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The Story of Job

Scripture: Job 1:1-42:17

Theme: God is sovereign even in suffering

4th-6th Grade (Ages 9-11)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

Lesson Overview: Jonah and the Great Fish , God's Mercy for All This lesson explores how God's love and mercy extend beyond who we think deserves them, even to someone like Jonah, who ran away instead of helping. Jonah ran from his job (telling Nineveh to repent) because he was afraid of what might happen if the city turned back to God. But God didn't let Jonah's fear stop Him, He used a big fish to save Jonah's life and remind him that His mercy is for everyone! Even when people mess up, God wants them to turn back and find forgiveness. Key Points & Story: Jonah was a prophet, and God gave him a big task: tell the people of Nineveh (a scary, powerful city) that God was about to punish them for their sin. But Jonah was so mad that Nineveh's sinners would get a second chance! He ran to sea in a boat instead, and a storm chased him there. A great fish swallowed Jonah, and God used that fish to teach him a lesson, even Jonah couldn't escape God's mercy. After three days inside the fish, Jonah prayed for help, and God saved him! God's Mercy Works in Unexpected Ways: Jonah's story isn't just about a fish, it's about God's big heart for everyone, not just us. When we mess up or feel unworthy, God still loves us! Jonah was angry because he thought mercy should only go to "good" people, but God proved Himself faithful to him. This lesson is a reminder that God's mercy is for all people, even when they're far from Him. Personal Connection & Application: 1. Have you ever felt like God's mercy didn't apply to you? Jonah felt that way, he ran because he thought Nineveh didn't deserve a second chance. But God's mercy is for everyone, even when we're afraid or stubborn! 2. Think about someone you know who might not believe in God or doesn't turn to Him. How can you share God's love and mercy with them, like Jonah was supposed to with Nineveh? 3. Reflection Question: What's one way you've seen God's mercy in your life, even when you didn't deserve it? Encouragement for Teachers: This story is full of hope! It's okay to feel frustrated like Jonah did, God's mercy is powerful enough to change hearts, even when we're not perfect ourselves. End the lesson by praying together: "God, help us to trust Your mercy for all people, and to share Your love like You want us to!" Keep it interactive, maybe act out Jonah's runaway boat or draw a fish with the class! Bonus Tip: Play soft music or tell the story with dramatic pauses to make it engaging! Let kids discuss: "Who do you think God's mercy is for today?" (Hint: It's not just us!)

Bible Story

Sunday School Lesson: Jonah and the Great Fish , God's Mercy for Everyone (Based on Jonah 1, 4)

Once, the prophet Jonah had a job from God: tell the people of Nineveh, a big city far away, that they must repent (change their hearts and lives) or face judgment. But Jonah didn't want to go! He hated the Ninevites, he knew they were wicked, and he was afraid. Instead of obeying God, he ran away by ship in the opposite direction. One stormy night, the wind howled so loud that the sailors were terrified. As they panicked, they threw Jonah overboard, hoping to make the storm stop. But the waves calmed immediately! Whoa! The sailors asked, "What have you done?" Jonah admitted it was his fault. God sent a great fish to swallow him whole, that's what happened! For three days and nights, Jonah floated in the fish's belly, terrified but trusting God.

When Jonah finally agreed to go to Nineveh, the people listened! They cried, fasted, and begged God for forgiveness. The king even announced it: "Repent and turn from your evil ways!" God was so happy with their change of heart that He promised to spare the city. But Jonah was furious! He had just been saved by a fish, and now he saw others being forgiven too. He begged God to take his life instead of Nineveh. God gently explained, "I have mercy on those I choose, not because they deserve it, but because of my kindness." Jonah stormed off, made a plant to shade him (which died the next morning), and sulked. Meanwhile, God prepared a warm spot for Jonah to rest in the sun.

This story shows us that God's love isn't just for us, it's for everyone, even those we might think are "unworthy." Jonah was a prophet, but he didn't trust God's mercy for others, even when they were far from Him. Have you ever felt like God's love is too big for someone else? Or maybe you've felt God's mercy when you least deserved it? The Bible tells us that God's love is like a big, kind heart, it reaches everyone, even when we don't want it to. Just like Nineveh, we all have a chance to turn away from sin and find peace with God.

Deeper Questions: 1. Why did Jonah run away from his job? 2. How did the fish save Jonah, and what does that teach us about God's power? 3. Why did God forgive Nineveh even though they were sinners? What does this say about God's heart toward us?

Personal Application: God's mercy is like a warm hug, sometimes we don't want to receive it, but that's when we need it most. Have you ever felt like you didn't deserve God's love? Or maybe you've seen someone else get it, and it made you jealous? God wants us to trust that His love is always enough, no matter who we are or where we are in our lives. Today, ask God to help you trust Him with your heart, and with the hearts of others!

Why This Story Matters: Jonah's story reminds us that God's mercy isn't just for us, it's for everyone! No matter how far away we feel from God, or how bad our mistakes seem, He still loves us and wants us to come back. Just like Nineveh, we all have a chance to turn to Him. This lesson teaches us to trust God with our fears and with the lives of others, just as He calls us to do.

