
SHIP
STORM
GOD

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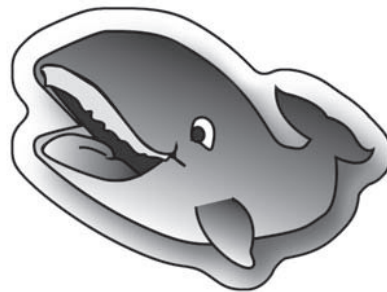
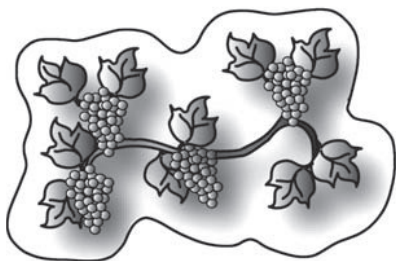
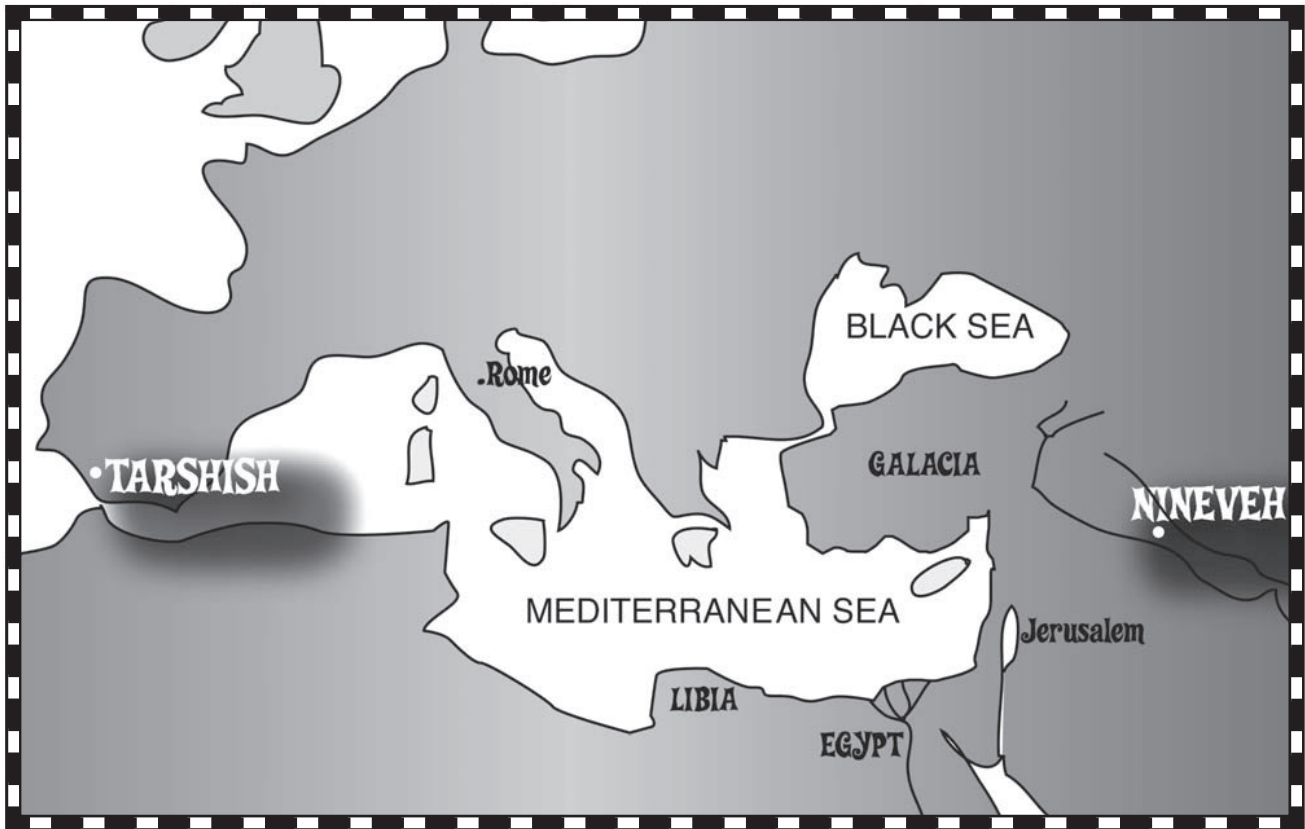
Jonah's Map Quest

Find Nineveh on the map. Glue the vine on Nineveh.

Find the Mediterranean Sea on the map.

Glue the big fish on the Mediterranean Sea.

Find Tarshish on the map. Glue Jonah walking on Tarshish.



Who Am I?

