

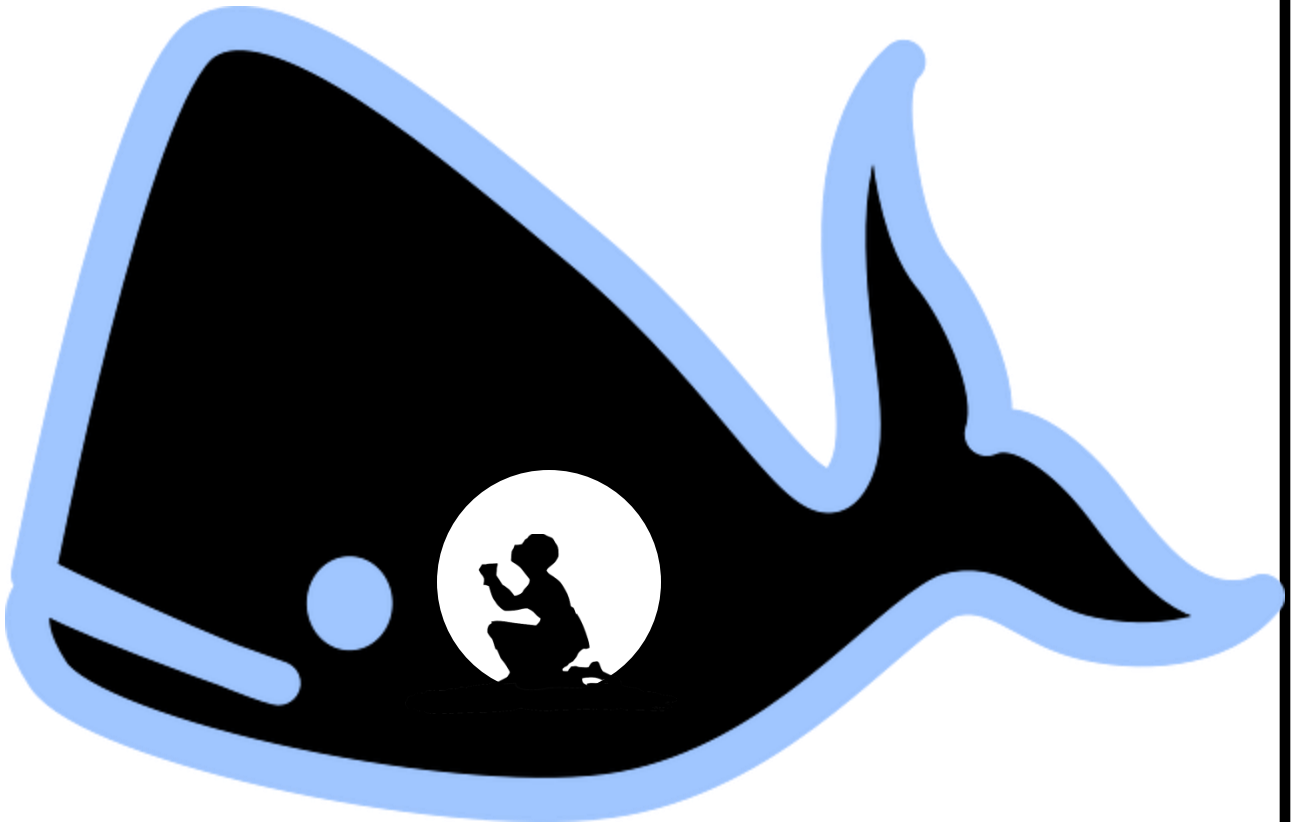


Bible Studies for preteens

growing deeper roots by studying God's Word

Colossians 2:6-7

JONAH AND THE GREAT FISH



Kathy Hutto

JONAH

a Bible Study for preteens

Bible Studies for preteens are a great first in-depth Bible Study for this age-group. They take readers through a portion of the Bible, leaving them with a feeling of success and training them how to study their Bibles. The reading passages are divided into manageable and content appropriate chunks. Each Bible study includes word checks with definitions to aid in understanding. Each also includes relevant and thoughtful questions throughout. Short answer responses verses long writing assignments are utilized to make the study fun and not overwhelming.

This Bible Study for preteens is great for girls OR boys!

