

Introduction to the Bible

Supplies:

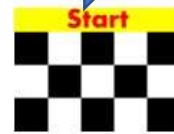
- Masking tape
- Cone

UPPER

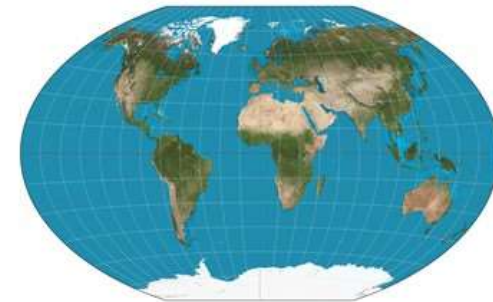
ELEMENTARY

Intro:

Show children a globe. What part of the world do you think is the farthest away from us? (China, Australia, the South Pole, Fiji...) What is the farthest away you have ever traveled?



Jonah



I think the place that is the farthest away from me is

Ninevah was a city ruled by the Assyrians, who had a reputation for being very cruel. They did not like Jewish people at all. But God wanted to save them. Does it sound like Jonah wanted to save them? What was he afraid of? (Being mocked or rejected? Being laughed at or ignored? Maybe he was afraid of being killed.) Have you felt God telling you to do something (through prayer or the Bible) and you wanted to run from His instructions?



Jonah 1:1-3

One day the Lord told Jonah, the son of Amittai, to go to the great city of Nineveh and say to the people, "The Lord has seen your terrible sins. You are doomed!" Instead, Jonah ran from the Lord. He went to the seaport of Joppa and bought a ticket on a ship that was going to Spain. Then he got on the ship and sailed away to escape.

The port in Spain Jonah was sailing toward was called Tarshish. Many Bible scholars think it was the same port called the Strait of Gibraltar. This is where the southern tip of Spain and the northern tip of Africa come very close together. For people who lived around the Mediterranean Sea (North Africa, Egypt, Israel, Greece, Italy) this was considered the "edge of the world." No one knew what existed past this place, if anything at all. No one dared go past it. To sail there was literally to go as far away from Nineveh as was possible. It would have been like if God told you to go to New York, and instead you went to Australia, (or China, or Fiji).



Jonah sailed for a port in Spain called Tarshish. It is believed to be the place that is now called the Strait of Gibraltar. From there, you can see across the water to Africa.







Jonah 1:4-6

But the Lord made a strong wind blow, and such a bad storm came up that the ship was about to be broken to pieces. The sailors were frightened, and they all started praying to their gods. They even threw the ship's cargo overboard to make the ship lighter. All this time, Jonah was down below deck, sound asleep. The ship's captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep at a time like this? Get up and pray to your God! Maybe he will have pity on us and keep us from drowning."

Ancient cultures worshipped hundreds of gods. Whenever something bad was going on in their lives, it was blamed on "the gods being mad." They believed they had to work to keep the gods happy. So 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. They cast lots, which is like drawing straws (or playing "Eenie-meenie-minie-mo"). God made the lot fall to Jonah.



The Mediterranean Sea sometimes gets storms that are as strong as hurricanes, but do not last long enough to count as hurricanes. They are nicknamed, Medicanes.



Ancient people believed that each of their many, many gods ruled a certain part of the universe. There was a god of storms, war, money, farming, business, etc. Like Jonah, we are surrounded by people who have all different religious beliefs. When others ask us what we believe, how do we describe ourselves? (I'm a Christian. I go to church. I believe in God.) What makes someone a follower of God? It's more than just going to church or not being a part of some other religion.



Jonah 1:9-10

Jonah answered, "I'm a Hebrew, and I worship the Lord God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." When the sailors heard this, they were frightened, because Jonah had already told them he was running from the Lord. Then they said, "Do you know what you have done?"



Jonah 1:11-16

3

The storm kept getting worse, until finally the sailors asked him, "What should we do with you to make the sea calm down?" Jonah told them, "Throw me into the sea, and it will calm down. I'm the cause of this terrible storm." The sailors tried their best to row to the shore. But they could not do it, and the storm kept getting worse every minute. So they prayed to the Lord, "Please don't let us drown for taking this man's life. Don't hold us guilty for killing an innocent man. All of this happened because you wanted it to." Then they threw Jonah overboard, and the sea calmed down. The sailors were so terrified that they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made all kinds of promises.

Why do you think Jonah told them to throw him overboard?

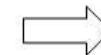
Did the sailors want to do this?

What did the sailors think of God after this?

What do they do that shows this? (they prayed to the Lord, "Please don't let us drown for taking this man's life. Don't hold us guilty for killing an innocent man. All of this happened because you wanted it to.")



Jonah runs from God



God sent a storm

Sailors prayed to their 'gods'



The storm continued

Jonah was thrown overboard



The storm stopped

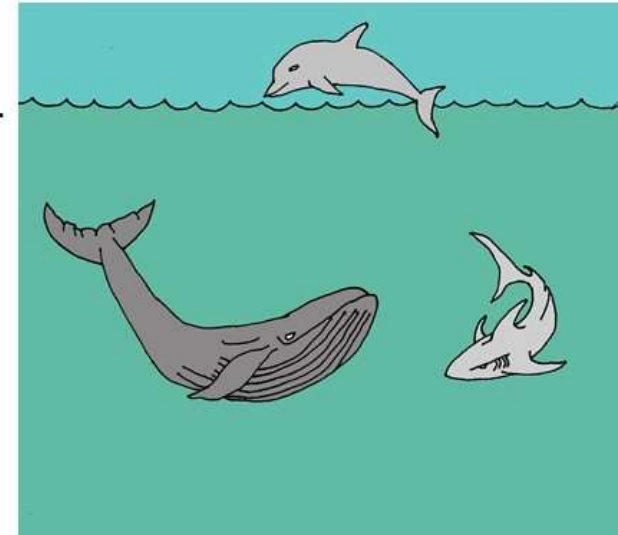


Jonah 1:17-2:4

The Lord sent a big fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights. From inside the fish, Jonah prayed to the Lord his God: When I was in trouble, Lord, I prayed to you, and you listened to me. From deep in the world of the dead, I begged for your help, and you answered my prayer. You threw me down to the bottom of the sea. The water was churning all around; I was completely covered by your mighty waves. I thought I was swept away from your sight, never again to see your holy temple.

