



*A Workshop Rotation Model Lesson Plan from rfour.org*

## **Jonah and the Fish | Jonah Chapters 1 & 3**

**Season 1.Session 2: Movement & Games, Storytelling, Science**

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### OVERVIEW SECTION

#### **How to Read This Lesson Plan**

The **Overview Section** is the foundation of this lesson plan. The questions and activities for the class that you will be teaching on Sunday morning have been based (sometimes loosely) upon what you read in this section. The **Overview Section** is composed of five components (each component is underlined in the lesson plan):

**How to Read This Lesson Plan** (defines all components of the lesson plan)

**Purpose of Sunday Morning Spiritual Formation** (a reminder of why we do this)

**Scripture(s) for the Session** (a reminder that the scripture is to be read in every class)

**Key Verses & Theology** (background for teachers to ponder)

**Themes to Focus on from the Scripture** (the ideas that the session's lessons are based on)

The actual lesson is found in the second section, **The Sunday Morning Experience Section**. Think of this section as the step-by-step instruction guide to your Sunday morning teaching experience. There are four components to this section (again, each component is underlined in the actual lesson plan):

**Preparation** (including supplies needed)

**Classroom Statement** (a brief explanation of what will be taught/happening in the classroom)

**Step-by-step process of the lesson** (including the scripture to be read)

**Suggested variations for age groups** (Self-explanatory but not always applicable)

We encourage you to read the rest of this **Overview Section** before reading the **Sunday Morning Experience Section**.

#### **Purpose of Sunday Morning Spiritual Formation**

The purpose of Sunday Morning Spiritual Formation is, with God's help and in community, to hear and interact with the stories of our faith tradition, to pray, worship and play together, and to equip and support the building of relationships with God and with each other.

**Scripture(s) for the Session:** Jonah chapters 1 & 3.

Please *READ this aloud in every class you teach.* The actual words to the scripture can be found in **The Sunday Morning Experience Section: Step-by-Step process of the lesson.** When reading to the class, please read it from the lesson plan (not an actual Bible) as the wording of the scripture has been modified to help clarify some language issues.

**Key Verses & Theology:** These are provided to help the teachers think about and build a framework for understanding the story to help in answering some of the questions that the students might raise in class.

*1:2 "Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me."  
3 But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.* In these two verses we see that the author of Jonah sees no difference between disobeying God and not being in the presence of God. The author is not saying that God is not in or at Tarshish. The author is saying that Jonah is trying to remove himself from God's presence by being disobedient. Tarshish is in the exact opposite geographical direction from Nineveh. Jonah is going the wrong way. Jonah has very reasonable reasons for doing this: Nineveh is the capital city of Israel's current occupiers. Nineveh probably will kill Jonah for bringing this message. But, however reasonable, these reasons send Jonah in the wrong direction – away from God. Compare this with Jacob and last session's story, where God's telling Jacob to go back to Esau, and Jacob has very strong fear about going, but does. Jonah doesn't even try to go. He just runs away.

*2:4 But 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.* Thus begins the strangest part of this story: God intervenes first with winds and storms, then with a game a chance (the drawing of straws) and then by sending a great fish to swallow Jonah whole. Such stories lend themselves to thinking of God as a God that intervenes in the physical world. However, for the Israelites (the first hear-ers of the story), the concept of a storm on the water would be understood not just as a storm, but also as a symbol for chaos. So another way to think of the story is to think of how disobeying God leads to chaos. The chaos, though, doesn't happen because God punishes us and is out to get us. Instead, the chaos is part of the design of creation. We're supposed to have God in us (Genesis 3 – God breathes life into humans). If a car starts to run out of gas, what does it do? It sputters and coughs and finally comes to a stop. In this scenario, the car is not being punished (nor is it punishing you, the driver). It's simply living within its design. So it is with us and God. We and our surrounding environment start to sputter and cough when we stop receiving God. But God never gives up on us, no matter how great the storm. So if we choose to seek God again, even if it is in the middle of a great big chaotic storm, God will offer us a way out. In Jonah's case, that second chance came in form of a "Large Fish."