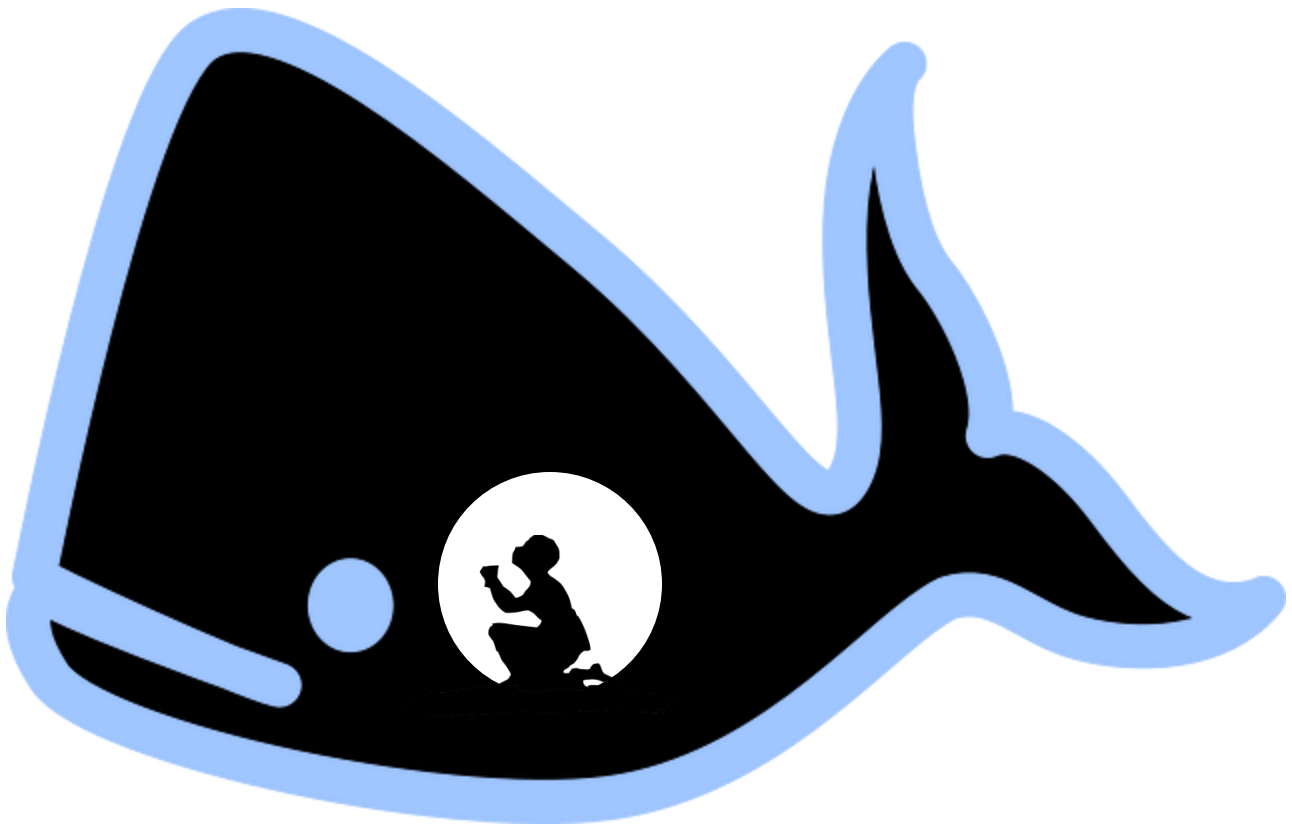
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JONAH AND THE GREAT FISH

Bible Study



Name: _____

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Who was Jonah?

Read Jonah 1:1

Jonah's name means dove.

Jonah was a prophet.

During Bible times, God chose prophets to deliver His messages to people. Often, these messages were warnings because the people were not doing right things.

Jonah is known as a minor prophet. The minor prophets of the Bible include: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

They are described as minor because their books are shorter in length. They can be read in one sitting. Jonah, for example, is only four chapters long.

Jonah is the only prophet God asked to deliver a message to a foreign country. The other prophets delivered messages to their own people - the Israelites. God told Jonah to go to Nineveh.

Long ago, Noah's great grandson, Nimrod, had established Nineveh. Nimrod was a great hunter. He became a leader. He was not satisfied to be equal to other leaders in the area. He thought he was better than anyone else. He ruled by force and violence.

Years passed and new leaders came, but the people remained evil. They were known as the Assyrians (you will read more about them tomorrow). Jonah did not like them. In fact, he would rather run than obey God and preach to them. He knew God was a good and forgiving God. He didn't want to preach to the people of Nineveh because he knew God would have mercy on them if they turned around. He wanted to see them get destroyed.

The Bible is full of cool things! Sometimes, God uses a story to parallel something else in the Bible. For example, Jonah is kind of similar to the country of Israel.

