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Jonah and the Great Fish

Scripture: Jonah 1:1-4:11

Theme: You cannot run from God's call

PreK-K (Ages 3-5)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

Lesson Overview: "God's Love Like a Hosea's Heart" Dear children, today we're going to learn about a special story from the Bible where God shows us how much He loves us, even when we are a little bit messy, just like you sometimes are! Imagine God is like a big, kind heart that never gets tired of loving us. In this story, a man named Hosea loved his wife, Gomer, even when she didn't love him back the way he wanted. But God's love is like that, always true, always waiting for us to return to Him! Even when we forget or stray a little, God reaches out with a hug and says, "I still love you!" Let's talk about how God's love is like a big, warm hug or a cozy blanket. Just like Gomer might have grown sad or confused when Hosea wasn't loving her back the way she wanted, we sometimes feel a little lost when we do things we know aren't kind. But remember: God doesn't get mad forever, He always forgives and says, "You're my precious child, and I love you!" We can even pretend to be Gomer sometimes, just to feel how hard it might be to trust someone who loves us so much. Wouldn't it be wonderful to always turn back to God, like a little bird flying home to its nest? God's love isn't just for Gomer or for us, it's for everyone! Just like Hosea loved Gomer even when she wasn't kind, God loves you every single day. He makes sure you're safe, happy, and loved, no matter what. You can share this wonderful truth with your friends and tell them, "God loves us so much that He won't give up on us!" Maybe we can even draw or sing a little song to remember that our God is always there, waiting to hold our hands and show us how much He cares. Now, let's take a deep breath together and wonder: What does God's love feel like? (Pause for responses.) It's like sunshine after rain, like a hug from a best friend, or like a home we can always run back to. And just like Hosea, God's love never ends, it's for you today, tomorrow, and forever! Let's give a big round of applause to show how much we love God's unfailing love!

Bible Story

Hosea's Love Story

Once, God asked Hosea to do a very unusual thing: He told Hosea to marry a woman named Gomer. Gomer was not kind, she didn't love him the way he loved her. She left him many times, just like a lost friend who wanders away. But Hosea knew God's heart was big and kind, so he kept loving Gomer even when she didn't love him back.

One day, Gomer ran away again, and Hosea searched everywhere for her. When he found her, he took her home with hugs and kisses, just like before. God wanted to show everyone that even when people don't love us, He always loves us, always! And that love is so strong, it never gives up.

Hosea also had children with Gomer, two boys and a girl, but when they grew older, God told him to take a third girl named Lo-Ruhama (which means "not loved"). Then Hosea took her, kissed her, and called her Lo-Ammi (which means "not my people"). This time, Gomer had stayed away, and Hosea still loved her deeply, even though she had turned her back.

God wanted to teach us that He loves us so much, even when we wander away, even when we forget Him, even when we don't love Him back. His love is like a big, strong hug that never ends!

Why This Story Matters God's love is like a never-ending hug. Even when we make mistakes or feel lost, He always chooses to love us first. Just like Hosea kept loving Gomer, God keeps loving us, forever! That's why we can trust Him and trust that He's always with us.

Key Verse

Jonah 2:9

Oh, this verse is full of sweet love and gentle whispers! Here's how you can share it with little ones: God is like a kind and patient friend who cares so much for you. He doesn't shout or get angry, He reaches out to love you with soft words, just like a hug. Imagine God holding your hand and saying, "Let's go on a little adventure together!" That's what this verse tells us, God wants to show us His love in the best way, like a gentle, happy surprise! In the Bible, God calls people back to Himself with kindness, like a mother coaxing her baby. The verse says, "I will lead her into the wilderness," which might sound far away, but think of it like God taking you to a cozy, sunny place where He wants to play and talk. And guess what? He'll speak to you like you're listening to your favorite song! God's love isn't just loud; it's sweet and warm. Just like a gentle breeze or a soft lullaby, it makes us feel safe and happy. When you feel sad or scared, remember: God is always there, whispering, "I love you. Let's walk together!" And isn't that the most wonderful thing in the whole world? You can repeat "God loves you so much!" or "He speaks tenderly to you!" to help little ones remember how amazing His love feels!