*3:4 Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" 5 And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth. 6 When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.* This is a rather remarkable turn of events. The prophet in this story has to be eaten by a giant fish in order to be obedient to God's call. The supposedly evil and godless conquerors of Nineveh on the other hand heed God's call immediately. In both instances,

however, there is repentance. Repentance means to turn around. Jonah was going in the wrong geographical direction. But because he “repented” or turned around, then he was headed in the right direction. And because he was headed in the right direction, he was able to remind others to go in the right direction. And they listened!

**Themes to Focus on from the Scripture:** Themes are provided to help teachers understand the teaching of the *session* (not necessarily the class). Sometimes an activity in one class may not match up with any of the themes.

**Disobedience:** Jonah thinks he knows better than God (it’s actually in chapter 4 where Jonah said he knew that God would spare Nineveh because God was a loving and forgiving God). Jonah doesn’t want Nineveh to hear the word of God because Nineveh is the oppressor of Israel. It is the enemy of Jonah’s people. So Jonah goes in the opposite direction. Jonah heads for Tarshish. In Jonah’s running away though, he encounters a huge storm and is then tossed into the waters.

**Chaos/accidents:** Jonah being tossed into the raging waters of a sea in the middle of a storm is quite the scene. And a little bit scary. If you ignore the strangeness of the story and instead look at the metaphors/symbols, then the story makes a little more sense. The sea or water represents chaos. And the chaos is stirred up for Jonah because Jonah is disobeying God. The story makes it sound like God is punishing Jonah. But a better way to think about it is that chaos is a natural consequence to disobeying God. Just like if a parent tells a child to brush his/her teeth, but the child does not, the natural consequence is that the child gets a cavity. Another way to think about chaos is to think about accidents. Like a car accident for example. A car accident usually happens when one or more drivers are not paying attention for whatever reason to what they should be paying attention to. The result is an accident/chaos. This is what happens for Jonah. He should be paying attention to what God tells him what to do. Instead, he turns his back.

**Repentance/turning around/metanoiya:** Jonah turns his back on God and experiences chaos. In the chaos, he comes to realize his mistake and so he turns around and goes to where he’s supposed to go. This *turning around* is called “metanoiya” in Hebrew. We translate that word in English to: Repentance. Jonah is repenting. And in Jonah’s repenting, he still isn’t completely obedient. God tells him to go through the city. It’s a three days walk. Jonah only goes for a day’s walk. But Jonah’s obedience, if only a third of obedience, is enough. The whole city repents (turns around). Jonah who is supposed to know better has to be thrown in the water and eaten by a fish for three days before repenting. He’s the prophet! But the enemy of the prophet’s people hear him speaking, and they listen immediately! And what happens? God says that “calamity” (another word for chaos) will not be experienced by these people.



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### THE SUNDAY MORNING EXPERIENCE SECTION

#### **Preparation**

- Print out this lesson plan and bring it with you on the Sunday Mornings you are teaching
- Arrive at pre-arranged time to join other teachers, shepherds and staff for an opening prayer.
- Supplies Needed: Styrofoam cups, construction paper for sails, hole punch, straws, scissors, tape, markers, vinegar and baking soda, pan for vinegar and baking soda, table cloth to catch vinegar and baking soda, cardboard discs, markers, thread, example of this.

#### **Classroom Statement**

Class will practice saying “chaos” whenever they hear the word “sea.” Activities include making a sailboat that’ll survive the stormy seas of vinegar and baking soda and the making of “Thaumatrope” which are simple devices that help show/tell a story (in this case of Jonah praying inside the fish).

#### **Step-by-Step Process of Lesson**

Shepherd comes in with students

**SHEPHERD ASKS** “Question of the Day.”

**INTRODUCE yourself**

Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_ and I want you call me (tell the students how they may address you).

**PRAY** (Short and simple is perfect)

God, thank you for this day and for each other. We need your help. Help us to learn about you this day. Amen.

**TELL**

- In the story that I’m going to read you, every time you hear the word “Sea” I need you to say as a group, “Chaos.”
- Let’s practice that...“SEA!” (chaos!). “SEA!” (chaos!).
- Do you know what chaos means? Right. It’s when everything goes crazy and has no reason or pattern in it or to it.

