

Lesson 10

Jonah

Jonah 1:1–4:11

Memory Verse

“Blessed are those who
hear the word of
God and keep it”
(Luke 11:28)

Teacher’s Objective

At the end of the session,
the students should
be able to:

Define what it
means to obey

Locate on a map Nineveh
and the Tigris River

Describe what Jonah
was to do, and what
he did instead

Express in their own
words how they will deter-
mine to please God by
obeying His words even
when it is hard

Materials Needed

See “Teaching Activities”
for specific activities

Teacher’s Bible Study

The name *Jonah* means “dove.” Jonah is listed fifth among the minor prophets. He was a servant of God from Gath Hepher (II Kings 14:25), a town in the tribe of Zebulun (Joshua 19:10,13). Jeroboam II of the northern kingdom was king during the time that Jonah prophesied. He was a powerful king (II Kings 14:23–29). Jonah was born in Gath Hepher and was the Hebrew son of Amittai (Jonah 1:9). *Amittai* means “my true one.” To his discredit, Jonah was the only Old Testament prophet to attempt to run from God.

Jesus Christ referred to four Old Testament prophets. Jonah was one of them (Matthew 12:41; Luke 11:32). The other prophets were Elijah (Matthew 17:11–12), Elisha (Luke 4:27), and Isaiah (Matthew 15:7).

Jonah is not the principal person in the book of Jonah; God is.

1. The Lord had the first word (Jonah 1:1).
2. The Lord had the last word (Jonah 4:11).
3. God commanded Jonah twice (Jonah 1:2; 3:2).
4. God sent a violent storm on the sea (Jonah 1:4).
5. God provided a great fish to swallow Jonah (Jonah 1:17).
6. God commanded the fish to vomit Jonah onto dry land (Jonah 2:10).
7. God threatened Nineveh with judgment (Jonah 3:10).
8. God provided a vine to shade the prophet (Jonah 4:6).
9. God had a worm destroy the plant (Jonah 4:7).
10. God sent a scorching wind to discomfort Jonah (Jonah 4:8).

What is the main message God was delivering to Israel and us today through His dealings with Jonah? “Jonah was a symbol to Israel of her disobedience to God and indifference to the religious plight of other nations. Jonah symbolized Israel by his disobedience and disaffection. God’s punishment of Jonah shows His wrath on Israel. Yet the Lord’s gentle, miraculous dealings with Jonah also picture His tender love and slowness of anger with the nation. As Jonah wrote the book from a repentant heart, God desired that the nation would heed the lesson Jonah learned and repent as Jonah and Nineveh had done.” (John H. Stek, “The Message of the Book of Jonah,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 4. 1969:42,43).

To prepare for this week’s lesson, read the entire book of Jonah. Get to know the story well. Depending on the ages of your students, you may just tell the story or read the entire story to them. Either way, they will enjoy it. In addition to this read Acts 13:1–13; Acts 15:36–41; II Timothy 4:1–11.

Presenting the Bible Story

Jonah 1

*Nineveh was built
by Nimrod
(Genesis 10:11)*

*When you obey, you
comply with a request
(II Corinthians 2:9)*

*Casting lots to make
a decision was a
common practice*

Jonah was commanded by God to warn the people of Nineveh that their city would be destroyed because of their wickedness. There is always a penalty for sin (Romans 6:23).

Jonah did not want to obey God. After all, these people in Nineveh were Gentiles—the enemy. As a prophet, Jonah knew that when God’s warnings are obeyed, He withholds His judgment. Jonah must have been struggling with the realization that his nation’s greatest enemy might repent. Jonah had to decide whether he would obey God or disobey Him. God sent a great storm while Jonah slept on the ship. Isn’t it ironic that a pagan ship captain had to call a man of God to prayer? At last when Jonah admitted that he was running from God, the response of the pagan sailors showed how they seemed to grasp the seriousness of Jonah’s disobedience more than he did. Following Jonah’s instruction, the sailors threw Jonah overboard, and they asked that God have mercy on them. The sea became calm as soon as Jonah went over. The sailors then feared the Lord, offered sacrifice to the Lord, and took vows. What a contrast with Jonah. Jonah was disobedient to God, and they were praising God.