God chose Israel to be His people.	→	God chose Jonah to be His prophet.
Israel rebelled against God.	→	Jonah ran from God.
Israel was saved by God.	→	Jonah was saved by God from the fish.
Israel began to follow God (for a time).	→	Jonah finally preached to Nineveh

The story of Jonah teaches us that God loves and wants to save ALL people.



What God told Jonah to do

Read Jonah 1:2

What did God tell Jonah to do?

Circle one.

- A. Go to Tarshish
- B. Go to Jerusalem
- C. Go to Nineveh

Look back at verse 2. Fill in the blank. Nineveh is described as a _____ city.

Nineveh was possibly the largest city in the world at this time. How many days did it take to walk around Nineveh?

Circle one footprint for each day it took.



Look back at verse 2 and fill in the blank.

The people of Nineveh's _____ had come up before God.

We've already learned that Nineveh was a large city, but it was also an evil city.

Long ago, Noah's great grandson, Nimrod, had established Nineveh. Nimrod was a great hunter. He became a leader. He was not satisfied to be equal to other leaders in the area. He thought he was better than anyone else. He ruled by force and violence.

Years passed and new leaders came, but the people remained evil. They were known as the Assyrians. The Assyrians were among the most feared and hated people during the time of Jonah. They described themselves as "kings of the universe who had brought the whole world into submission." (Abeka, 2005) They worshipped false gods.

Jonah did not like them. In fact, he would rather run than obey God and preach to them. He knew God was a good and forgiving God. He didn't want to preach to the people of Nineveh because he knew God would have mercy on them if they turned around. He wanted to see them get destroyed!

Jonah's Response

Read Jonah 1:3

How did Jonah respond when God told him to go to Nineveh?

Circle one.

- A. He went to Nineveh right away.
- B. He found a ship heading to Tarshish and got on it.
- C. He went to Joppa and stayed there.

Write True or False.

Jonah thought that he could run from the presence of God. _____

Look back at verse 3 and fill in the blanks below.

Jonah went to _____ to catch a ship heading to _____.

Circle Nineveh, Joppa, and Tarshish on the map below.



Jonah was headed in the opposite direction from where God told him to go!

Answer: animals

The Storm at Sea

Read Jonah 1:4-6

The Lord sent a great _____ on the sea. (verse 4)

The ship was about to be _____ up. (verse 4)

The men on the ship began to pray to their gods. What else did they do to lighten the load? (verse 5)

Where was Jonah during this time? (verse 5) _____

What do you think you would be doing if you were in the middle of the sea in a ship during a terrible storm?

What did the Captain of the ship tell Jonah to do?

- A. Go back to bed.
- B. Pray to your God.
- C. Help us throw the cargo overboard.

Read Jonah 1:7-9

Word check:

casting lots – this was like flipping a coin or rolling dice; whomever had the high number on the dice must have been the one who was causing the punishment of this terrible storm

The men all cast lots to try to determine whose fault it was. They believed someone was being punished by their god.

The lot fell on Jonah. This was no coincidence. God had caused it to happen this way.

Jonah described God as the One who made the _____ and dry land. (verse 9)

It's easy to see how God could cause this terrible storm at sea since He made the sea!

Jonah Thrown into the Sea

Read Jonah 1:10-16.

What did Jonah tell the men to do to him so that the sea would calm down?

Did the men do this at first? Circle one. Yes No

What did they do to try to reach safety? (verse 13) _____

What happened when they finally threw Jonah into the sea? (verse 15) _____

How did the men react? (verse 16) _____

Remember in yesterday's session, you read in verse 9 that when the men asked which God Jonah served, he said, "the God of heaven who made the sea and dry land." The men now believe that the God Jonah serves is real. They have seen Him control the sea!

Read Jonah 1:17

God prepared a great _____. People often assume it was a whale that swallowed Jonah, but according to scientists a better candidate could be the great white shark! Read more about this at the end of this study following the Wrap Up Session .

Check this out...

- ✓ It was God who caused the storm at sea.
- ✓ It was God who caused the lot to fall on Jonah.
- ✓ It was God who caused the sea to be calm when Jonah was thrown in.
- ✓ It was God who prepared a big fish swimming right there to swallow Jonah alive.

Circle True/False

God was in control the whole time! True False

How many days and nights was Jonah in the fish?

Circle one.

1

2

3



Jonah's Prayer & Deliverance

Read Jonah 2:1-10

We learned yesterday that God was in control of all that was happening to Jonah. God knew what it would take to get Jonah's attention. Deep within the belly of the great fish, Jonah began to pray.