- Accidents are chaos.
- Chaos is when things stop going as planned.
- When you spill your milk that is chaos, because the milk is no longer where it's supposed to be.
- Again, whenever I read the word "Sea," what are you going to do? That's right. You're going to say, "Chaos."
- You ready? You think you can do this? Alright...

### **READ SCRIPTURE STORY (Jonah chapters 1 & 3)**

**Jonah 1 - 1** Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah (who was a prophet – someone who speaks for God to the people). God told Jonah, **2** "Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me." **3** But Jonah set out to for Tarshish which was in the opposite direction from Nineveh. Jonah was trying to hide from the presence of the Lord. He did this by going 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.

**4** But 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. **5** Then the sailors were afraid, and each cried to his god. They threw the cargo that was on the ship into the **sea**, to lighten the boat. Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down into the hold of the ship and had lain down, and was fast asleep. **6** The captain came and said to him, "What are you doing sound asleep? Get up, call on your god! Perhaps your god will spare us a thought so that we do not die." **7** The sailors said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, so that we may know whose fault this is." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. **8** Then the sailors said to Jonah, "Tell us why this is happening?" Jonah told them and the men were even more afraid, and said to him, "What is this that you have done!"

**11** Then they said to him, "What can we do so that the **sea** may quiet down for us?" For the **sea** was growing more and more stormy. **12** Jonah 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." **13** Nevertheless 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. **14** Then they cried out to the Lord, "Please, O Lord, we pray, let this be the right thing to do because we do not want to do it." **15** So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the **sea**; and the **sea** ceased from its raging. **16** Then the men offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. **17** But the Lord provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. In the belly of the large fish, Jonah prayed to God. Then the fish spat Jonah up on a beach.

**Jonah 3 - 1** The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying, **2** "Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you." **3** So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very large city. It took three days to walk across it. **4** Jonah went a day's walk into it and he cried out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

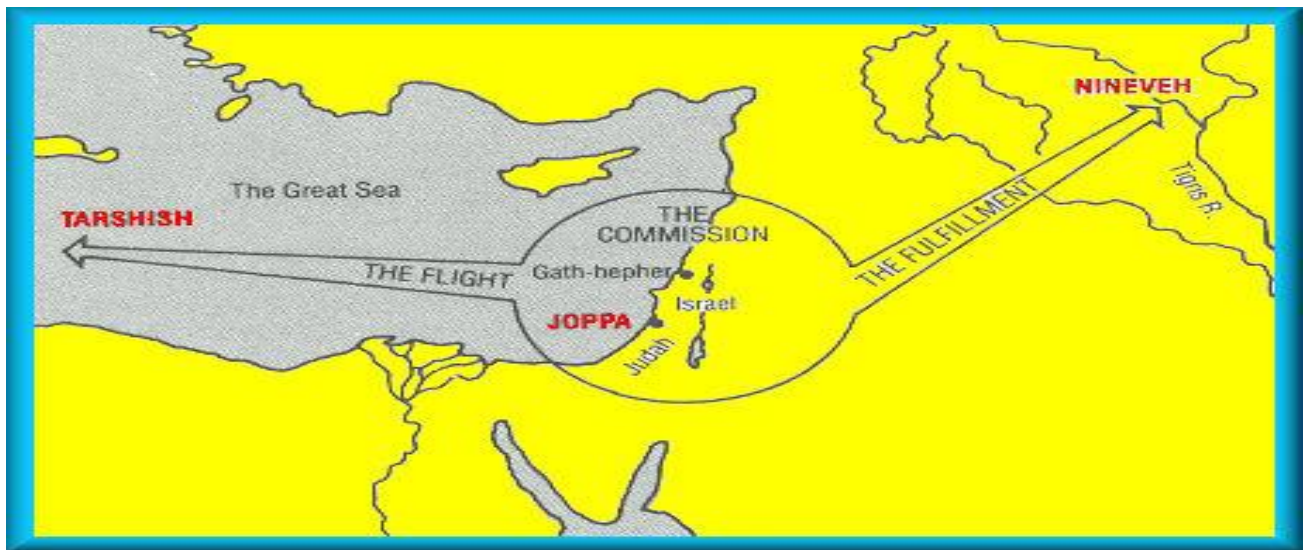
**5** And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast (this meant no one ate), and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth (very itchy, ugly clothing). **6** When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. **7** Then he had a proclamation made in Nineveh: "I command that no human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water. **8** Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All will turn from their evil ways and

from the violence that is in their hands. **9** Who knows? God may change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not die." **10** When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the disaster that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

