

### CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Discuss why Jonah avoided God’s call
- Note how Jonah basically creates his own storm by avoiding God’s call
- Highlight how God is a helpful presence in chaotic situations, even ones we create on our own.

#### Materials needed:

1. **Note:** The teaching content in this lesson leans pretty heavily on topics covered in Session 1 and 2 of this season.
2. Movie clip (available on rfour.org) from *Trainwreck*
3. Electronics that show the video clip
4. A way to show the picture of map (located in lesson) to the students
5. An item that you have 15 items of (like pencils, toothpicks, Q-tips, etc) per teacher in the room.
  - a. If you want to make the activity more like a rock, paper, scissors tournament, have 15 items available per every two students

## THE LESSON

### OPENING PRAYER

### OPENING QUESTION

- One of the things we do every class is ask and answer the opening question at the beginning of class – because it helps us 1. Learn more about each other and 2. Helps “warm us up” for some of the ideas in the upcoming lesson. So we’re going to do that now.
- So here’s the opening question for today’s class. I [the teacher] will ask the question and then to give you some time to think of an answer, I will answer first.
- Once I answer the question, we’ll go around the circle and each of us will answer.
- When it’s your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- **Here’s this week’s question:** What is something someone told you, but you didn’t believe the information to be true?

### INTRO TO VIDEO CLIP

- In our previous session, we read 3 stories that all had chaotic situations in them.
- We also saw how language – especially language shaped in and by God’s presence – helped play a role by calming the chaotic situation or helping the characters fare better in the chaotic situation.
- In our new session, we’re going to read two stories about Jonah and then one story about Jesus.

- And in all three stories, especially in this first story with Jonah, we will see how chaos continues to play an important role in the story.
- There's also hope that the Jonah stories will help make the one Jesus story make more sense.
- To get started with today's lesson, let's watch a movie clip from *Trainwreck*.
- In it are two characters.
- One character is LeBron James, the basketball star, playing himself and the other character is Aaron, a long-time buddy of his (in the movie)
- They are talking about a number of things, including: Why Aaron doesn't visit LeBron in Cleveland.
- Let's see what happens.

## WATCH MOVIE CLIP

### ASK

- Does it seem like LeBron and Aaron are good friends? (hard to tell – LeBron doesn't seem to really understand Aaron's life even though he genuinely seems to care about him – but LeBron does text him, even if it's because texting is free for him and then LeBron also does say, "friends equals forever")
- What city does LeBron want Aaron to visit? (Cleveland)
- Has Aaron visited LeBron in Cleveland? (No)
- Has Aaron visited LeBron elsewhere? (Yes, Miami)
- So why hasn't Aaron visited LeBron in Cleveland, do you think? (because Cleveland is not a destination city)

### TELL

- So what we see in the movie clip is that Aaron does not follow through with LeBron's suggestion to visit him in Cleveland mostly because going to Cleveland does not agree with what Aaron wants to do.
- In fact most of what LeBron has to say, though funny and sort-of well-meaning, does not agree with Aaron's situation or what he wants to do.
- Which is why Aaron probably won't do anything that LeBron is suggesting – because LeBron doesn't really seem to understand what is best for Aaron.
- In today's scripture story, we see a similar situation happen.
- God (not LeBron, who, believe it or not – especially for some basketball fans – is not God) is directing Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh.
- Jonah is a prophet in Israel, but Jonah doesn't want to go to Nineveh, just like Aaron didn't want to go to Cleveland.
- Jonah has different reasons, though, than Aaron for not wanting to go.
- Probably because Nineveh was the capital of Assyria – the kingdom that had conquered the (Northern) Kingdom of Israel.
- In other words, Nineveh was a very dangerous place to go to. It was the capital city of the national enemy of Jonah's people.
- It is not an easy thing God is asking of Jonah.
- Let's see what happens.

**READ** **Jonah 1:1-17** (recommendation: Have class read it aloud; one person per verse)

1Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, 2“Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.” 3But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid his fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

4But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and such a mighty storm came upon the sea that the ship threatened to break up. 5Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried to his god. They threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten it for them. Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down into the hold of the ship and had lain down, and was fast asleep. 6The captain came and said to him, “What are you doing sound asleep? Get up, call on your god! Perhaps the god will spare us a thought so that we do not perish.” 7The sailors said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, so that we may know on whose account this calamity has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. 8Then they said to him, “Tell us why this calamity has come upon us. What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And

of what people are you?” 9“I am a Hebrew,” he replied. “I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” 10Then the men were even more afraid, and said to him, “What is this that you have done!” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them so.