Let's take a look at his prayer:

Verse 2	"Out of the belly of Sheol I cried..."	Jonah was saying he faced certain death.
Verse 3	"You cast me into the deep..."	Jonah acknowledges that it was God who caused this to happen to him because he had disobeyed Him.
Verse 5	"The waters surrounded me, even to my soul..."	The water was physically all around him, and he was also sinking spiritually because he had disobeyed God.
Verses 5 & 6	"Weeds wrapped around my head. I went down to the...mountains."	Jonah was describing what he saw as he sunk deep into the sea before the fish swallowed him. There are underwater mountains in the ocean.

Look at verse 9 and fill in the blank.

S_____ is from the Lord.

What did God cause the fish to do? (verse 10)

Jonah Preaches at Nineveh

Read Jonah 3:1-4

Compare Jonah 1:2 with Jonah 3:2. Did God tell Jonah the same thing both times?

Circle one. Yes No

Now compare Jonah 1:3 with Jonah 3:3.

The first time Jonah rose to _____ (Jonah 1:3). The second time Jonah arose and _____ (Jonah 3:3).

Write 2nd in the box below. You will refer back to it later.

Why do you think Jonah was ready to obey the second time?

Have you ever heard anyone say, “fear the Lord?” This doesn’t mean we are to be afraid of God like we are afraid of lightning or bears. To fear the Lord means to respect Him; to remember that He is the Creator of the universe and can do anything.

I think Jonah got a healthy dose of fear (respect for God) when He saw God cause and calm a storm, and send a great fish to swallow and then spit him out!

God still wanted Jonah to go to Nineveh. This time, he went!

Jonah arrived and walked around for a day. Then, he began to speak.

What message did he deliver to the people? (verse 4)

The People Believe

Read Jonah 3:5-10

Did the people believe Jonah? Circle one. Yes No

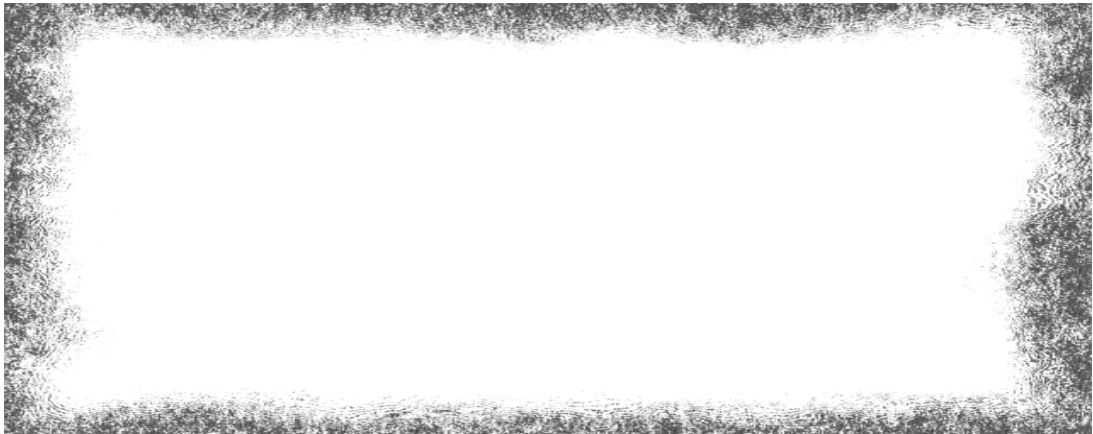
What did the people do to show they were sorry? (verse 5) _____

Word Check:

sackcloth – black cloth made from goat’s hair (Can you say itchy?!)

Besides the people, who else wore sackcloth. Look at verse 8 to find out. Write the answer on the line below and then turn back to Session 3 to see if you were right. The answer is in the bottom corner on that page.

Draw a picture below showing what that might have looked like.



When God saw that the people were sorry, He decided not to destroy the city. Look back at Session 7 and copy what you wrote in the box on that page into the box below.

God gave the people a



chance.

Jonah's Anger and God's Kindness

Read Jonah 4:1-10

How did Jonah react when he heard that God was going to give the people of Nineveh a second chance? (verse 4)

Circle one.

- A. He was angry.
- B. He was happy.
- C. He didn't care.

Turn back to Session 7 and once again copy what it is in the box on that page in the box below.

God gave Jonah a

chance.



God gave Jonah a second chance, but Jonah didn't want the people of Nineveh to have a second chance.

In fact, Jonah goes outside the city, sets up a tent and watches to see what God would do to the city. Doesn't it sound like he's pouting?

God caused a _____ to spring up and give Jonah shade. (verse 6)

During the night, a worm came and damaged the plant. It withered and died.

Re-read Jonah 4:7

Word Check:

scorching or vehement wind – a super hot wind blowing off the Arabian desert

God sent a scorching east wind to blow. The sun was so hot on Jonah's head and he grew faint.

