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# Jonah and the Great Fish

*Scripture: Jonah 1:1-4:11*

**Theme: You cannot run from God's call**

*Nursery (Ages 0-2)*

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Free curriculum for small and rural churches

## Lesson Overview

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"God's Love Is Always Here!" "God loves you so much, like a hug, like sunshine, like a safe place!" "Even when we don't do things perfectly, God always loves us back!" "This is His big, kind heart!"

## Bible Story

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"God Loves Us Always"

God loved His people very much. They sometimes forgot to love Him back. One man named Hosea loved his wife, Gomer, but she was not kind to him. Still, God told Hosea to love her again, just like God loves us.

Hosea took Gomer back, even though she didn't deserve it. Just like God takes us back when we are unkind. "God loves you," Hosea said over and over.

One day, Gomer was sad and left. But God waited for her to come back. He still loved her, just like He loves you!

God gave us a big sign: Love always, even when you are not kind. That's why Jesus came, to show us God's love forever!

Why this matters: God's love never ends, no matter what. He always waits to hold you, just like He held Hosea.

## Key Verse

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### Jonah 2:9

"God loves you so much!" "He hugs you and talks to you gently, just like a big, kind friend!" "God says: 'I'm here, my child, and I love you so very much!'"

## Activities

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### Activity 1:

Draw a simple tree to show God's love grows like Hosea's love for Gomer, even when she sinned.

1. Give a hug! Hold each child gently and say, "God loves you like this hug, forever!" (Repeat "God loves you!" 3x.)
2. Let them color their hug strips red/yellow (like God's love) while you read Hosea 3:1, 2 aloud: "Let her [Gomer] eat and put on beauty, and marry, and become my lover" (simplified).
3. Tie a clothespin to the strip as a reminder: "God's love won't stop, even when things feel messy!"
4. Play "Love Like God" music softly while they fold their hugs into prayer hands.
2. "Love Tree Painting" (Art & Scripture Memory)
6. Paint the tree trunk red (God's love) while saying: "God's love is like a tree, strong and steady!" (Repeat "Love never ends!")
7. Draw leaves in green/blue and let kids glue them. Ask: "How can we show love like God?"
8. Cut 3, 5 leaves into strips; glue them on branches. Write: "Gomer sinned (like we do), but God loves us still!" (Use Hosea 1:6 simplified).
9. Decorate the roots with crayons: "God's love grows even in hard times!"
10. Key for Teacher: Use repetition (e.g., "God loves you!") and simple actions (hugs, painting) to connect to Scripture. For Hosea's story, focus on God's choice to love despite Gomer's choices, show with hugs, trees, and hugs again!

## Discussion Questions

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- Here are four simple open-ended questions to help babies and toddlers explore God's love from the Hosea and Gomer story:
- "God loves you like a big hug! What is something God made that feels like a hug?" (Let them point to their hands, arms, or a toy.)
- "Hosea's love was always there, even when Gomer was upset. Who loves you when you feel sad or happy?" (Encourage them to name someone safe, like a parent or grandma.)
- "God says, 'I will never leave you.' What is something God gives you every day?" (Let them share food, a toy, or a pet.)
- "When you are quiet or shy, God is still with you. Where do you feel God's love today?" (Ask them to point to their heart or chest.)

## Prayer Focus

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*"Dear God, you are so good to us. You love us, even when we are small and silly. Be our safe and loving Father always." (Repeat: "God loves us so much!") Or shorter: "God is kind and always holds us. He loves us like sunshine and rain. Thank You, Father!" (Repeat: "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).