

Upper Elementary

Jonah

All scripture quotations are taken from the World English Bible, 2020.

Checklist

☐ masking tape

☐ cones

Topic:	Jonah
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?
2 Kings 14: 23-25	In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria for forty-one years. He did that which was evil in Yahweh's sight. He didn't depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, with which he made Israel to sin. He restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the sea of the Arabah, according to Yahweh, the God of Israel's word, which He spoke by his servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was from Gath Hepher.
	Jeroboam II was king of the northern Kingdom of Israel. He was very successful on the outside, returning Israel to the size it had been during the days of King Solomon. But the prophets Amos and Hosea both criticized the moral and spiritual decline that happened during his time. Jonah, like Jeroboam, seems focused on Israel's military success, and pays little attention to the moral problems happening in the country.



Jonah



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



2 Kings 14: 23-25

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Jeroboam II had the longest reign of any king in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Inscribed potsherds and seals from Samaria and Megiddo found in the early 1900s confirm his reign.



Guillaume Rouille, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Jonah 1:1-3	Now Yahweh's word came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me." But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of Yahweh. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid its fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of Yahweh.
	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?
map & picture of Strait of Gibraltar	Many Bible scholars think that Tarshish was the same port now 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," the farthest west you could travel. 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 (which was east of Israel) 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 1:4-6	But Yahweh sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty storm on the sea, so that the ship was likely to break up. Then the mariners were afraid, and every man cried to his god. They threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone down into the innermost parts of the ship and he was laying down, and was fast asleep. So the ship master came to him, and said to him, "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God! Maybe your God will notice us, so that we won't perish."



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2



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

CIA, Peter Littmann at German Wikipedia, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons





Jonah 1:4-6

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	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 they were mad at. They cast lots, which is like drawing straws (or playing "Eenie-meenie-minie-mo"). God made the lot fall to Jonah.
Jonah 1:9-10	He said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear Yahweh, the God of heaven, who has made the sea and the dry land." Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, "What have you done?" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of Yahweh, because he had told them.
	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. (Have children name different things there could be false gods for, to illustrate how ridiculous this is: ie; a god of sneakers, a god of tic-tac-toe, etc.). If someone asked you which God you believe in, how would you answer?



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."

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



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Jonah 1:9-10

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If someone asked me what God I believe in, I would respond:

Jonah 1:11-16	Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you, that the sea may be calm to us?" For the sea grew more and more stormy. He said to them, "Take me up, and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will be calm for you; for I know that because of me this great storm is on you." Nevertheless the men rowed hard to get them back to the land; but they could not, for the sea grew more and more stormy against them. Therefore they cried to Yahweh, and said, "We beg you, Yahweh, we beg you, don't let us die for this man's life, and don't lay on us innocent blood; for you, Yahweh, have done as it pleased you." So they took up Jonah and threw him into the sea; and the sea ceased its raging. Then the men feared Yahweh exceedingly; and they offered a sacrifice to Yahweh and made vows.
	Why do you think Jonah told them to throw him overboard? (he felt guilty, he knew that God was only after him) Did the sailors want to do this? Did the sailors recognize the Lord as the true God? 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." The sailors were so terrified that they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made all kinds of promises.)



Jonah 1:11-16

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Jonah runs from God	→	God sent a storm
Sailors prayed to their 'gods'	→	The storm continued
Jonah was thrown overboard	→	The storm stopped

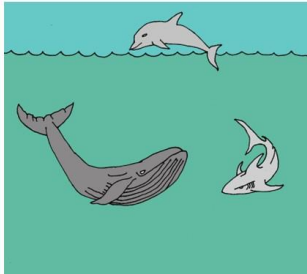
Jonah 1:17-2:4	Yahweh prepared a huge fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Then Jonah prayed to Yahweh, his God, out of the fish's belly. He said, "I called because of my affliction to Yahweh. He answered me. Out of the belly of Sheol, I cried. You heard my voice. For You threw me into the depths, in the heart of the seas. The flood was all around me. All Your waves and Your billows passed over me. I said, 'I have been banished from Your sight; yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.'"
whale picture	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.



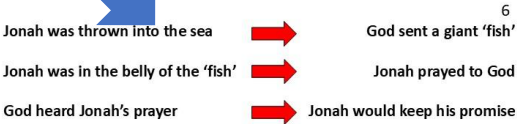
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Animal categories in Bible times were different from the ones we have today. Animals were grouped by where they lived, not how they breathed. Most animals that swam in the sea were called fish, including whales, and sharks. Because of this, we do not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



	Jonah prayed to God and acknowledged what He had done for him. Being thrown overboard during a storm would normally be guaranteed death. But God rescued Jonah through a supernatural miracle. Jonah remembered that the sailors' prayers to their idols did nothing to calm the storm. Only when Jonah surrendered himself to God's will was everyone shown mercy. Jonah agreed to keep his promise to God and obey Him.
Jonah 2:10-3:3	Then Yahweh spoke to the fish, and it vomited out Jonah on the dry land. Yahweh's word came to Jonah the second time, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I give you." So Jonah arose, and went to Nineveh, according to Yahweh's word. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey across.
	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?



