

Family Lesson 47

Principle: We cannot run from God. God's discipline is good for us.

Bible Character(s): Jonah

Scripture Reference: Jonah 1-4

1. Worship - Gather your family and play the [worship video](#) found on the curriculum resource page. Have fun, sing loudly, and follow along with the motions!

2. Skit Video - Watch the [skit video](#) with your family to hear a special message about what you will be learning this weekend.

3. Bible Lesson - Read through the lesson with your family. The bold font is meant to be read aloud along with the Scripture references.

Bible Lesson

Who did we learn about last week? (Shadrach, Last week, we studied about Daniel. **What choice did Daniel have to make?** (Daniel had to choose to continue worshipping God even when it was against King Darius' law.) **What did Daniel do?** (He continued worshipping God.) **We saw how Daniel was characterized by integrity, and he stayed faithful to God no matter what. He trusted God with his life. What happened to Daniel because he stayed faithful to God?** (He was thrown in the lions' den. God saved Daniel from the lions, and when the king found out, he ordered everyone to worship the God of Daniel.)

Today is our last day in the Old Testament. We have spent a lot of time learning about different people who worshiped God and about who God is. We are going to finish our Old Testament study by looking at the life of Jonah. We already know that Jonah was in the belly of a big fish. Let's take a closer look to find out why.

Let's begin reading the Bible in Jonah chapter 1.

Jonah 1:1-4 [NLT]

¹ Daniel soon proved himself more capable than I. The Lord gave this message to Jonah son of

Amittai: ² "Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are."

³ But Jonah got up and went in the opposite direction to get away from the Lord. He went down to the port of Joppa, where he found a ship leaving for Tarshish. He bought a ticket and went on board, hoping to escape from the Lord by sailing to Tarshish.

⁴ But the Lord hurled a powerful wind over the sea, causing a violent storm that threatened to break the ship apart.

What does Jonah do? (Allow responses.) **He listens to God's instructions, but he runs away from God. Which way does Jonah go?** (Allow responses.) **He goes in the opposite direction of Nineveh!**

Why do you think God sends a storm? (Allow responses.) **As the story continues, we learn that the sailors find out that Jonah is running from God, so Jonah tells them to throw him in the sea. Jonah tries to run away from God; he does not want to follow God's instructions. God uses the storm to discipline him because he wants Jonah's heart to change. He wants Jonah to turn from his sin and follow him because God loves Jonah and knows what is best for him.**

Are you ever like Jonah? Do you try to run away from God and his plan for your life? (Allow responses.)

Am I Running?

The purpose is to identify how we try to run from God.

Supplies:

Teacher's guide – ["Verses Guide" side](#)

Ask your child if they can think of some ways that

they might be running from God. Read through the verse cards to help them think about how they disobey specific commands God gives us. (Examples from the verses include loving, honoring, and forgiving others; being kind to one another; and obeying parents.) Ask them about how they disobey their parents and other people in authority over them.

Tie It Together

Anytime we disobey what God commands us to do, we are turning away, or running, from God. God has a plan for us, and he gives us commands on how to live our lives because he knows what is best for us. He loves us. When we disobey God, sometimes he uses discipline to help us recognize our sin. Have you ever wondered why you are disciplined when you do something wrong? (Allow responses.) This is why people in authority over you, like your parents, discipline you. They want you to recognize your disobedience. What are some things you have been disciplined for? (Allow responses.)

God desires for you to turn from your sin and follow his plan for your life because he loves you and knows what is best for you. He gives your parents the authority to discipline you if you are disobeying him. Their discipline is out of love for you because your parents want to show you how you are not obeying God.

The sailors on the ship are afraid of the storm, and they cry out to their gods for help. They find out that Jonah is running away from his God, and they become terrified. They ask him what to do to make the sea calm, and he says to throw him out of the ship. They throw him overboard and pray to Jonah's God not to hold them responsible for Jonah.

Let's continue reading the Bible to see what happens to Jonah.

Jonah 1:17, 2:1

¹⁷ Now the Lord had arranged for a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights.

¹ Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from inside the fish.

How does God respond to Jonah being thrown overboard? (Allow responses.) God sends a big fish to swallow Jonah and save him from the storm. He shows Jonah mercy. What is the first thing Jonah does? (Allow responses.) He prays to God. No matter where we are, God is with us. We cannot run from him. Instead, we should run to him. This is what Jonah does inside the belly of the fish. It is probably really scary to be inside of it, but Jonah turns to God. We can do the same thing when we are in a tough, scary situation. We can pray to God, knowing that he is always with us because he is everywhere.

We saw that God changed Jonah's heart through discipline and saving him through the big fish. Do you think Jonah stays in the belly of the fish? (Allow responses.)

Let's take a look at what happens next.

Jonah 2:10 - 3:5

¹⁰ Then the Lord ordered the fish to spit Jonah out onto the beach.

³ ¹ Then the Lord spoke to Jonah a second time:

² "Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh, and deliver the message I have given you."

³ This time Jonah obeyed the Lord's command and went to Nineveh, a city so large that it took three days to see it all.

⁴ On the day Jonah entered the city, he shouted to the crowds: "Forty days from now Nineveh will be destroyed!"

