

Bible Story 23: JONAH REFUSING TO OBEY GOD

SCRIPTURE: JONAH 1:1-17; 2:1,9-10; 3:1-10

MEMORY VERSE: 2 JOHN 6

BIBLE STORY:

On a certain day, God spoke to an Israelite man called Jonah. He told him to go and preach to the people in the large city of Nineveh. This city was the capital of Assyria, Israel's enemy. Therefore, Jonah did not want to go and preach to his enemies. So he tried to run away from God, going in the opposite direction. When he arrived in Joppa, he entered a ship that was going to Tarshish (Spain).

Could Jonah flee from God? No! God sent a terrible storm and the ship was about to split apart. The sailors were very afraid. Thinking that the ship would be safer if it weighed less, they tossed their cargo overboard into the sea.

Where was Jonah? The captain of the ship found Jonah below deck, sleeping! He asked him, "*How can you be sleeping during this terrible storm?*" The sailors discovered that Jonah was the cause of the storm. He admitted that his God caused the storm because he (Jonah) was running away from God. Then Jonah told the sailors to throw him overboard and

the storm would stop. Finally, the sailors tossed Jonah into the stormy waters and everything became calm.

What had happened to Jonah? God had prepared a large fish who came and swallowed Jonah. For three days and three nights he stayed inside the fish. Jonah asked for God's help, saying that he was now willing to obey and go to Nineveh. Then God ordered the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto a beach.

God once again told Jonah to go preach to the people in Nineveh. Now Jonah obeyed God. When he arrived, the city was so large that it took Jonah three days to walk from one side to the other. He preached God's message. They must stop doing their evil, bad ways and follow God. If they did not do this, God would destroy the city. All the people listened, believed, and asked God for his forgiveness. God saw that they repented, turning away from their bad ways. They began to follow God. Therefore, God saved the city and did not destroy it.

LIFE LESSONS:

1. Jonah was disobedient to God. He did not go to Nineveh, but he went in the opposite direction. Because of this, he was inside a fish for three days. Obey God in order to avoid difficulties which result from bad choices.
2. The people in the city of Nineveh turned away from their bad ways, asked God for forgiveness and turned to follow God. Ask God for forgiveness for things that you have done wrong and seek to follow God with your life.
3. Jonah shared God's message with the people in Nineveh. Tell others that God loves them and invite them to go to church with you.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What did Jonah do when God told him to go to Nineveh? Why?
2. Was Jonah able to run away from God? What happened?
3. Can anyone run away from God? What are some ways that God uses to bring people back to serving him?
4. Where was Jonah during the storm? Who woke him up? Why did the sailors throw Jonah overboard? What happened when Jonah was in the stormy sea? What do you think it was like to be inside a large fish? How do you think Jonah felt? What did Jonah do when he was inside the fish?
5. How do you feel when you are doing something that God does not want you to do?
6. Did God listen to Jonah's prayer when he was inside the fish? What did God do? What did the fish do?
7. When someone is not obeying what God wants him to do, what should he do in order to serve God?
8. What happened when Jonah obeyed God and preached in Nineveh?
9. Should you share God's love to people you do not like? Why?
10. What are some ways that you can share God's love to family, friends and those around you?

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS BIBLE STORY:

Choose activities that may be used in your specific situation. Consider the age and maturity of each person, locality where the story will be told (customs and traditions), and available resources, time and space.

PRESENTATION:

- Ask: *"Have you ever tried to run away from home, work or school? How did you feel? What happened?"*
- Explain that the Bible story today is about a man who tried to run away from God and he suffered the consequences. Tell the Bible story.
- **Option:** Design an outline of a boat by placing masking tape on a floor, writing with chalk on a floor or drawing with a stick on dirt. Let each one sit inside the boat while you tell the story.
- If possible, talk about the Life Lessons and/or ask questions for discussion.

DRAMA:

- Retell the Bible story. Prepare a drama about Jonah. The different scenes should include:
 1. God calling Jonah to go to Nineveh. Jonah running away, going toward and entering a boat in Joppa.
 2. The terrible storm begins, the sailors are afraid but Jonah is sleeping below deck. They discover that God sent the storm because of Jonah's disobedience. Jonah is being thrown into the sea. A large fish is coming toward him.
 3. Jonah is swallowed by the large fish and stays inside it for three days and three nights. Jonah prays to God. Jonah prays to God and the fish vomits him onto the beach.
 4. God calls Jonah to go to Nineveh again. This time Jonah goes and preaches God's message. The people of Nineveh ask for God's forgiveness and turn to serving God. The city is saved.

MISSION ACTIVITY:

"REACHING OUT FOR THE LORD"

- Through words, actions or music, share your testimony.
- ...Help in a church, community center or in planting (beginning) a church.
- ...Help with Vacation Bible School, construction, food and clothing distribution, etc. Where? (In your area; another part of your country or another part of the world.)

GAME: "WATER, WATER!"

- Divide into two groups. Place a table or chair a distance in front of each group. On the table put plastic cups, containers of water and trash can.
- **Game:** Line up by groups. The first person in each group runs to the table/chair, gets a cup, drinks the water, throws the cup in the trash container, and returns to his group. When he touches the hand of the next person in the line, that person does the same thing: runs to the table/chair, gets a cup, drinks the water, throws the cup in the trash container and returns to "tag" the next person. Repeat the process until everyone in the group has played.

OUTING:

- Prepare an outing, such as:
 - ...Go on a picnic.
 - ...Go boat riding.
 - ...Go fishing.

Suggestion: Retell the Bible story of Jonah while on the outing.

DAILY BIBLE READING - Jonah 1:1-17; 2:1,9-10; 3:1-10

1 ST	2 ND	3 RD	4 TH	5 TH	6 TH	7 TH
Jonah 1:1-2	Jonah 1:3-5	Jonah 1:6-10	Jonah 1:11-16	Jonah 1:17; 2:1, 9-10	Jonah 3:1-4	Jonah 3:5-10