11Then they said to him, “What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?” For the sea was growing more and more tempestuous. 12He said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you; for I know it is because of me that this great storm has come upon you.”

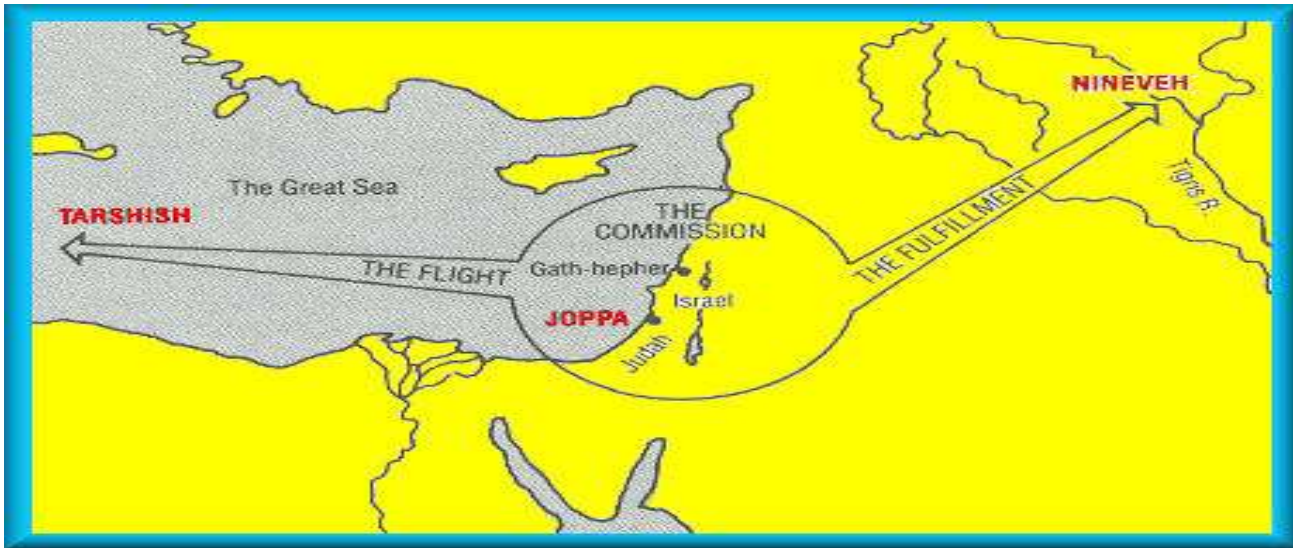
13Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring the ship back to land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more stormy against them. 14Then they cried out to the Lord, “Please, O Lord, we pray, do not let us perish on account of this man’s life. Do not make us guilty of innocent blood; for you, O Lord, have done as it pleased you.” 15So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging. 16Then the men feared the Lord even more, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. 17But the Lord provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

**ASK**

- In verse 2, what does God tell Jonah to do? (go to Nineveh)
- In verse 3, what does Jonah do instead? (goes to Tarshish)
- Why do you think he does this? (he’s afraid of Nineveh)
- Verse 3, it’s not very clear at first, but how does Jonah choose to travel to Tarshish? (by boat)
- Because he travels by boat, what does Jonah experience? (a storm at sea)
- When the storm first strikes, what is Jonah doing? (sleeping)
- Does that remind you of another story we’ve read recently? (hopefully of Jesus sleeping in the boat during the storm that he calms)
- Verse 7, what do the sailors do to figure out what’s going on? (draw straws – sort of like picking up sticks, but not quite)
- Verse 12, whose idea is it to throw Jonah into the sea? (Jonah’s)
- Verse 13, do the sailors agree with this decision at first? (nope)
- Verse 14, what do the sailors do before throwing Jonah overboard? (they pray for forgiveness)
- Verse 15, what happens once Jonah is dropped into the sea? (the storm stops)
- Verse 17, does Jonah die? (No, he’s swallowed whole – apparently – in the belly of a fish [not a whale!])