HOLY BIBLE

Jonah 2:10-3:3

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i Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire in Bible times. Now, it is called Mosul, and is an important city in Iraq.



Jonah 3:10-4:4

God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way. God relented of the disaster which He said He would do to them, and He didn't do it. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. He prayed to Yahweh, and said, "Please, Yahweh, wasn't this what I said when I was still in my own country? Therefore I hurried to flee to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness, and You relent of doing harm. Therefore now, Yahweh, take, I beg you, my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." Yahweh said, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

The Assyrians were the Israelites' enemies. Jonah must have wanted them to be punished by God. Now he is wondering why he even bothered obeying God when he didn't even get rewarded by being able to see his enemies destroyed. God is merciful. That's why He sent Jonah to warn the people of Nineveh. When God saw that they were truly sorry, He chose not to give them the punishment He had planned. God doesn't want to punish us. That's why He sent Jesus to die for the sins of the whole world.

Jonah 4:5-8

Then Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city, and there made himself a booth and sat under it in the shade, until he might see what would become of the city. Yahweh God prepared a vine and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the vine. But God prepared a worm at dawn the next day, and it chewed on the vine so that it withered. When the sun arose, God prepared a sultry east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he was faint and requested for himself that he might die. He said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

Did you ever tell your parents on your brother or sister, or your teacher on a classmate? Were you hoping they would get in trouble? Obviously, sometimes a parent or teacher needs to know about something done wrong, but if you are going to tell on someone just to get them in trouble, it's called tattling. What are some things you could do instead? (warn your friend/sibling they will get in trouble or about the natural consequences of what they are doing, explain why they shouldn't do what they are doing, encourage them to do something positive instead) When we want to see others get punished for the things they have done wrong, it can help to



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Highlight the words above that describe what God is like.

What was Jonah like?



Jonah 4:5-8

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Jonah
4:9-11

God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the vine?" He said, "I am right to be angry, even to death." Yahweh said, "You have been concerned for the vine, for which you have not labored, neither made it grow; which came up in a night and perished in a night. Shouldn't I be concerned for Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred twenty thousand persons who can't discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also many animals?"

Have you ever gotten really upset over something very little (missing a turn at something fun, having to wait for a younger sibling, having to do chores instead of playing)? When you look back on it, was it really worth getting so upset? God used the vine to show Jonah how mixed up his priorities were. God thought about the people, and even the animals in Nineveh. But Jonah just thought about himself. God is gracious and loving, full of mercy and slow to anger. He does not want to bring judgment on evil people. Throughout the book of Jonah, we see examples of the grace and compassion of God. He spared the sailors when they pleaded for mercy. God saved Jonah when he prayed from the belly of the fish. And, He saved the people of Nineveh when they responded to Jonah's preaching. God always answers the prayers of those who call on Him. He extends His mercy and grace to all people.

Closing:

Put tape on the floor about 6 feet apart. Divide children into pairs and have them separate and form lines behind each line. Have one of each pair stand on the tape and instruct them to carefully roll the cone to their partner. They may not move their bodies or move their arms past the line. Because the cone is not flat or even, it will just roll in a circle and can't travel to their partner. Explain that when we take matters into our own hands like Jonah did, no amount of effort will give us the results we want. Like the cones, our attempts will just come back toward us.



Jonah 4:9-11

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Shown
Mercy

Didn't Show
Mercy

God spared the sailors when they prayed

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God rescued Jonah from drowning

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God rescued Jonah from being digested

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God saved the people of Nineveh

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☐

God cared about the animals

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God made a vine grow up over Jonah

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Jonah wanted to see the Ninevites punished

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Who was the hero of the story? _____

Start



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



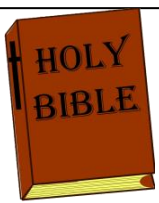
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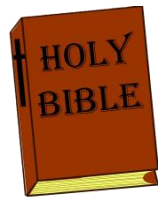


Jonah sailed for a port in Spain called Tarshish. It is believed to be the place that is now called the Strait of Gibraltar. From there, you can see across the water to Africa.