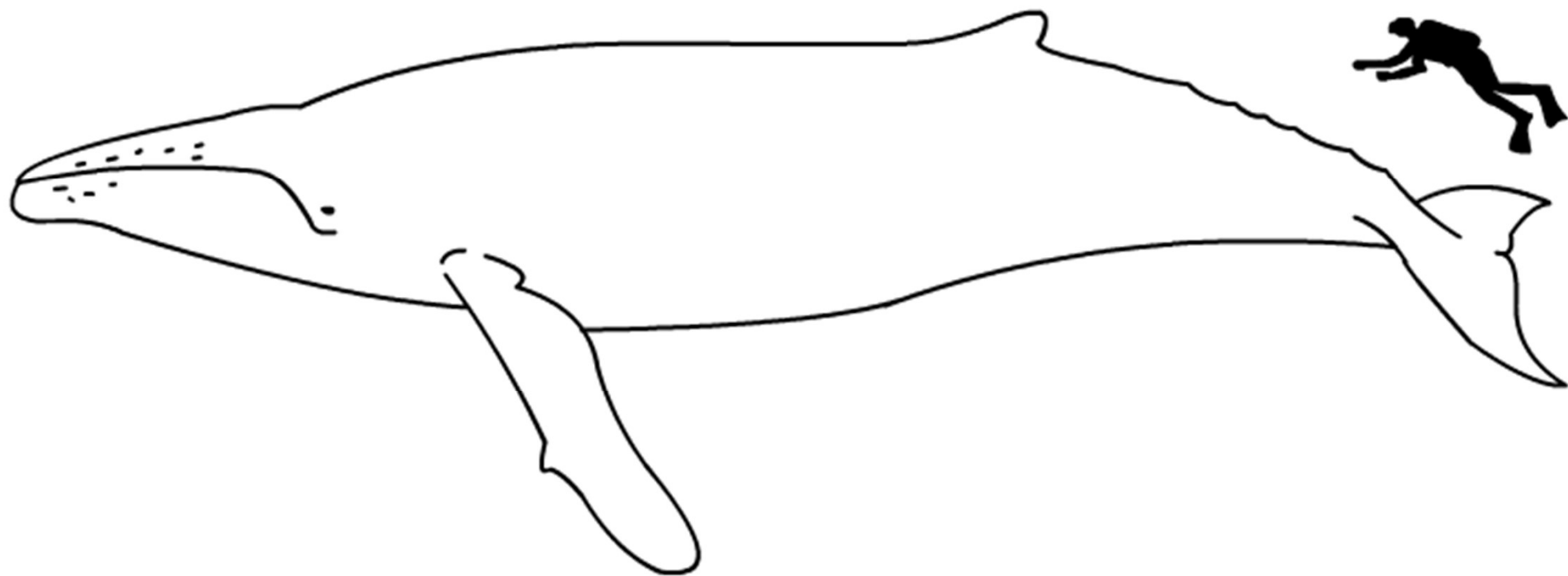


Animal categories in Bible times were different from the ones we have today. Animals were grouped by where they lived, not how they breathed. Most animals that swam in the sea were called fish, including whales, dolphins and sharks. Because of this, we do not know if Jonah was swallowed by a giant fish, or by a large whale, such as a blue whale.



Most of you have already learned in school about mammals, fish, birds and reptiles. In Bible times people put animals into different groups than we do today. All animals that flew were one group. All animals that lived on land were another group. All animals that lived in the water were a group and they were all called fish. Whales, eels, sharks, crabs, lobsters and actual fish were all part of one group. So we don't know if the animal that swallowed Jonah was a giant fish or a whale. Most people argue it was a whale because whales breathe in air and some whales are the largest creatures on earth, even bigger than the biggest dinosaur that ever lived.





Jonah was thrown into the sea



God sent a giant 'fish'

Jonah was in the belly of the 'fish'



Jonah prayed to God

God heard Jonah's prayer



Jonah would keep his promise



Jonah 2:10-3:3

The Lord commanded the fish to vomit up Jonah on the shore. And it did. Once again the Lord told Jonah to go to that great city of Nineveh and preach his message of doom. Jonah obeyed the Lord and went to Nineveh. The city was so big that it took three days just to walk through it.

Did Jonah obey God this time? Why do you think he changed his mind? Do you think it would have been easier for Jonah if he had obeyed the first time? Can you think of a time you got punished because you didn't obey an instruction the first time and wound up obeying in the end?



Closing:

Put tape on the floor about 6 feet apart. Divide your class into pairs and have them separate and form lines behind each mark. Have one child from each pair stand on the tape and try to roll the cone to their partner. They may not move their arms past the line. Because of the cone's shape, it will not go the distance to their partner; it will just roll in a circle.

When we take matters into our own hands, like Jonah, nothing we do will make things work. Like the cones just rolled back again, our plans will just roll back again.

Extra Time:**Jonah & the Whale****Word Search**

P	O	S	L	K	J	H	G	D	S
R	B	E	L	L	Y	X	A	M	F
E	H	A	V	E	N	I	N	N	E
V	C	R	I	U	W	C	V	W	Z
Q	T	A	R	S	H	I	S	H	V
W	T	Y	S	W	A	V	H	A	N
Z	B	N	W	A	N	H	I	L	M
X	U	M	K	L	O	G	P	E	P
G	D	F	V	L	J	K	F	Y	R
U	B	S	T	O	R	M	B	L	T
I	O	P	L	W	W	X	N	K	H

**BELLY
JONAH
WHALE
NINEVAH
SHIP**

**TARSHISH
SWALLOW
STORM
SEA**

Lower Elementary

Introduction to the Bible

Supplies:

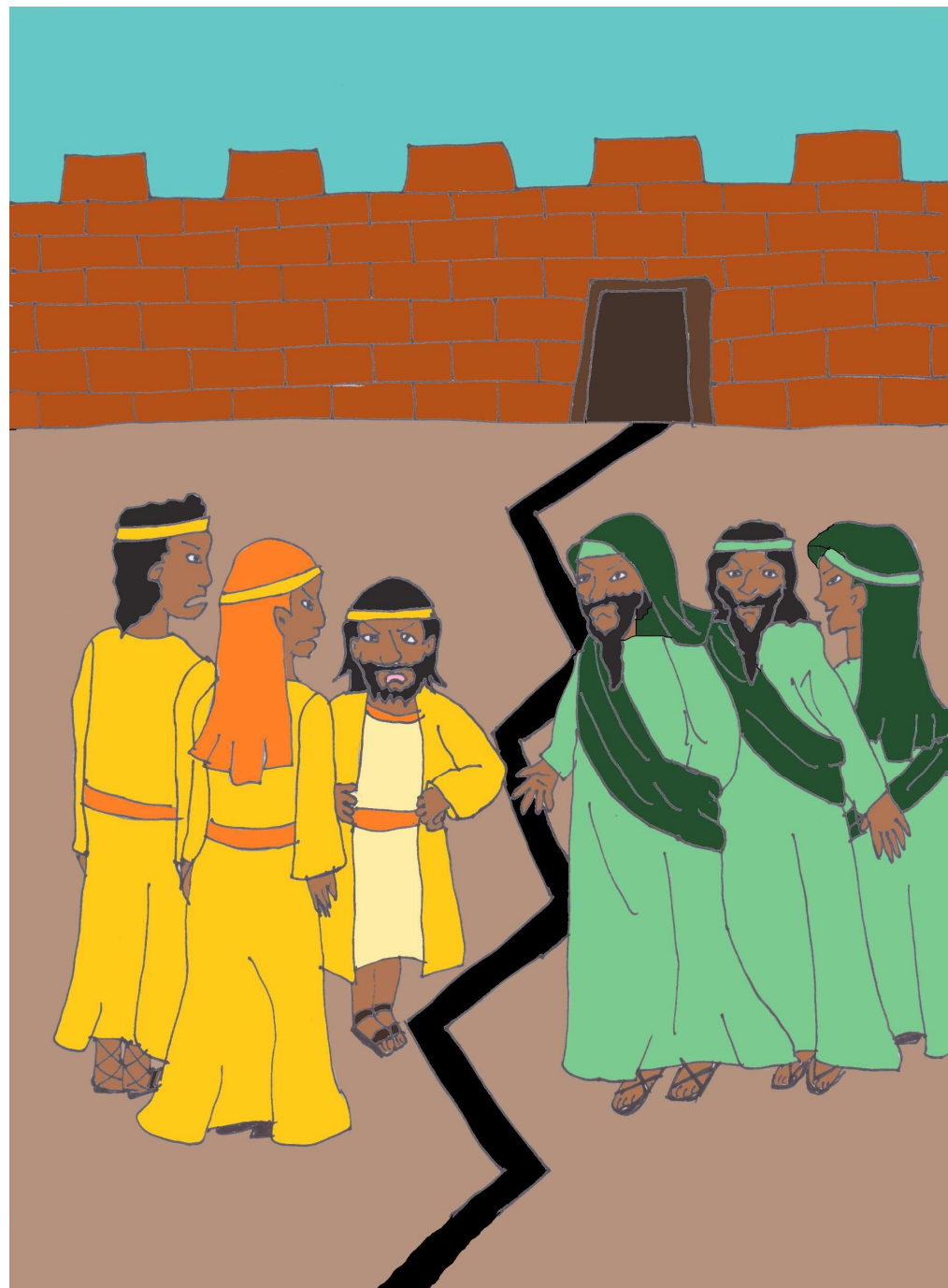
- Sardines
- Globe

Intro:

- Has an adult/parent ever told you to do something, but you didn't do it? What was it? What happened to you for not obeying?

Who does God love? You? Your friends? Your family? What about the people who are different than you? The ones who believe in different things and disagree with you? Does God love them, too? What if they're not very nice and don't like you? Could God still love them?

Jonah didn't think so. Jonah knew who he didn't like. It was the Assyrians. They had been mean to the Israelites back in Elisha's day and the Israelites were still pretty upset about it. They're bad people, Jonah believed. They don't deserve for God to love them.