⁵ The people of Nineveh believed God's message, and from the greatest to the least, they declared a fast and put on burlap to show their sorrow.

What happens to Jonah? (Allow responses.) He is spit out of the fish and then God commands him again to go to Nineveh. This time, Jonah obeys God and goes to Nineveh. Nineveh is a really large city. Jonah walks around the city, warning the people that God is going to destroy Nineveh in 40 days. The people believe Jonah

and change their ways. What do you think is going to happen to the city? (Allow responses.)

Let's read the Bible in Jonah chapter 3 to find out.

Jonah 3:10

¹⁰ When God saw what they had done and how they had put a stop to their evil ways, he changed his mind and did not carry out the destruction he had threatened.

Does God destroy Nineveh? (Allow responses.) No, God does not destroy the people of Nineveh. Why not? (Allow responses.) They repent of their sin and worship God. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness." God is merciful and forgives the people of Nineveh. They deserve to be punished for their sin, but God has mercy on them.

Jonah experiences God's mercy and forgiveness too. How do you think Jonah responds to seeing God pour out his mercy and forgiveness to the people of Nineveh? Do you think he thanks God for showing mercy and forgiveness, or do you think he is mad that they do not get punished for their sin? (Allow responses.)

Let's continue reading the Bible to see how Jonah responds.

Jonah 4:1-4

¹ This change of plans greatly upset Jonah, and he became very angry. ² So he complained to the Lord about it: "Didn't I say before I left home that you would do this, Lord? That is why I ran away to Tarshish! I knew that you are a merciful and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. You are eager to turn back from destroying people. ³ Just kill me now, Lord! I'd rather be dead than alive if what I predicted will not happen."

⁴ The Lord replied, "Is it right for you to be angry about this?"

Jonah is upset; he does not want the people of Nineveh to receive God's mercy and forgiveness. Do you think Jonah has the right to be upset?

Do you think it is right of him to be angry that God does not punish the people of Nineveh for their sin? (Allow responses.)

Jonah is so angry that he leaves and waits to see what will happen to the city. God takes this opportunity to use a plant to teach Jonah. He causes a plant to grow up over Jonah and give him shade from the scorching sun. Jonah is happy under the shade of the plant. Then, God sends a worm to eat the plant and leaves Jonah under the heat of the burning sun. Jonah feels compassion for the plant and anger that it has been destroyed. God asks Jonah how he can go from happiness to anger so easily. God can show mercy to the people he has created. God loves the people of Nineveh as much as he loves Jonah. God wants them to come to him. They deserve God's mercy no more than Jonah deserves it. Jonah does not want others to receive mercy and love from God in the same way he has for his sin. God corrects him and shows him that God's love is for everyone.

God's love is for us and others. God desires for everyone to repent, turn from their sin, and accept his love. He calls us to share our faith, our belief in God, with others. He uses us to show his love and mercy to others, just like he used Jonah to call the people of Nineveh to repentance. We shouldn't keep our faith to ourselves. We should share it with those around us so that they can turn from their sin and have a relationship with God.

Jonah's message is not just for the Old Testament or just for the people of Nineveh. Matthew 12:40-41 tells us,

⁴⁰ For as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.

⁴¹ "The people of Nineveh will stand up against this generation on judgment day and condemn it, for they repented of their sins at the preaching of Jonah. Now someone greater than Jonah is here—but you refuse to repent.

Jesus is the greater one mentioned in this verse. He taught that all should repent and turn away from their sins. He also taught about God's forgiveness and mercy. Jesus brought this message of salvation to all of the people, not just the Israelites. God's salvation through the death of Jesus is for us and for others. We can share this message with everyone around us.

Prayer

Spend some time in prayer to close the lesson. Thank God for his love and mercy, even though we do not deserve it.

Activity

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Word Search

The purpose is to show that we can be continually thankful to God for our salvation.

Supplies: found on the Kids Resource Page
[Teacher's guide – Jonah excerpts side](#)
[Bookmark](#)
[Jonah's Prayer Worksheet and Word Search](#)

Have your child turn their word searches over to the side with Jonah's prayer. Read through what Jonah prayed while he was in the belly of the fish. Give your child a bookmark to keep as a reminder that salvation is from the Lord. Go over the verses on the bookmark.

Tie It Together

Even when Jonah was in a dark, wet, nasty place, he was able to see God's faithfulness and provision. God is always faithful and never leaves us. Remember Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? In the fiery furnace, there were four men seen inside when only three were thrown in. God was with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace. He was also with Daniel in the lions' den.

God is always the same. We can trust in a God who never changes. God is also merciful and gracious. He provides a way of salvation for us through his Son, Jesus. What did Jesus do for us? (Allow responses.) He came down to earth, lived a perfect life, died for our sins on the cross, and was resurrected. We can thank God for the cross and know that God loves us and cares for us no matter what our circumstances are.

Who is someone you can tell about God's great love? Let's each write down the name of someone who we want to tell about God's great love on the back of our bookmarks so that when we use them, we can be reminded and encouraged to share God with that person.

Your child can complete the What's in the Belly of A Whale? Word Search as an additional activity.