Key Verse

Job 1:21

Jonah's Big Praise (Jonah 2:9) In the middle of a big storm at sea, Jonah had been thrown overboard, he was so scared he almost quit. But deep down, even when things felt hopeless, Jonah remembered God was still with him. Instead of staying angry or giving up, he turned his heart toward thanks. His prayer wasn't just about getting out of trouble; it was about telling everyone, "The only real helper is the Lord!" Even when we're struggling, God wants us to shout praise, like Jonah did, to show our faith and trust in Him. Why Did Jonah Say This? Jonah knew that no matter how bad things looked, God could fix them. Sometimes, when we're upset or scared, we might want to ignore God or complain. But Jonah chose to be brave and say, "I won't stop believing in you!" His words were like a light in the dark, reminding others (and himself) that God never gives up on us. What happens when you feel like God isn't paying attention to your problems? When Was Jonah Praising God? Jonah wasn't praising God because he wanted to be saved, he was saved because he had to be! (He was in the ocean, not by choice!) But he chose to thank God anyway. That's kind of like how sometimes we feel like we don't have to pray, but God still

wants us to talk to Him. If you're struggling with something right now, how can you thank God even if you don't feel happy? A Praise That Goes Beyond the Storm Jonah's prayer was so powerful because he wasn't just saying words, he meant them! He promised to give God thanks, and that meant doing things to show it: sharing God's love, helping others, or even just smiling when you feel tired. Praise isn't just singing loud, it's making your whole life a little brighter for God. The next time you're upset, ask: How can I thank God with my actions today? Your Turn to Praise! God doesn't want you to wait until you feel perfect to praise Him. That's like waiting to eat your favorite food until you're hungry really hungry, it's the best time to enjoy it! Jonah's story shows that even in chaos, we can choose to trust God and shout our thanks. So next time things feel rough, try saying: "Salvation comes from the Lord!" Not because you have to, but because you can, and God will love that you did! What's one small way you can thank God today?

Activities

Activity 1:

1. Prepare the Scene (3 min):
2. Read Jonah 3:8, 10 aloud: "The king announced a day of fasting and prayer, and everyone confessed, 'God is just; he will save everyone from this great disaster.'" Ask: If you were a Ninevite, would you have believed Jonah? Why or why not?
3. Write the answer on the board. Discuss how God's mercy surprised them!
4. Act It Out (5 min):
5. Divide students into two groups: Jonah's crew (1, 2 students) and Ninevites (4, 6 students). Give the Ninevites white paper bags to wear as "heads" (symbolizing blind faith). The crew warns the Ninevites about the coming flood, and the Ninevites argue back. End by saying, "What if God sent Jonah back to Nineveh to tell them mercy was still possible?"
6. Debate Mercy (3 min):
7. Assign each Ninevite an "objection" (e.g., "This is our home! Why help others?"). Have them shout their reasons. Then, ask: How did Jonah feel when God changed his mind? Why do you think God chose mercy instead of punishment?
8. Personal Application (4 min):
9. Each student writes on an index card: "One way I can share God's mercy today is..." (e.g., listening to someone struggling, forgiving a sibling, or praying for a friend). Pair up to share their cards and discuss.

Activity 2:

1. Read the Story (3 min):
2. Recap Jonah 1, 2: God called Jonah to Nineveh, but he ran away. The fish swallowed him, and he prayed. God saved him. Ask: What was Jonah's biggest struggle? How did God's love change his heart?
3. Create the Fishbowl Scene (5 min):
4. Place a fishbowl in the center. Each student draws a 2-inch square of paper to represent Jonah's heart. On it, they color:
5. Anger (red zigzags)
6. Fear (blue waves)
7. Hope (green light)
8. Label each emotion with Jonah's feelings from the story.
9. Glue & Add Ocean (4 min):
10. Glue the paper heart onto the fishbowl's base. Add blue paper for water, then a red "mercy light" (Jonah's prayer) on top. Ask: Why did the fish swallow Jonah? How does God's love "catch" our hearts even when we run away?
11. Reflect & Share (4 min):

12. Each student writes: "One time I ran from God, but He caught me. How?" (Example: "When I didn't want to share my toys, I felt angry, but now I know God wants me to be kind.") Pair up to share their stories.
13. Both activities connect to the lesson by using simple supplies, small groups, and discussion. The first emphasizes empathy, while the second helps students visualize God's love as transformative!

Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended discussion questions for upper elementary students (ages 9-11) about Jonah and the Great Fish, designed to explore the story, reflect on God's mercy, and tie it to their own lives:
- 1. Why do you think Jonah ran away from God at first?
- Jonah's story starts with something surprising: he refused to go on a trip God had asked him to take! Many of us have felt like Jonah, maybe we've been given a task (like helping someone, sharing our faith, or doing something kind) and hesitated, even avoided it. Why do you think Jonah ran? What might have made him feel scared, embarrassed, or angry? Have you ever felt the same way about something God asked you to do? How did you handle it? What could have helped you stay brave, like Jonah later did?
- (Deeper question: How does it change your heart when you realize God's plan is always good, even if it doesn't feel fair at first? Why might God have asked Jonah to go to Nineveh, what did He want to accomplish there?)
- 2. The fish saved Jonah's life! How does that make you think about God's protection?
- Jonah was in the ocean for three days and nights, and then... a giant fish swallowed him! At first, this seems like a random miracle, but it was God's way of showing Jonah something important: God is always there to rescue you, even when you're far from Him. In the Bible, we learn that God's love isn't just for certain people, it's for everyone. Jonah didn't stay angry forever; he eventually prayed and begged God for forgiveness. Have you ever felt like you were "lost" or overwhelmed by a problem, and God used someone (or something) to help you? How did that make you feel about Him?
- (Personal application: Think of a time when you struggled, whether it was a big problem or just feeling tired or lonely. Did God help you in a way you didn't expect? How did that change you?)
- 3. Jonah spent three days in the fish's belly. What does that remind you about God's time with us?
- When Jonah was inside the fish, he didn't know when or how he'd be let out. It felt like he was trapped forever! But God never forgets us, even when we're struggling. Jonah later realized that God's plan for Nineveh (to show mercy to the people there) was bigger than just him, it was about all of them. Have you ever felt like you were waiting for something important to happen, and it seemed like time was slowing down? How did you wait? Did you trust that God was still working, even if you couldn't see it?
- (Deeper question: Why do you think Jonah was so angry at first? What does his story teach us about how we should respond when we feel like we've been forgotten by God? How can we be like Jonah in the end, ready to ask for forgiveness and do what God asks?)
- 4. God's mercy is for everyone, even the people Jonah was sent to help!
- Jonah was told to go to Nineveh, which was a city with many people, including those who weren't nice or kind. Yet God's mercy was so big that even if Jonah hadn't gone, the people of Nineveh would have repented (turned back to God) because God's love was too strong! Today, God's mercy is available to everyone, whether we're kind or not, rich or poor, brave or scared. Jonah later realized that God's love didn't depend on how good he was; it was always there, waiting for him to trust. Have you ever felt like God's love was for someone else, but not for you? Why do you think God's love is like that, so big and free for everyone?
- (Personal connection: If God's mercy is for everyone, how should that change how you treat others? Who in your life needs God's mercy right now? How can you be a friend or a helper to someone who might feel lost or alone?)

- These questions encourage students to think deeply, share personal experiences, and reflect on how God's story applies to their lives. Would you like any of them adjusted for a specific focus (e.g., more art connections, group discussion prompts)?

Prayer Focus

Prayer Focus: "God's Kindness Never Fades" Dear God, We come to You today like Jonah, some of us feeling angry, some of us scared, and others just wondering how You work in big stories. Jonah ran away from You because he thought he had to stay in his own comfort, but You chased after him anyway. You wanted to show people mercy, even when they weren't kind to others. So today, we ask You to help us be like You, slowing down when we're in a hurry, speaking up when someone is hurt, and remembering that You love everyone, no matter what. Help us trust You, even when it's hard, because You're always faithful. Thank You for making a way out of a big, dark situation (like Jonah's ship or the fish!) just like You made a way for us when we needed it. Amen. Why This Works for Upper Elementary: 1. Connects to Jonah's Story , Kids notice Jonah's disobedience but also see God's relentless love (e.g., the fish, the gourd, the second chance). The prayer ties his mistakes to God's mercy. 2. Personal Application , Questions like "When have you felt like Jonah ran from God? What did You teach you about trust?" let kids reflect with the class, not just listen. 3. Emotional Anchor , Anger, fear, and curiosity (e.g., "How did God show mercy to the Ninevites?") are natural for ages 9, 11. Invite them to share: "What's one way you want to show mercy today?" 4. Community Focus , Ends with a group promise (e.g., "Will we pray for someone who's hurting today?") to bridge prayer and action. Class Prayer Adaptation (Teacher Lead): "God, You're like a big fish that swallowed Jonah when he ran from You. But You didn't stop, You showed Your power in the deep, and You sent him back with a mission. Today, help us listen to Your voice even when we don't want to obey. When we're like Jonah, scared or stubborn, teach us to trust You, just like You trusted us with the story of Your love. And when someone else is in trouble, help us be like the fish that brought Jonah back safe. Amen." Tip: End with a scripture read aloud (e.g., Jonah 2:9, "I called out to the Lord, and He answered me!") and ask: "What does this verse say about God's kindness?" to spark discussion.

>> Missions Spotlight

Among the Tuareg people of the Sahara Desert, who are almost entirely Muslim, there is a deep sense of tribal identity. Jonah's story challenges the idea that God's mercy is only for 'our group', it's for every tribe, tongue, and nation.

-> To the Cross

Jonah ran from God's call to preach to Nineveh, a city he hated. But God's mercy reached even the worst of sinners. Jesus said, 'As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth' (Matthew 12:40).