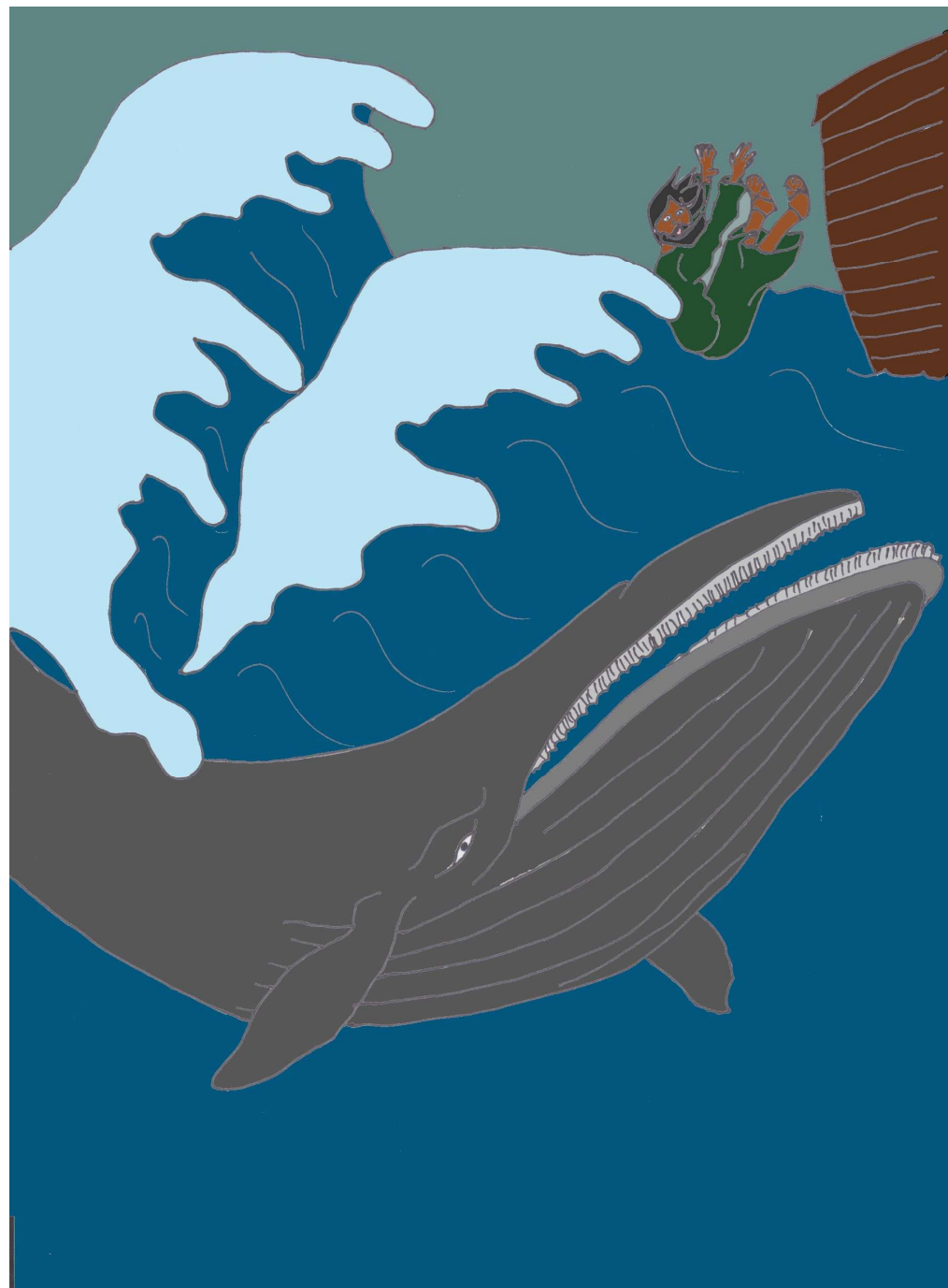
So you can imagine how surprised Jonah was when God told him to go to Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria, and warn everyone that they needed to change their ways and turn to God. Jonah didn't want the Assyrians to hear God's message. He thought things should just stay as they were. Jonah knew that God had done amazing miracles in Israel and could see everyone in Israel, but perhaps if he went somewhere else, God wouldn't see him, and would forget about this job. Jonah got on a boat headed in the opposite direction of Ninevah.



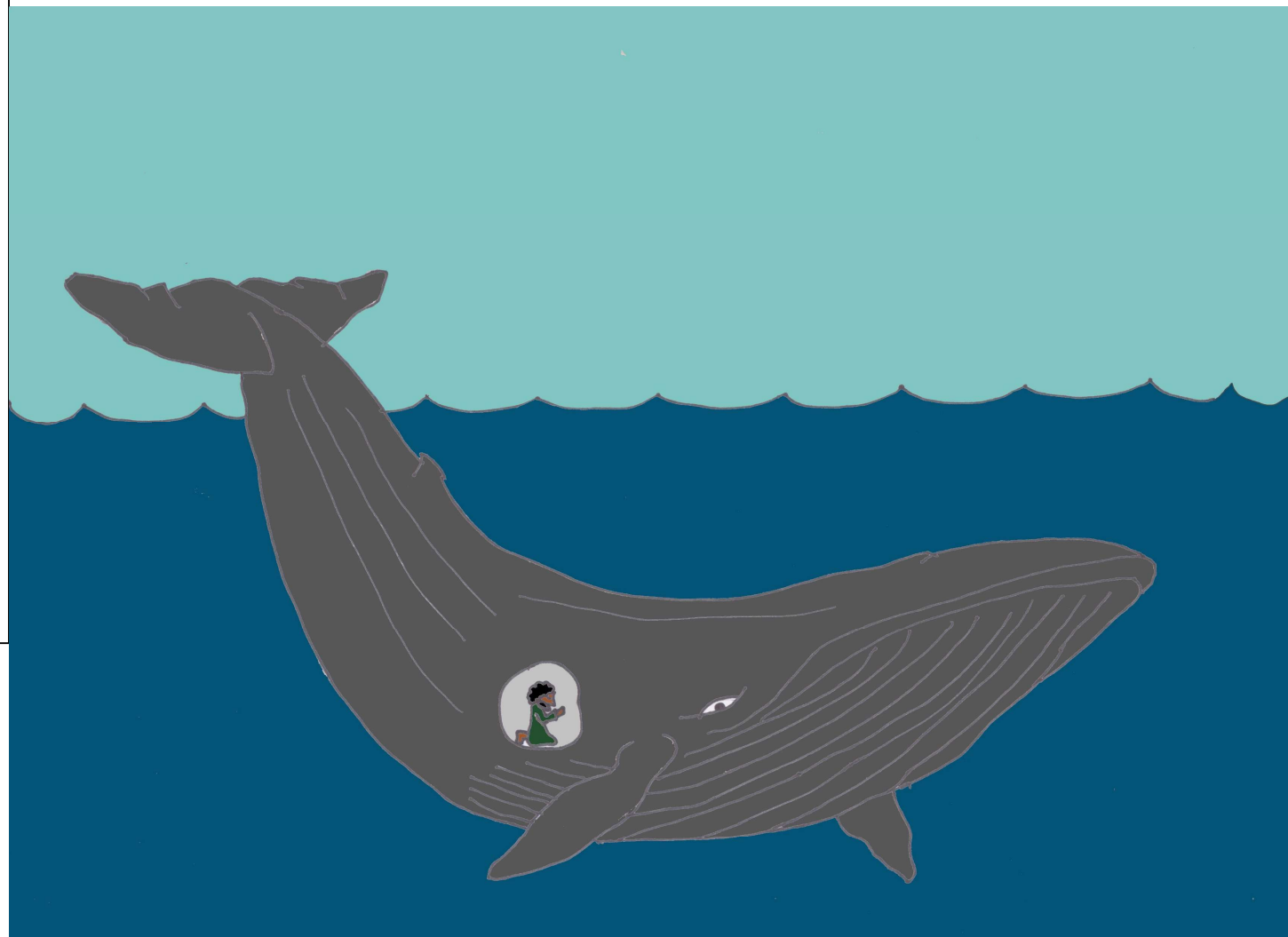
Jonah's boat was going as far as boats from Israel went back then. As far as anyone knew how to sail. Jonah thought he had outsmarted God. But he was in for a surprise! God sent a huge storm to rock the boat back and forth. All the sailors were terrified. They went down below deck and found that Jonah was sleeping like a baby. He didn't even know the storm was happening. They woke Jonah up and yelled at him to pray to his God.