The Mediterranean Basin



CIA.Peter Littmann at German Wikipedia, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



Jonah 1:4-6

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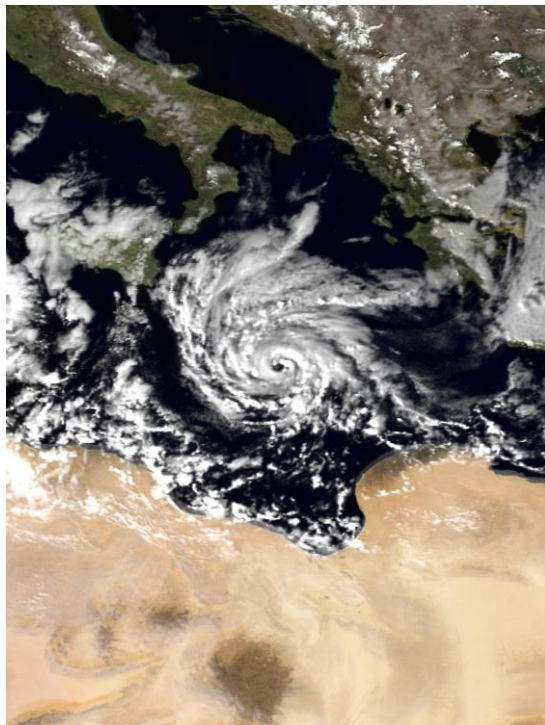
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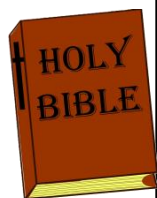
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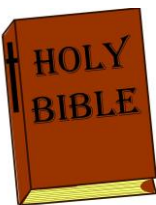
The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



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If someone asked me what God I believe in, I would respond:



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Jonah runs from God



God sent a storm

Sailors prayed to their ‘gods’

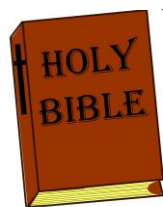


The storm continued

Jonah was thrown overboard



The storm stopped

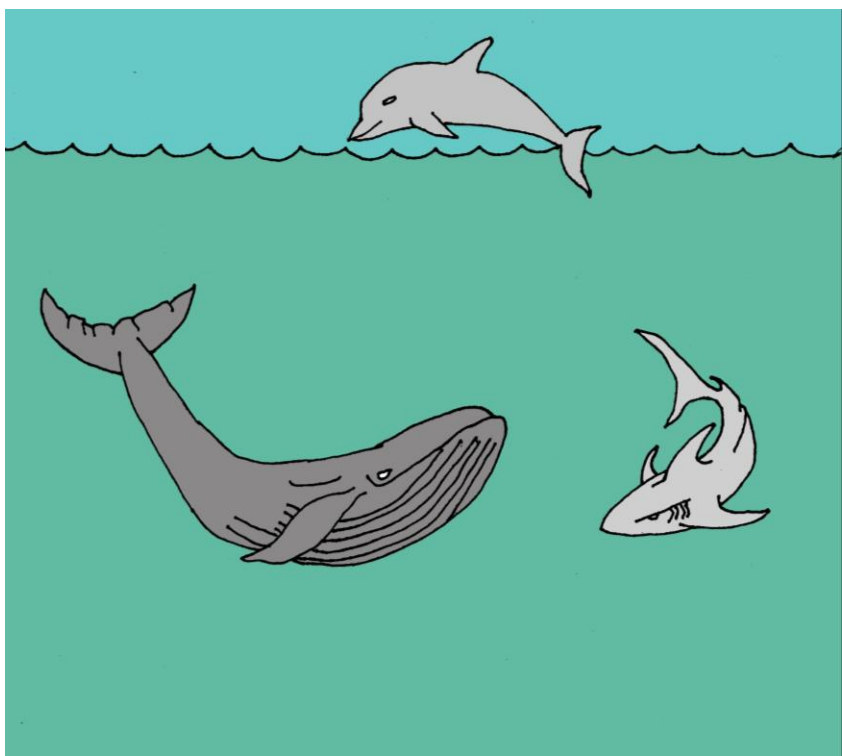


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Jonah was thrown into the sea



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

HOLY BIBLE

Jonah 2:10-3:3

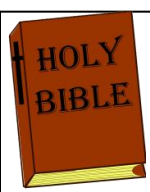
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Russell & Struthers Engravers, New York, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

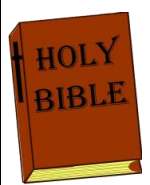


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Showed Mercy	Didn't Show Mercy
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God saved the people of Nineveh

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God cared about the animals

☐
☐

God made a vine grow up over Jonah

☐
☐

Jonah wanted to see the Ninevites punished

☐
☐

Who was the hero of the story? _____

Jonah



Name: _____

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