## TELL

- Pretty weird story, yeah?
- So there are a few things we can look at to make this a little bit more understandable.
- First – where God wants Jonah to go and where Jonah actually goes are in opposite directions.
- Here's a map that shows this:



- So it's not just that Jonah ignores God, like Aaron ignored LeBron.
- No, Jonah actually goes in the exact opposite direction of where God was saying to go.
- Why would Jonah do this?
  - Maybe Jonah doesn't trust God.
  - Or maybe Jonah doesn't want Nineveh to be changed by God's word(s).
- Regardless of why, Jonah goes in the opposite direction.
- And, because Jonah goes in the opposite direction of what God was saying to go, Jonah finds himself in a chaotic, stormy situation.
- If Jonah had actually listened to God, he would not have been traveling in a boat. And not taking a boat would have meant not being at sea during a violent storm.
- Moving away from God's direction caused Jonah to make some waves, so to speak.
- And not just any waves, but big waves. Waves that affected other people.
- It's not until Jonah stops going against God's direction that the waves stop for the other people as well.
- And, once Jonah stops going against God's direction, then Jonah is able to receive God's help in the chaos...by being swallowed by a fish.
- It's a weird development in the story (to get swallowed by a fish), but it is also another reminder of how helpful God can be in chaotic situations.

## TRANSITION to EXPLANATION OF ACTIVITY

- Now, one reason why God is helpful in the chaos is because the chaos isn't so chaotic to God.
- To help us think about how a situation could seem chaotic so us while not being chaotic to God, let's do the

following activity.

- It's a very simple activity -- it's called "Pick Up sticks"
- There are 15 items (aka sticks) and 2 contestants
- One of those contestants will always be a teacher.
- The reason for this is because we're really good at this activity – mostly because we've been picking things up longer than you have
- Here's the goal of the activity: The goal is to NOT pick up the last item/stick.
- Either contestant can start first. As teachers, we'll let you decide who starts.
- A turn for a contestant consists of taking one, two or three items off the table (it has to be one of those three options).
- Then, it's the other contestant's turn, who must decide if they are going to take one, two, or three items off the table.
- Again, the whole goal of the activity is to NOT pick up the last item/stick
- Any questions?

**[For teachers only:** Whatever you do, do your best to not let the students win. To win, do what you can to pick up the 2<sup>nd</sup> item, the 6<sup>th</sup> item, and the 10<sup>th</sup> item. For example, if the first player picked up 3 items, then you would pick up the next 3 items to get to 6. If the first player then picks up 2 items, you would pick up 2 items to get to 10. If you get the 10th item, then you've won for sure. And, getting to 2 or 6 will ensure that you will get to 10. If you go first, you'll win every time because you'll always want to start by picking up 2 sticks. If the other person goes first, there's a possibility that they'll win, but they'll have to hit 2 or 6 *and* then hit 10 by accident/luck.]

## DO ACTIVITY

### ASK / TELL about ACTIVITY

- So why do think the teachers are so good at this game?
  - Do you think we're lucky?
  - Do you think we have experience on our side?
  - Do you think we cheated?
- Would you like to know the real reason for why the teachers are so good at this game?
- As teachers, we used a strategy – we made sure to try and pick up the 2nd and 6th and especially 10<sup>th</sup> items (without going beyond those numbers on our turn). Once we picked up item #10, there was no way you could beat us. Picking items 2 and 6 helped ensure that we'd get to item #10.
- Feel free to try this out on your parents at home!
- So at first, it may have seemed like a random sort of game and that our choices in the activity didn't have bearing on the outcome.
- Turns out, though, that the activity wasn't just a random turn of events, but that some knowledge about the rules and the patterns found in the activity made certain outcomes much more likely

## TELL

- This activity, I think, has some similarity to the story.

- Jonah wasn't able to see the bigger picture, he couldn't see how things fit together.
- So he made the best decisions that he knew to make.
- But those decisions didn't help him out.
- Things didn't get better for Jonah until Jonah accepted that God might know more than Jonah.
- At the end of the story, then, Jonah is learning to trust God's direction, at least a little bit, when facing a chaotic situation.
- Today's story is a good reminder, I think, that if we trust God's directions / prompting, then we might avoid the storms we'd encounter when we go our own direction.
- But sometimes, sometimes we think we have to try it our own way and experience the storms before we're ready to accept God's help.

## **CLOSING PRAYER**