Jonah told the sailors that he worshipped the true God, the Creator of the universe. When the sailors heard this, they knew they were in trouble. Jonah realized he could never run from God. He told the sailors to toss him into the water. Jonah thought he would drown. He believed that God was angry with him and had sent the storm to kill him. But God had sent the storm to get his attention. God was still watching over Jonah and keeping him safe.

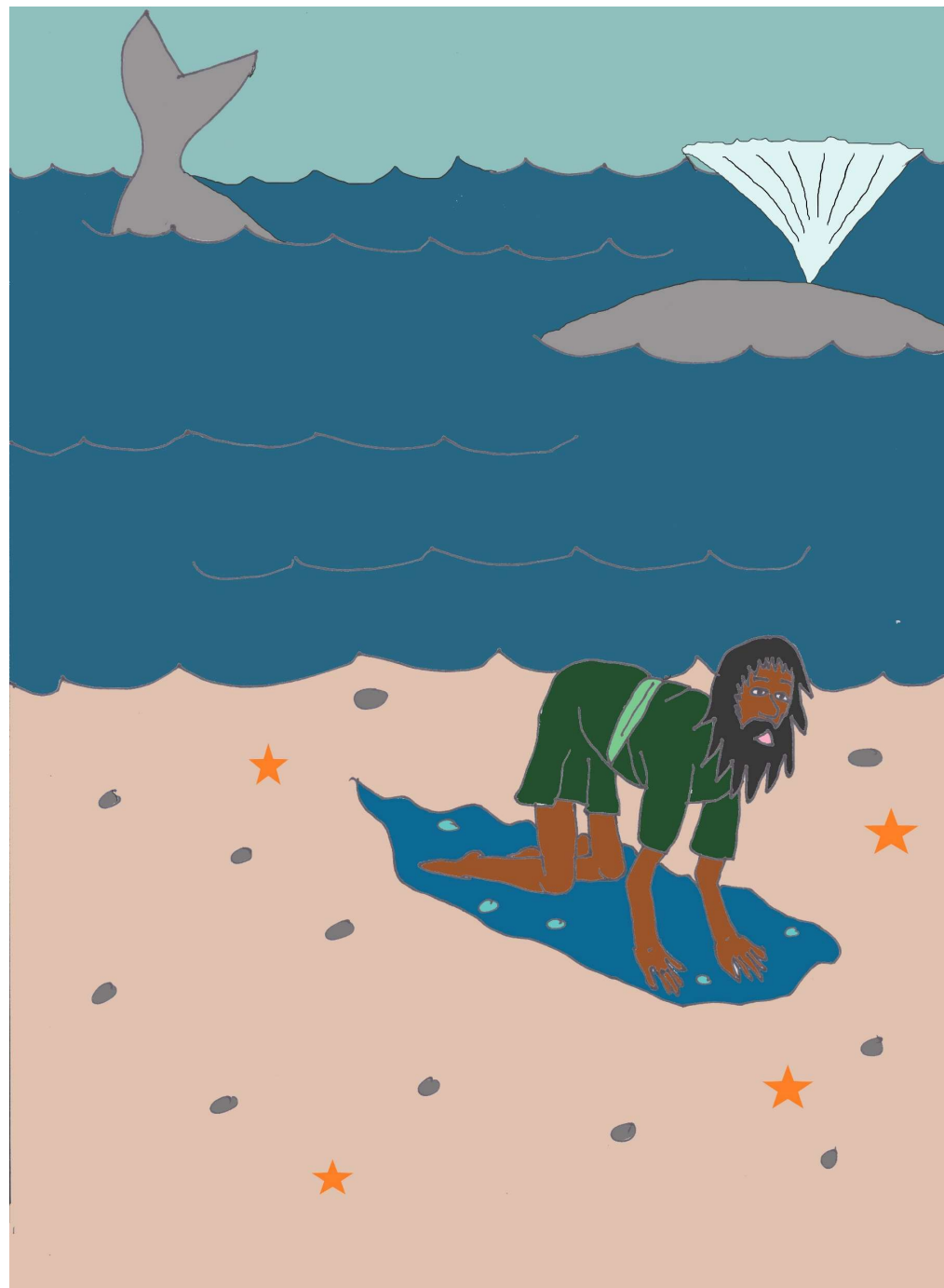


God sent a giant whale toward Jonah. If Jonah had his eyes open, he would have been scared to death! The whale opened its mouth and in went all the water, and shrimp, and seaweed, and Jonah, too. He was trapped in the whale's belly. Now what would Jonah do? He did the only thing he could do, and what he should have done in the first place: pray!



Jonah asked God for forgiveness in the whale's belly. He promised to obey God and bring His message to the people in Nineveh...even though they were different...even though they had been enemies...even though he didn't think they deserved it. The truth is none of us deserve God's love. He doesn't love us because we have earned it. He loves us because He is Love and we are His children. God wanted Jonah to obey Him and He wants us to obey Him, too. But we don't obey God to earn His love. We obey Him because we already have His love.

God made the whale spit Jonah onto the beach. And Jonah was ready to obey.