Jonah 2

Jonah was now alive in the belly of a great fish which God had prepared to swallow him whole. Jonah was in this fish for three days and three nights. The prayer by Jonah is not a plea for deliverance but one of thanksgiving. He thanked God for providing a fish to save him from drowning. Jonah learned that deliverance from a difficult situation is from God alone. “Salvation comes from the Lord.” Seven miracles have occurred in a short time: (1) God caused a violent storm—1:4. (2) The lot fell on Jonah—1:7. (3) The sea calmed when Jonah was thrown overboard—1:15. (4) God commanded the fish to swallow Jonah—1:17. (5) The great fish transported Jonah safely. (6) The great fish threw Jonah on dry land. (7) The disobedient prophet changed his heart and gave a prayer of thanksgiving.

Jonah 3

This time Jonah obeyed God and went to Nineveh and gave the warning message. The people, from the king down, repented. They fasted and showed humility by wearing sackcloth and sat in ashes. Here is an insight to the nature of God. God will respond to human action. God will forgive sinners. God showed compassion on a wicked but repentant people.

Jonah 4

Now Jonah was not happy that the people of Nineveh repented. He was angry. Here God had shown Jonah compassion by saving him from his disobedience, and yet Jonah showed no compassion to the people of Nineveh. In verse 2, we see a Jonah who had a clear idea of God’s nature. He quotes almost word for word Joel’s description of God (Joel 2:13).

The book of Jonah concludes with Jonah being angry and depressed. However, God leaves Jonah contemplating his lack of compassion and the depths of God’s compassion. God made His points with Jonah and we will do well if we take heed of them as well.

- God is gracious and merciful to all.
- God is sovereign.
- God will punish rebellion.
- God wants us to obey Him.

Art and Activities

- Obedience pleases God.

Teaching Activities

Young Children

Provide copies of the Activity Page along with crayons or colored pencils.

Older Children

Provide copies of the Activity Page puzzles.

Explore with your students the following questions:

Explore the Subject

1. What did Jonah learn about obedience?
2. Why did God prepare the wind and the great fish?
3. What may have happened if Jonah had obeyed God to begin with?

Always close your class with prayer

Respond and Reinforce

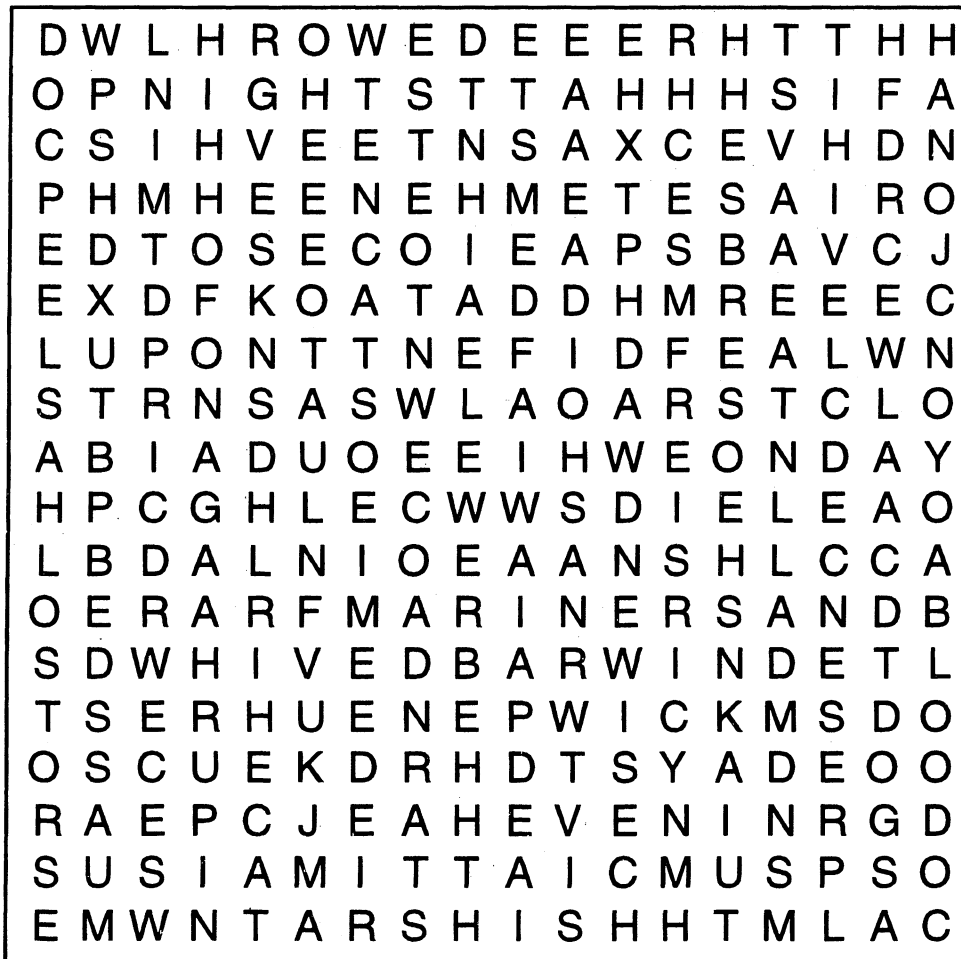
1. Have you ever been in trouble because you did not obey right away?
2. If you had done what you were told to do and when you were told to do it, what might have happened?
3. Discuss the memory verse.

