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Jonah and the Great Fish

Scripture: Jonah 1:1-4:11

Theme: You cannot run from God's call

1st-3rd Grade (Ages 6-8)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

Lesson Overview: Hosea and Gomer , God's Unfailing Love (Based on Hosea 1, 3) Introduction (5 min): Start by asking kids: "Have you ever had someone say they'd always love you, even when you made mistakes? How did that make you feel?" Explain that God made a big promise to His people, Israel, through a man named Hosea. Though they often turned away from Him, God still loved them, just like a parent might forgive a child who messed up. Share a simple story: Imagine you have a favorite toy, and even when you lose it or break it, your parent still wants to play with you. God is like that, always ready to love us! The Lesson (10 min): Hosea married a woman named Gomer, who didn't love him well. In Hosea 1, she even left him, just like Israel sometimes left God! But Hosea didn't give up; he loved her anyway. In Hosea 2, God told Hosea to marry Gomer again to show Israel how God loves them even when they stray. God even called Israel "my wife" (Hosea 2:19) because He wants a relationship with them! In Hosea 3, Hosea bought Gomer back, showing how God buys us back when we sin (like a broken toy that gets repaired). Application: When we mess up, God doesn't give up on us. He forgives us and loves us like a parent who says, "I'll always be here for you." Closing & Discussion (5 min): End with a short prayer: "Dear God, thank You for loving us even when we're not perfect. Help us to trust You and love others like You love us." Ask: "What's one way you can show someone today that God loves them?" Share a heartwarming example, like bringing a snack to a friend who's sad, or encourage them to draw a heart for their neighbor! End by repeating: "No matter what, God's love is unbreakable!" (Use a simple hand motion to show a heart opening and closing gently.)

Bible Story

Hosea and Gomer: God's Unfailing Love

Long ago, in the Bible, there was a man named Hosea. God asked Hosea to do something unusual: He wanted him to marry a woman named Gomer. Gomer was not kind, she was unfaithful, just like the people of God's time. She didn't

always love and obey Him, and she even left her family to go live with other people. God wanted Hosea to show what it means for Him to love people even when they turn away. So Hosea married Gomer anyway, even though she didn't deserve it.

Just like Gomer, the people of God's time often turned away from Him. They didn't always listen to Him, and they sometimes forgot to love others the way He wanted. But God still loved them deeply. Through Hosea, God showed how He would never stop loving, even when people strayed. He wanted them to know that even if they made mistakes, His love was always there.

After a while, Gomer left Hosea and went back to live with other people. Hosea loved her so much that he went to find her. He got her back, just like God comes back to us when we stray away from Him. Even when we make choices that aren't kind or follow His rules, God still loves us. He wants us to know that He will always forgive us and welcome us back.

This story teaches us that God's love is like a strong, unshakable promise. Just as Hosea kept loving Gomer even when she was unkind, God keeps loving us even when we are silly or choose to turn away. When we feel lost or confused, we can remember that God is always there, waiting to forgive us and help us grow closer to Him.

God's love in this story reminds us that we are never too far from Him. No matter what happens, He wants us to know that He loves us and wants to be our friend forever. That's why we can trust Him, just like Hosea trusted God's plan.

Key Verse

Jonah 2:9

Here's a simple and heartfelt explanation of Hosea 2:14 for young children (ages 6, 8): God Loves Us Like a Mother! Imagine a mom holding her baby close, giving extra love when the baby feels sad or scared. That's how God feels about us! In this verse, Hosea is telling us that God isn't just angry, He's full of kindness. When someone hurts us or doesn't behave well, God doesn't stay far away. Instead, He comes to comfort us, just like a good parent would. God Takes Us Away from Harm Sometimes, when we're in trouble, our mom or dad might take us to a safe place to rest. God does the same for us! He leads us to a quiet, peaceful place, like a cozy bed or a special spot where we can feel safe and loved. Just like how a mom leads her child to a warm hug, God brings us to His love to help us feel cared for. God Speaks Kind Words to Us When we're sad or feel lost, God doesn't just let us sit quietly, He talks to us gently! He tells us we're special, that He sees us, and that He's always there to help. Think of how you might tell a friend, "I believe in you, and I'm here to help!" God does the same, just with even more love. What Can We Do? The next time you feel sad or scared, remember: God is always reaching out to you with love! You can pray, "Thank You, God, for loving me like a mother," and imagine how good it feels to be held in His arms. When someone hurts you, you can also tell God, "I'm sorry," and He'll listen with kindness. This keeps it warm, relatable, and easy to understand while still giving the heart of the verse! Would you like any adjustments?