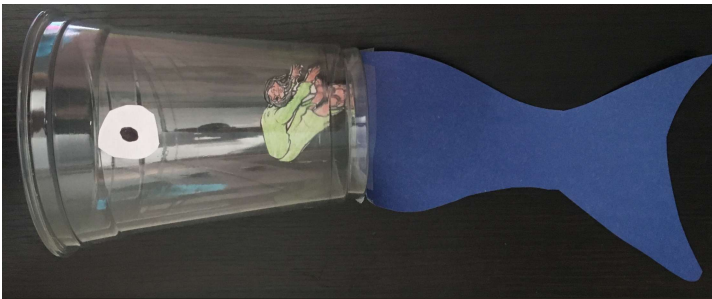
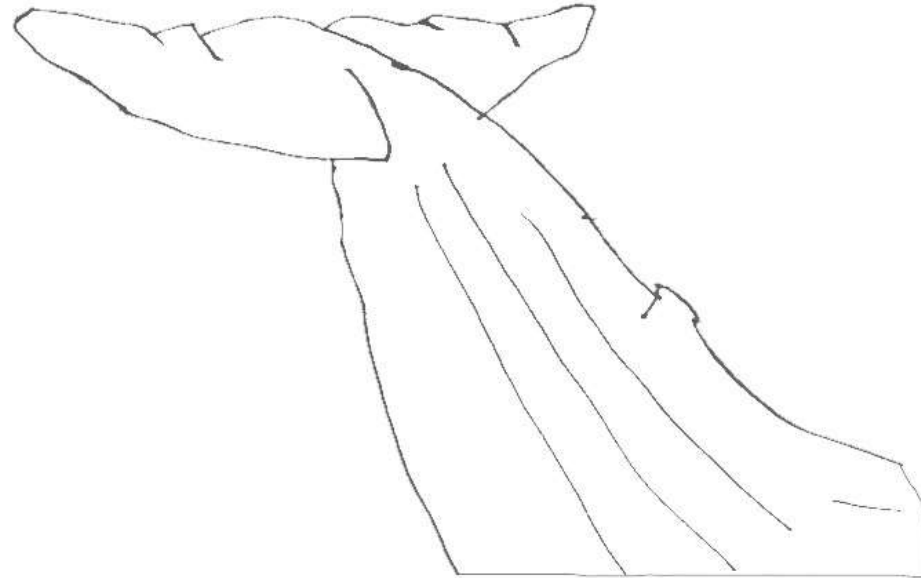
Discussion:

- ❖ Why didn't Jonah want to go to Ninevah? Does it matter if we WANT to do what God asks?
- ❖ What was God's message? Is this a good message? SHOULD people hear it?
- ❖ When Jonah tried to get away from God, did it work? What happens when we don't do what God asks? (eventually...we will.)

Craft:

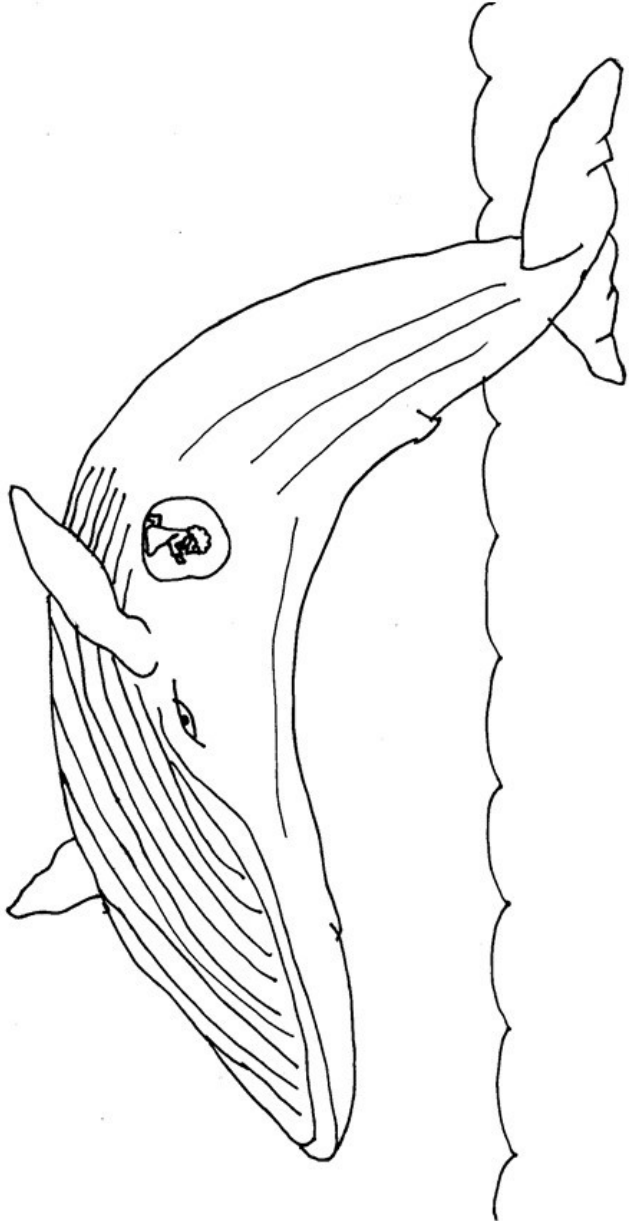


- ❖ Children cut waves at top and bottom of blue paper
- ❖ Teacher folds over and staples to make 2 layers
- ❖ Children color & cut out leprous & healed Naaman figures
- ❖ Children glue 2 Naamans back-to-back with popsicle stick in middle
- ❖ Teacher cuts slit at bottom for Naaman to fit through; demonstrates how to make leprous Naaman dip down 7 times, then flip him around to healed side



Jonah and the Whale

Name: _____



The LORD sent a big fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights. ~ Jonah 1:17

Closing:

Pass around sardines for children to smell. Imagine smelling that (and worse!) in the belly of the whale for three days.

Extra Time:

Preschool

Jonah and the Whale

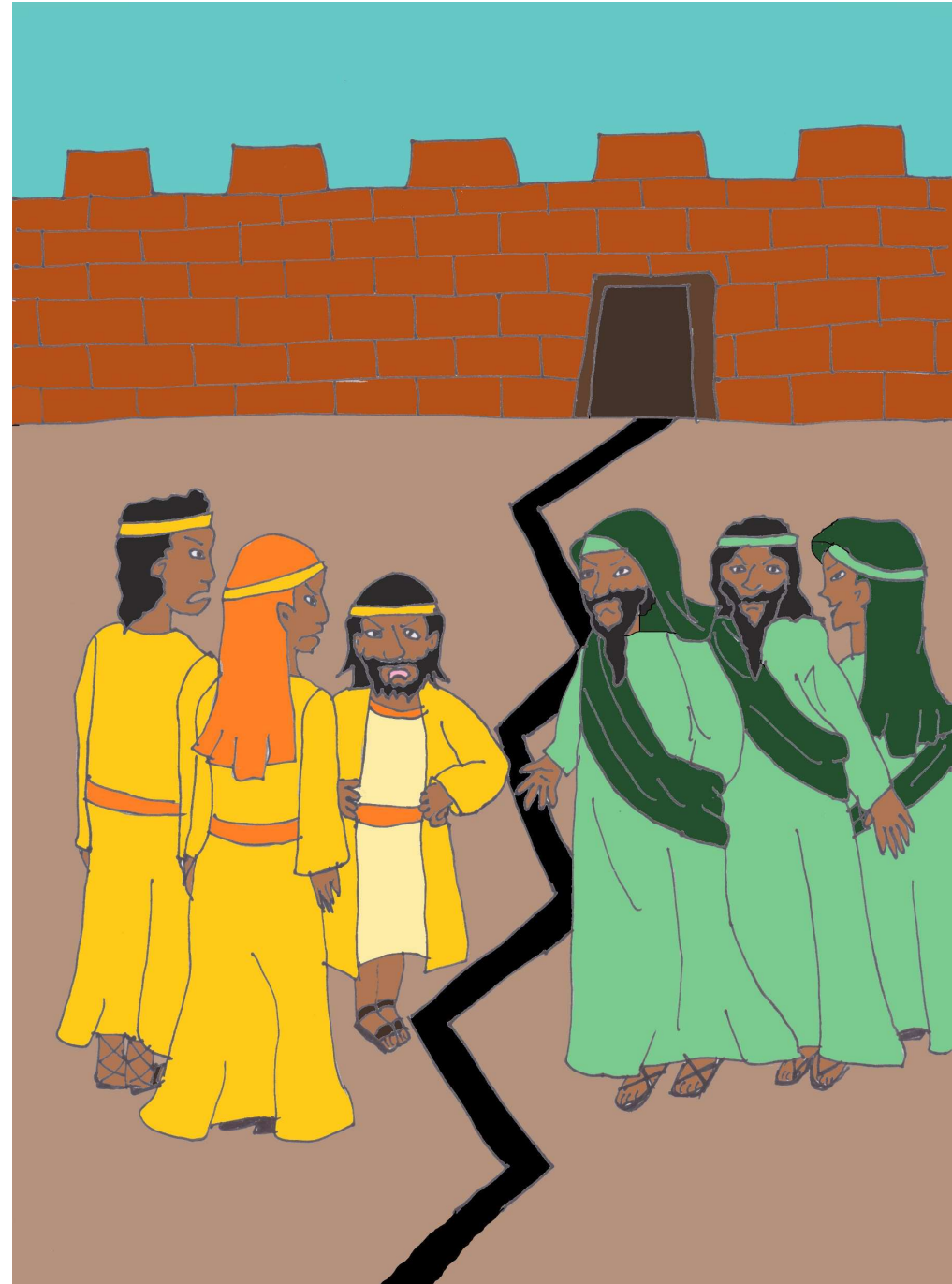
Supplies:

- Large zip close bag
- Small plastic sea animals
- Blue food dye
- Large blue paper
- Blindfold

Prep:

- Fill large zip bag with water and mix in blue food dye.
- Add plastic sea animals to create an ocean sensory bag.
- Cut out an outline of a whale on a piece of large blue paper and tape to the wall.
- Make copies of Jonah cut out for children to tape to the whale while blindfolded.

God loves everyone. The people who are like us that we like. And also the people who are not like us who we don't always like.



God told Jonah to go to a town called Nineveh and warn the people that they needed to come to Him so they could change their bad behavior.

Jonah didn't like the people in Nineveh. He didn't see why they should know about God. So he decided to take a boat to the place that was farthest away from Nineveh.

