

Lower Elementary

Jonah

Checklist

- ☐ paper cups
- ☐ yarn
- ☐ Jonah cut-outs
- ☐ can of sardines
- ☐ hole puncher
- ☐ paper clips

Introduction:

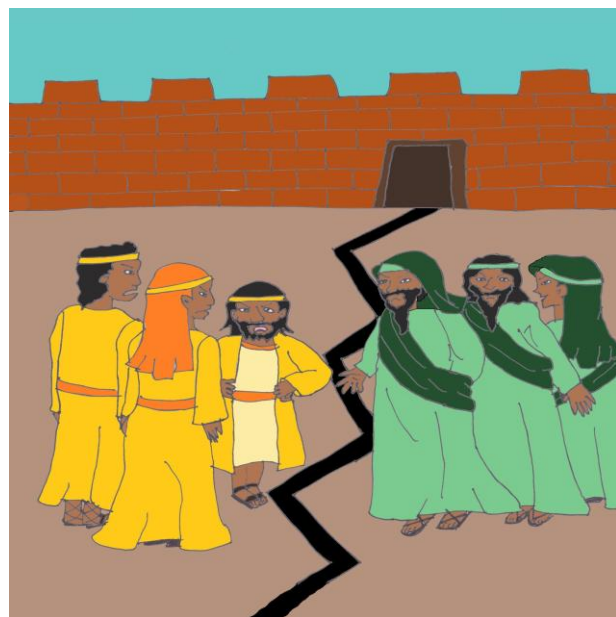
Has an adult/parent ever told you to do something, but you didn't do it?

What was it?

What happened to you for not obeying?

After the days of Elisha, King Jeroboam the Second ruled in Israel. He had brought back the power that Israel had lost and made it strong. But the prophets Amos and Hosea warned that even though the land was mighty on the outside; on the inside, people's hearts were hard and their actions to others were cruel. But Jonah had no words of criticism for the king for all the evil he had done. Jeroboam had many victories over Israel's enemies, and that seemed to make Jonah happy.

Many people at that time. If Jonah's people won, they were good, and those they had defeated were bad. And who did the Israelites think were the worst? It was the Assyrians. 'They're bad people,' Jonah believed. 'They don't deserve for God to love them.'



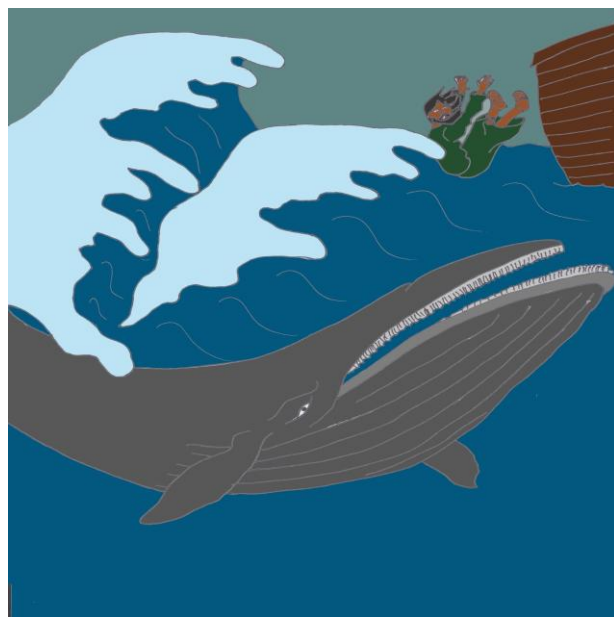
So, you can imagine how surprised Jonah was when God told him to go to Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria, and warn everyone that they needed to change their ways and turn to God, and that God wouldn't punish them for the terrible ways they had treated others if they repented. Jonah didn't want the Assyrians to hear God's message. He thought they should stay bad so they could get punished. Jonah thought 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 Nineveh.