Activity Page

Jonah

Jonah 1:1-4:11

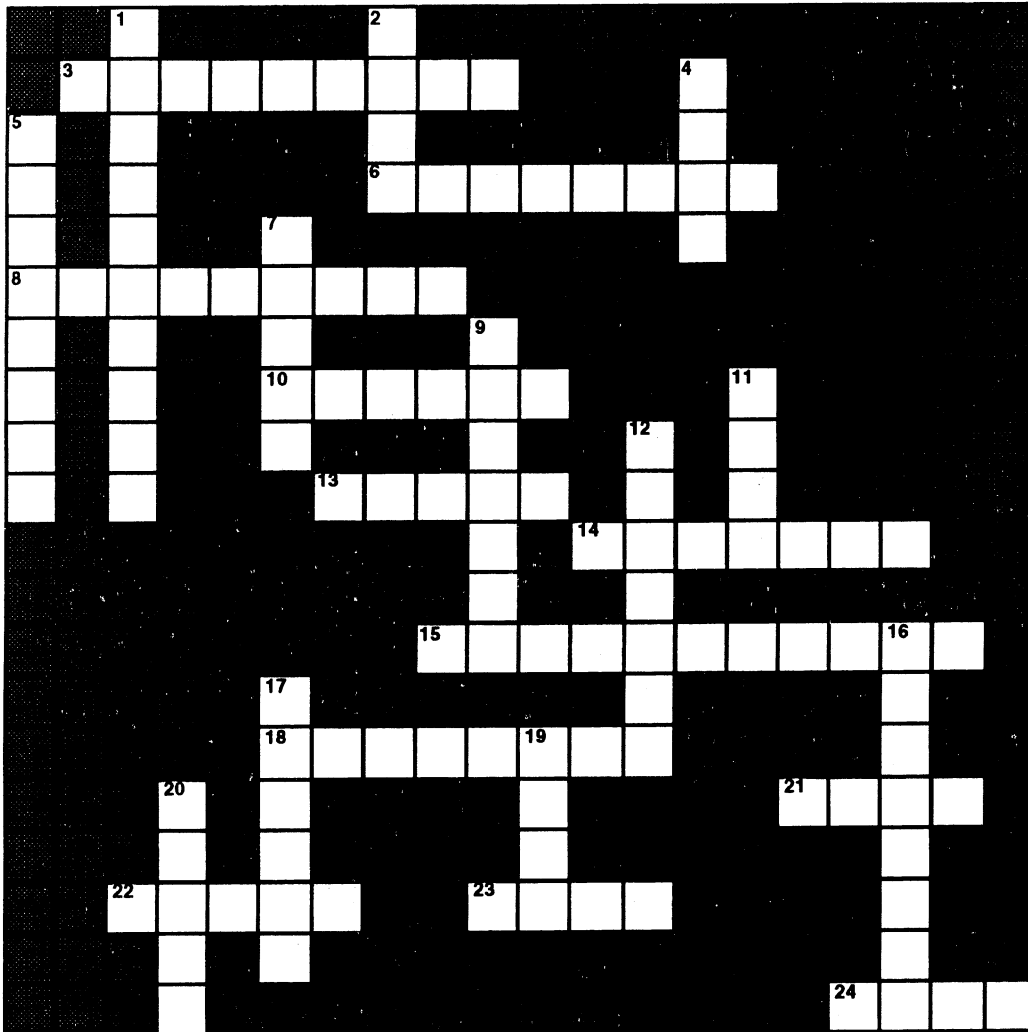
Find the words hidden in the puzzle below