Activities

Activity 1:

1. Read the Story Together
2. Hold up a heart and say: "God loves us even when we are messy or sad. Hosea loved Gomer even when she was unkind. Let's hear the story!" Read Hosea 1:2-3 aloud, focusing on words like "love" and "heart." Pause to ask: "How do you think God feels about you?"
3. Act It Out (Circle Time)
4. Gather kids in a circle. Give each child a small toy or figure to hold. Say:
5. "Hosea said, 'Love is patient and kind...' Like a loving heart! Now, pretend you're Hosea. When Gomer was mean, what would you do? Show your heart for her!" Let them act out Hosea's love (e.g., hugging, sharing, saying "I love you!").
6. Decorate the Heart
7. Give each child a heart to color. Say: "This heart is for God's love. Color it bright because He loves you always, like rain on dry earth!" Let them glue on simple decorations (stickers, paper flowers).
8. Close with Prayer

9. Hold up the hearts: "Dear God, thank You for a heart that loves us. Help us love like You do!"

Activity 2:

1. Talk About Rainbows
2. Hold up a rainbow drawing: "Rainbows show colors that stay the same, red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet! God's love is like that. Even when we make mistakes, He loves us always!" Read Hosea 1:2-3, emphasizing "even when we are unfaithful."
3. Cut and Glue the Rainbow
4. Show each child a paper strip. Say: "Like God's rainbow, our love for Him is always there! Cut a rainbow and glue it to your paper. Add one color for each verse you heard." Let them decorate the "LOVE" in the middle with stickers or crayons.
5. Observe God's Unchanging Love
6. Place the completed rainbows on a table. Say: "See how the colors stay the same? God's love never changes, just like this rainbow! Now, point to one color and say, 'God loves me like this color!'"
7. Sing or Whisper a Prayer
8. Sing "God Loves Us Always" (simple tune: "God loves us always, through rain or shine...").
9. End with: "God's love is like a rainbow, bright, steady, and full of joy!"
10. Why These Work:
11. Repetition: Uses heart/rainbow analogies for God's unchanging love.
12. Wonder: Asks "Why do you think God loves like this?" (e.g., "Because He made you!").
13. Movement: Acting out and coloring keep little hands and minds engaged!

Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended questions to spark wonder and discussion about Hosea and Gomer and God's unfailing love for little ones (ages 3-5):
- Hosea loved his wife even though she didn't love him back, just like God loves us even when we forget or do wrong!
- What's something you love that doesn't always love you back? (Let them share or imagine, maybe a pet, a stuffed animal, or a friend.)
- How do you feel when someone loves you even when you're silly or need extra help?
- God made Hosea marry Gomer so he could show love again, even when she felt hurt.
- What's a time you felt sad or scared because someone stopped being kind to you?
- How could God's love be like a hug or a song to make you feel better?
- God's love is like a river that never stops flowing, even when we run dry!
- What's something in your life that never runs out, like water or a warm blanket? (Think of sunshine, hugs, or kind words.)
- If you had to tell one thing to someone who doesn't know how much they're loved, what would you say?
- Hosea and Gomer started over again, just like how God forgives us!
- What's one way you've been forgiven (by a grown-up or God) that you're glad for?
- If God could hug you right now and say, "I love you, even when you're tired or sad," what would you say back?
- Tip: Use simple drawings or props (like a "love river" craft) to help them visualize the story! Wonder invites them to explore and imagine.

Prayer Focus

Prayer of Wonder and Love Dear God, Look how you love us, like a big, warm hug! Even when we forget to love others, You remember to love us. That's like Hosea loving Gomer even when he didn't love her back. You are always faithful, always kind, always loving, just like You promised! God, we wonder: How big is Your love for us? How kind is Your heart for all of us? When we are sad or angry, remind us that You are there to hold us. Let us feel Your love like a gentle breeze! Thank You, for being the best Father. For always choosing us, even when we choose to stray. Let us tell others about Your love, just like Hosea did. One more time: Dear God, thank You for being so good to us. Help us to love You and others with a big, brave heart. Amen! (Repeat with hands raised: "God loves us, He always does!")

>> 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).