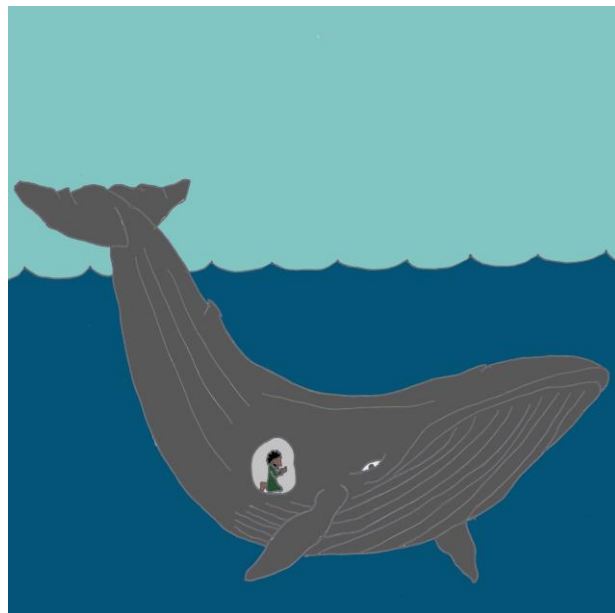
Jonah's boat was going as far as boats from Israel went back then. As far as anyone knew how to sail. Jonah thought he had out-smarted God. But he was in for a surprise! God sent a huge storm to rock the boat back and forth. All the sailors were terrified. They went down below deck and found that Jonah 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. Jonah had forgotten that 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...But he still wasn't happy about it.



When Jonah arrived in Ninevah, he saw an enormous city...a city filled with people who had been his country's enemies. It took Jonah three whole days to walk through the city sharing what God had told him to say.

'Well, I'll just give them God's message and be on my way,' he thought. 'Hopefully none of them will listen to it. I wouldn't want those kind of people to become a part of God's family. They're the worst!'



Jonah found a spot outside of the city to watch it from a distance. He was really hoping to see something terrible happen to the people there.

‘After all,’ he thought, ‘they’re not good enough for God’s love and forgiveness. They deserve to have bad things happen to them.’

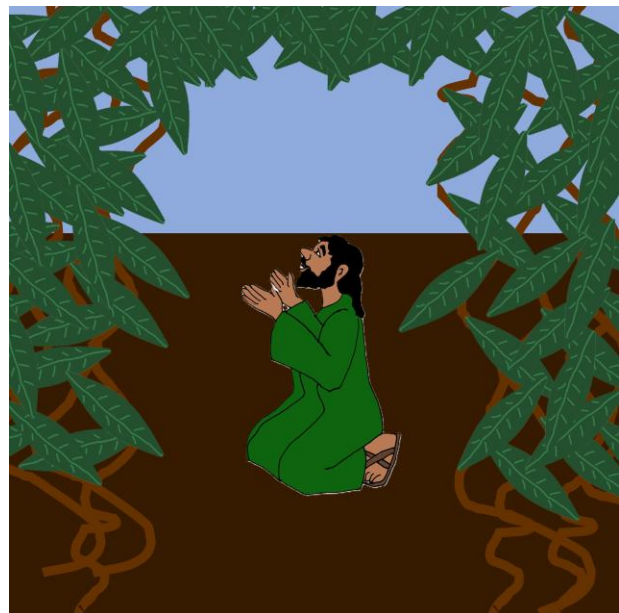
But the people of Ninevah listened to God’s message and changed.

Jonah was angry and told God, “You see? This was pointless. I should have never come here in the first place. I wanted bad things to happen to these people.”

Jonah sat there baking in the hot sun, feeling it burn the back of his neck.



God made a vine grow over Jonah's head so that the sun would not scorch him. Jonah was grateful and happy for the vine.



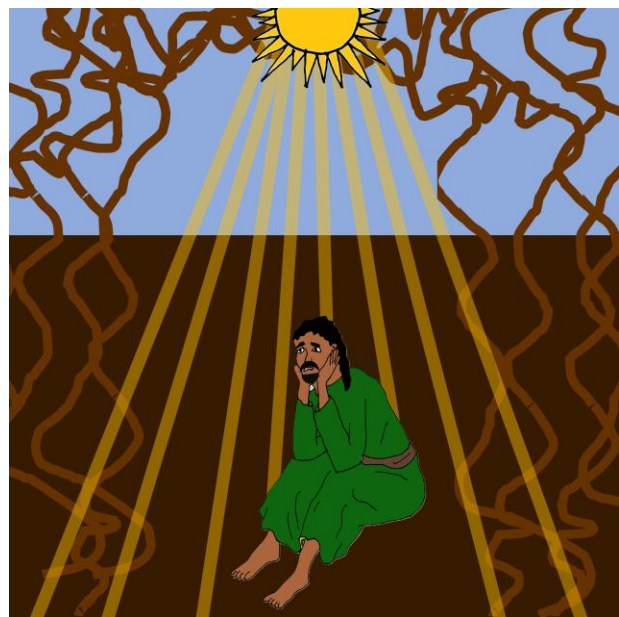
But the next day the vine withered and Jonah became angry.