God reminded Jonah that he'd felt sorry for the plant, but was angry that God had mercy on the people of Nineveh. God told him that 120,000 of the people of Nineveh were children.

God was reminding Jonah that He is a God full of mercy and forgiveness for ALL.

Wrap Up

God was in control the whole time as Jonah went from a sinking ship to pouting in the sun scorched outskirts of town.

Creation came into being because God spoke it and every part of it responds to His command.

It was God who...

- ✓ sent a great wind on the sea (1:4)
- ✓ caused the lot to fall on Jonah (1:7)
- ✓ caused the sea to calm down (1:15)
- ✓ prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah alive (1:17)
- ✓ made the fish vomit Jonah up on dry land (2:10)
- ✓ prepared a plant to shade Jonah (4:6)
- ✓ prepared a worm to eat the plant (4:7)
- ✓ prepared a vehement east wind (4:8)

God is in control of your life too! Nothing happens to you that catches Him off guard. He knows. You can trust that He will work things out for your good even though, at times, it doesn't seem that way at first.

It doesn't feel good to be corrected, but God knows what it takes to help us stay on the right path. When we are in His will, He can bless us freely.

God's love and mercy reaches everyone – no matter who you are. God even forgave the Assyrians, who were known for their terror. He will forgive anyone who asks with the right heart.

How many days was Jonah in the fish? _____ days and _____ nights

Add together the two numbers you just wrote. Write the answer here: _____.

See if you can find that many fish hidden throughout this study. Circle them all.

The fish will look like this, but this one doesn't count!



One more cool thing...

Did you know that Jesus talked about Jonah? **Read Matthew 12:40.** Jesus compared Jonah's 3 days and nights in the fish to the 3 days and nights He would spend in the grave before He arose!

What kind of fish swallowed Jonah?

Most people think that a whale swallowed Jonah. After all, when you think about a great fish, these gentle giants come to mind first.

The largest sea creature is the blue whale. In 1909, a whaling station reported capturing a blue whale that was over 110 feet long!

So, the blue whale is certainly big enough to have swallowed Jonah. But, there are some problems with this choice.

According to Keith Robinson (a senior marine scientist at Sea World) and Donna Parham (a science writer), a whale's esophagus wouldn't be big enough to swallow a man.

They believe that a better candidate would be the great white shark!

Here's why they think so...

Great whites are found in the Mediterranean Sea (which is where Jonah would have been). Robinson said he'd seen a photograph of a great white with its mouth open. You could see the head of a six-foot blue shark inside! So, a great white must have an esophagus large enough to swallow a man.

Also, great whites have slower metabolism than whales, so Jonah wouldn't have gotten digested as quickly – meaning he could have stayed alive 3 days and nights.

In conclusion, they believe "Jaws" swallowed Jonah!

There is another possible explanation. The Bible says that God prepared a great fish. God could have created a great fish just for this purpose if He wanted to.

One thing's for sure, Jonah was swallowed by a great sea creature! He was in the belly for three days and nights. The kind of fish really doesn't matter, but it's fun to speculate!

What about you?

What kind of fish do you think swallowed Jonah? _____

Have you ever wondered why Jesus had to die on the cross?

When God created the very first people, He made a garden for them to live in. He would visit them there and actually walk with them. (Genesis 3:8)

Later, God instructed Moses to build a tabernacle? The very name means “dwelling place.” God wanted to be with people.

He wants to spend time with us here on earth, but He doesn’t want it to end there...

God loves us and He wants us to live with Him in Heaven forever when we die.

God gave people some rules so we could know the right things to do. Those rules are known as the Ten Commandments. When we break one of these rules or commandments, we sin. The consequence or price we must pay for sinning is death and separation from God. (Romans 6:23) That means when we die, we won’t be able to live in Heaven with Him. Heaven is a perfect place and sin cannot be there. Instead, the place we will be sent to is a place called hell and it is a terrible place.

But, remember, God loves you so much. He wants you to live in Heaven with Him.

He had a plan. He sent His one and only Son, Jesus, to pay the price for our sin. (John 3:16)

Jesus died on a cross. Three days later, He arose. There was no reason for Him to stay dead. He had paid in full. It was finished!

If you believe this and are moved to accept this special thing that Jesus did for you, you need talk to Him and tell Him. Your prayer could sound something like this...

Dear God, I realize that I have sinned and I am sorry. I know that Jesus died to pay the price for my sins. I trust in Him now as my Lord and Savior. I know He’s the only way for me to be able to live in Heaven.

Tell your parent that you prayed this prayer. They will be so happy!

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