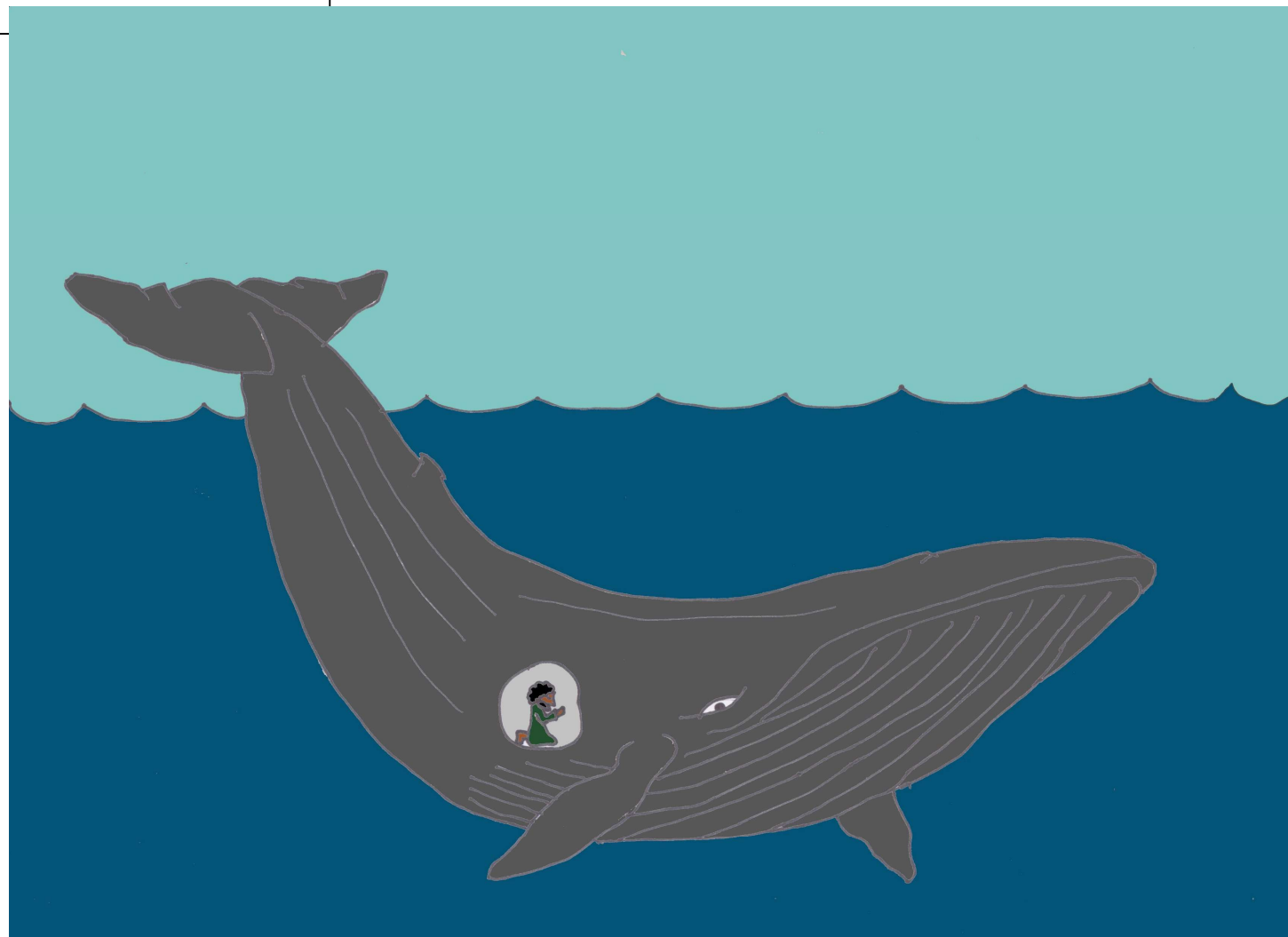


To get Jonah's attention, God sent a huge storm to rock the boat back and forth. All the sailors got really scared.

Jonah knew he was the reason for the storm. So he did something really crazy! He told the sailors to help him jump overboard into the water. As soon as he jumped in, the storm stopped.

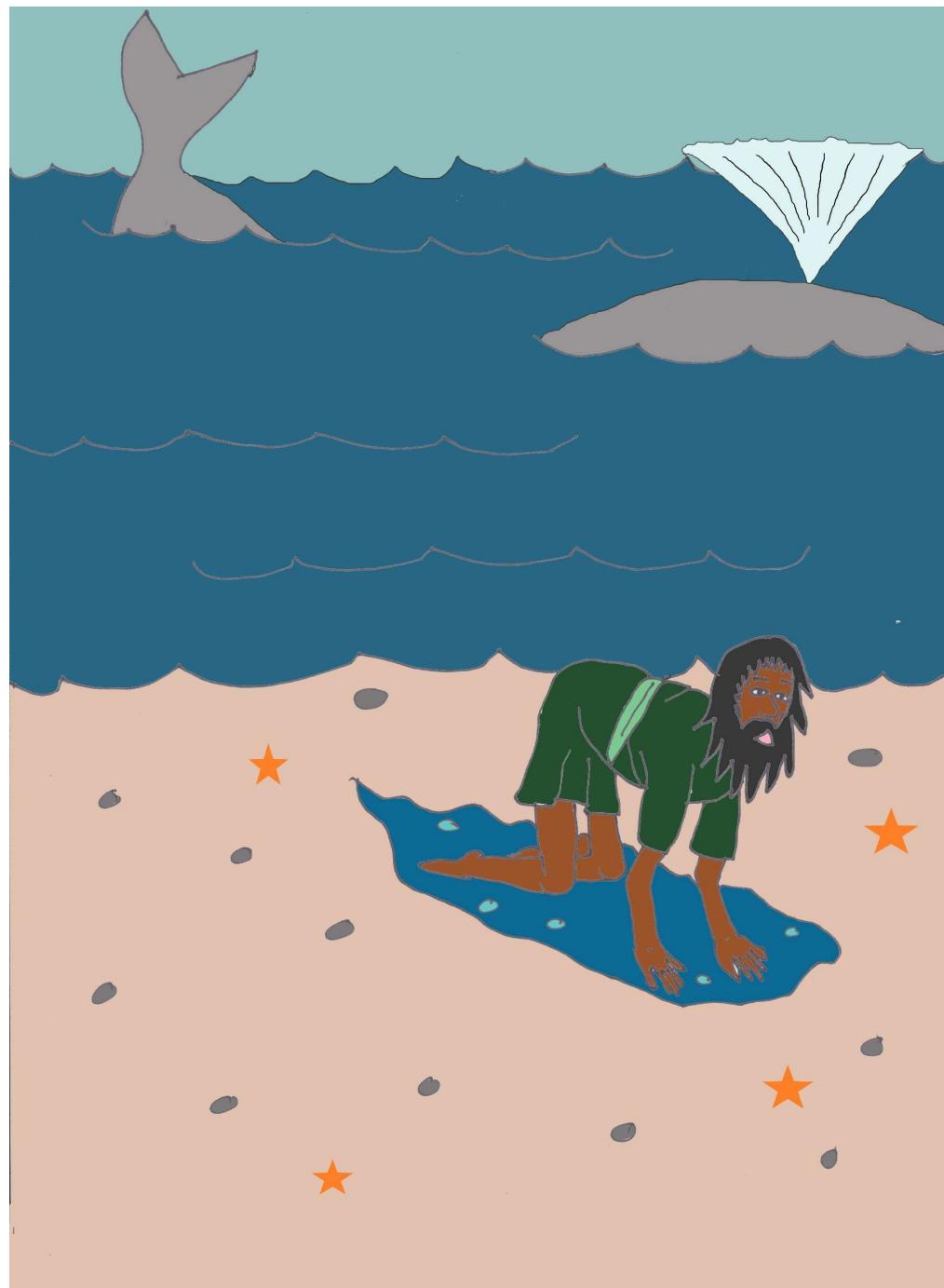


God sent a giant whale to swallow Jonah. Jonah stayed in the whale's belly for three days (yuck!). He apologized to God for running away from Him and disobeying His instructions.



God forgave Jonah and the whale spit him onto the shore.

God doesn't want us to have a bad attitude when He tells us to do something. He wants us to be joyful that we get to serve Him and other people. We can have joyful attitudes, even when we are doing jobs that don't sound fun.



Jonah

Name: _____

Coloring Page:

Encourage children to surround Jonah with darkness. How do you think he felt in the whale's belly? Do you ever feel scared in the dark? Who is always with you?

Modeling Dough:

Encourage children to make something from the story, like a boat or a whale.

Games:

Pin Jonah on the whale

Ocean sensory bag

Song:

Who Did Swallow Jonah?



God is with me, even in the dark.