“Are you seriously angry about that vine?” God asked him.

“Yes!” Jonah whined back. “I have every right to be angry about it dying.”

“Don’t you see the irony here?” God asked him. “You did nothing to grow this vine, but you’re crying that it is gone. Meanwhile, there are thousands of people in Ninevah that you couldn’t care less about!”

God wants our priorities to be in line with His priorities. And His number one priority will always be...us! All the people God has made are His children—the ones who are like us, who we like; and the ones who are not like us, who we may not like. He loves all of us, wants us to love Him, and cares about what happens to us.



Closing Discussion:



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.)

When Jonah was in the whale's belly and everything around him changed, how did he change inside?

When the people of Ninevah chose to believe God's message, how did Jonah react?

Craft:

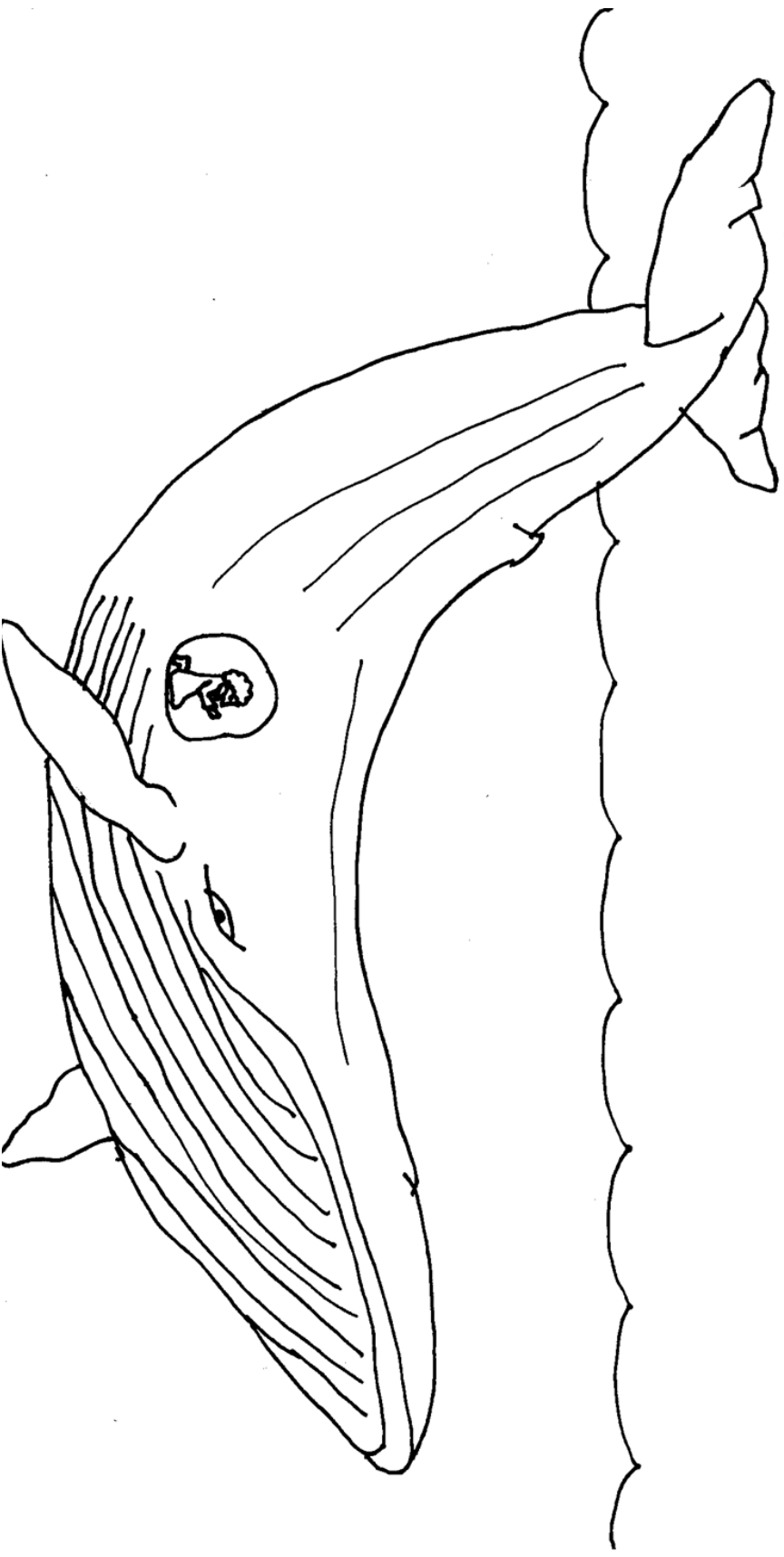
Paper cup whale

Closing Activity:

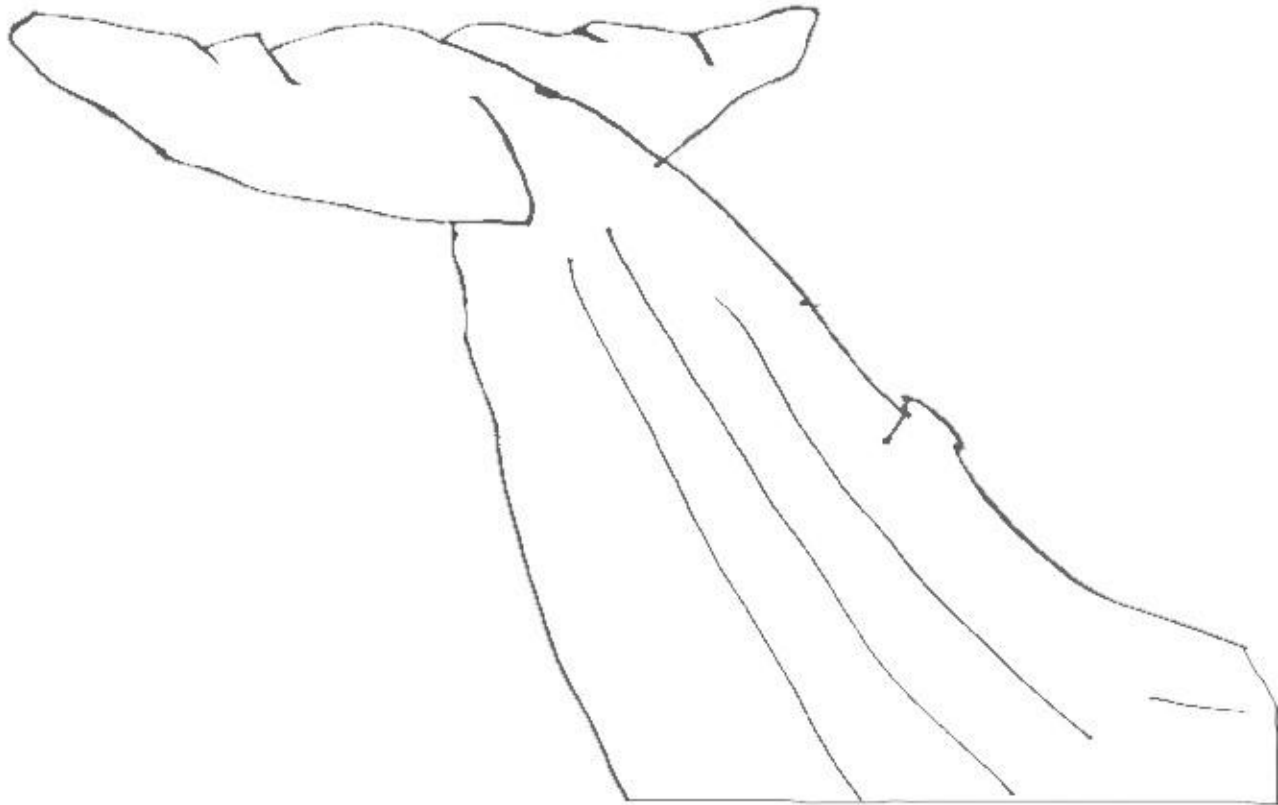
Pass around sardines for students to smell. Imagine smelling that (and worse!) in the belly of the whale for three days.

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



- ❖ Children color and cut 2 Jonahs and whale tale.
- ❖ Teacher helps tape tail to cup and hole punches cup and Jonah to attach with string.
- ❖ Tape two Jonahs back-to-back with the paper in between to give him more weight.
- ❖ Children try to flip Jonah into the whale.