Activities

Activity 1:

Kids create a collage showing Hosea's love for Gomer, even after Gomer's mistakes, using paper, glue, and Bibles to remind them God's love never fails!

1. Write Your Feelings: Ask students to think of someone who makes them feel sad or angry (e.g., a sibling, friend, or family member). Have them write or draw what they feel inside on their card.
2. Read God's Love: Share a short Bible verse from Hosea (e.g., "Even though I love you, you still turn away from me", Hosea 2:2) and ask: "What does this show us about God's love?" Let them write a short sentence about God's unchanging love.
3. Exchange and Reflect: Pair students with a partner. One writes their sad feelings, then the other writes a kind reply like Hosea did (e.g., "God loves you even when you're not nice").

4. Share & Close: Have each pair share one line from their letter aloud. End with prayer, asking God to help them love others with kindness, just like He does.
2. "Gomer's Heart: A Love Story Collage"
6. Draw a Circle: Have each child draw a big circle in the center of their paper to represent Gomer's heart. Write "Gomer's Heart" on the circle with a crayon.
7. Add Mistakes: Inside the circle, draw or glue pictures of things Gomer did wrong (e.g., a broken heart, a crossed-out letter). Say: "Gomer wasn't perfect, but Hosea still loved him!"
8. Show God's Love: Outside the circle, glue or draw things that show God's love, like a rainbow (Hosea 2:14), a heart, or a hug. Add Bible words like "Love never ends" (1 Corinthians 13:8).
9. Connect the Story: Read Hosea 2:14, 16 ("I will love her... and call her my wife"). Ask: "How did Hosea show Gomer he'd always love her?" Let them add details to their collage.
10. Display & Discuss: Hang up the collages. Ask: "How can we show God's love to people who don't deserve it?" Pray together.
11. Why These Work:
12. Both activities use simple supplies and Bible-based prompts.
13. They teach application (e.g., writing letters, showing kindness).
14. Short (10, 15 mins) and interactive, perfect for a group of 3, 10 kids!
15. Would you like any adjustments to fit a specific theme or Bible passage deeper?

Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended discussion questions for early elementary children (ages 6, 8) based on Hosea and Gomer and God's unfailing love:
- What happened in the Bible story with Hosea and Gomer?
- Think about what Hosea did that was different from other people. Why do you think he chose to love Gomer even though she was unkind to him? How can you show love to someone who might not treat you well?
- God loves us even when we make mistakes, just like Hosea loved Gomer even when she was unkind to him. How can you be kind to someone who hurts you first? What does it feel like to be loved when you don't deserve it?
- Hosea had to work really hard to love Gomer. What does that tell us about God's love for us? God doesn't stop loving us even when we forget to love Him back. Can you think of a time when someone showed you kindness when you didn't deserve it? How did that make you feel?
- God's love is like a big, strong hug, always there even when things get hard. How can you tell someone else about God's love, like Hosea told Gomer? What would make someone feel safe to share their heart with you?
- These questions encourage kids to reflect on kindness, forgiveness, and love while connecting it to their daily lives. Would you like any adjustments to match a specific lesson focus?

Prayer Focus

Here's a simple yet meaningful prayer for your young students, drawing on the story of Hosea and Gomer to remind them of God's love: "Dear God, You are like a father who loves his children even when they stray. Hosea loved his wife, Gomer, even when she forgot her promises, just like You love us when we forget to trust You. You always keep Your promises, even when we don't do what's right. Help us to remember that You never give up on us, just like Hosea never gave up on his love. Teach us to trust You, to follow Your ways, and to love others as You love us. Amen." How to Use This with the Class: - Pair with a storytime: After reading Hosea's story (Hosea 1-3), ask children to think about times they've felt loved even when they messed up, like Hosea loving Gomer. - Simple action: Have kids draw a heart and write/dictate one way they've been forgiven by someone (or by God!) to

reinforce the lesson. - Reflection: Ask, "How can we show love like God today?" to tie it to real life. This prayer keeps it heartfelt, age-appropriate, and rooted in the Bible's big idea: God's love never ends!

>> Missions Spotlight

Among the Fulani women of West Africa, who often face abandonment and betrayal, Hosea's story speaks powerfully. Missionaries share that God's love is not like human love, it never gives up, even when we are unfaithful.

-> To the Cross

God told Hosea to marry an unfaithful wife to show Israel how their sin hurt God. Yet God kept loving them. This is the Gospel in picture form: we are unfaithful, but God's love never quits. Jesus died for us 'while we were still sinners' (Romans 5:8).