- | | | | | |
|----------|----------|------------|----------|-----------|
| JONAH | LORD | ASLEEP | CAST | SACRIFICE |
| AMITTAI | SHIP | SHIPMASTER | CALM | FISH |
| NINEVEH | WIND | SLEEPER | ROWED | SWALLOWED |
| WICKED | TEMPEST | LOST | HARD | BELLY |
| FLEE | BROKEN | EVIL | INNOCENT | THREE |
| TARSHISH | MARINERS | HEBREW | BLOOD | DAYS |
| PRESENCE | AFRAID | HEAVEN | CEASED | NIGHTS |

Activity Page

Jonah Jonah 1:1-4:11



Across

- 3. Jonah was _____ and three nights in the belly of the great fish (two words).
- 6. Sailors (see Jonah 1:5).
- 8. To take into the stomach through the throat and esophagus with a voluntary muscular action.
- 10. Showing or affected by fear.
- 13. To propel a vessel by use of oars.
- 14. Jonah was the son of _____ (see Jonah 1:1).
- 15. Jonah was three days and _____ in the belly of the great fish (two words).
- 18. A person who lacks knowledge of evil.
- 21. The Lord prepared a great _____ to swallow up Jonah.
- 22. To cease being awake.

- 23. To run away from danger or peril.

- 24. A vessel propelled by sails or an engine across a large body of water.

Down

- 1. Master of the ship (see Jonah 1:6).
- 2. The absence of turbulence or disturbance.
- 4. Master, ruler; one having authority.
- 5. The state of being present.
- 7. _____ prayed unto God out of the belly of the fish's belly.
- 9. The city Jonah was warn about their iniquities.
- 11. To throw or hurl.
- 12. A violent wind and storm.
- 16. Jonah was trying to flee to _____ on a ship (see Jonah 1:3).
- 17. Morally bad in principle and practice.
- 20. The stomach and its additional parts.

Across: 3. Three days; 6. Mariners; 8. Swallow; 10. Afraid; 13. Row; 14. Amthal; 15. Three nights; 18. Innocent; 21. Fish; 22. Sleep; 23. Flee; 24. Ship. Down: 1. Shipmaster; 2. Calm; 4. Lord; 5. Presence; 7. Jonah; 9. Nineveh; 11. Cast; 12. Tempest; 16. Tarsish; 17. Wicked; 19. Evil; 20. Belly.

Activity Page

Jonah
Jonah 1:1-4:11

Jonah did not rejoice when the Ninevites repented



Activity Page

Jonah Jonah 1:1-4:11

Test yourself on how much you learned from the lesson about Jonah.

- _____ 1. What does the name *Jonah* mean?
(A) Son of trouble (B) Dove (C) Big Fish
- _____ 2. Who is the principal person in the book of Jonah?
(A) Jonah (B) King of Ninevah (C) God
- _____ 3. How many times did God ask Jonah to go to Ninevah?
(A) One (B) Two (C) Three
- _____ 4. Name the city that Jonah was trying to reach by boat.
(A) Tarshish (B) Joppa (C) Ninevah
- _____ 5. How did the ship's captain initially discover who was the cause of the great storm?
(A) In a dream (B) By casting lots (C) An angel
- _____ 6. How many days and nights was Jonah in the belly of the fish?
(A) Three days and three nights (B) Three days and two nights
(C) Four days and three nights
- _____ 7. In how many days was Ninevah to be destroyed if they did not repent?
(A) A week (B) Thirty days (C) Forty days
- _____ 8. What did the people of Ninevah do when they heard the warning?
(A) Scoffed (B) Fasted and prayed (C) Nothing
- _____ 9. Did God accept their acts of repentance and have pity on them?
(A) Yes (B) No
- _____ 10. What did Jonah immediately do after delivering God's warning to Ninevah?
(A) Returned home by ship (B) Went outside the city waited to see its destruction
(C) Returned home by land.
- _____ 11. What did God use to discomfort Job outside the city gates?
(A) Wind and rain (B) Hot wind and sun (C) Boils and thirst
- _____ 12. Did Jonah seem to remember his own disobedience and God's mercy when
the people repented?
(A) Yes (B) No

1. B; 2. C; 3. B; 4. A; 5. B; 6. A; 7. C; 8. B; 9. A; 10. B; 11. B; 12. B.