### ASK

- First...good job on saying Chaos whenever I said sea!
- Where did God tell Jonah to go? (Nineveh)
- Where did Jonah actually try to go? (Tarshish)
- Did you hear in the story what direction Tarshish was from Nineveh? (the opposite direction – show map)
- If Jonah had been obedient, would he had been in the storm and then tossed into the sea? (Highly unlikely)
- Because Jonah was disobedient to what God called him to do, he then experienced a lot of chaos, didn't he? (yes)
- At the end of the story, are the people of Nineveh obedient or disobedient? (obedient – repentant)
- Because they change their ways, do they suffer chaos like Jonah did? (Nope).

### SHOW MAP



### TELL

- The people who first told each other these stories would think of the word "chaos" whenever they heard the word "sea." That's why we said "Chaos" together whenever we heard the word "sea."
- We're now going to make some sailboats and then try to sail them across a very stormy sea.
- Whichever sailboats survive must be the ones that threw Jonah overboard into the sea.

### EXPLAIN

- Take a Styrofoam cup and cut the top half off (for younger class, have some cups done already).

- Cut out a triangle from the construction paper.
- Punch two or three holes along the longest edge.
- Weave a straw through the holes. This is your sail.
- Tape your sail to the inside of your boat/cut up cup.
- Use markers to decorate your sailboat. Give it a name.
- It might look something like this:



## DO

1. Put vinegar in bowl, filling the pan about halfway full.
2. Put in sailboats.
3. Add teaspoons of baking soda.
4. Watch the sailboats bounce up and down. Watch all the bubbles.
5. Say, "I think the SEA should be a bit more stormy, don't you? and then add more soda
6. Whose sailboat didn't tip over? Those must've been the ones that tossed Jonah overboard into the sea.

## TELL

- After Jonah was tossed into the sea a large fish came and ate him (without chewing, apparently).
- And what did Jonah do inside of the fish? That's right! He prayed.
- So Jonah was disobedient, didn't pay attention to God and so he was tossed into the sea.
- But God gave Jonah another chance to be obedient, so in the middle of that sea God provides Jonah a chance to seek God.

## EXPLAIN

- On these cardboard discs, we're going to draw Jonah praying on one side.
- On the other side, we're going to draw the fish that ate him without chewing him.
- The hard part is making sure that the Jonah on the one side fits inside the fish on the other side. So we have to draw very carefully.

## HERE'S HOW

- Take a plastic plate and cut the outside ring off of it.
- Discard the "ring"
- Take yellow card stock paper and using the newly-cut plate, trace a "circle" on the yellow paper
- Cut out two circles from the yellow cardstock.
- Paste or tape one yellow circle to each side of the newly-cut plate.
- Draw with crayons on one side of the plate/yellow paper the fish that Jonah was in. Add details like bubbles and other fish.
- On other side of plate/yellow paper, draw Jonah praying. MAKE SURE TO LINE HIM UP WITH THE FISH ON THE OTHER SIDE SO THAT JONAH IS INSIDE THE FISH.
- Punch a hole on each horizontal side of the plate.
- Take one string of yarn, double it up and push the folded part through the hole.
- Bring the two ends of the yarn through the loop sticking out of the hole.
- Tighten.

- Repeat on other side with other piece of yarn.
- There should be four ends of yarn now.
- Holding the two yarn ends in each hand, rotate (top over bottom) the plate over and over again.
- Doing this "winds" the yarn.
- Now hold the ends of the yarn out and the plate should flip (top over bottom or bottom over top).
- As it flips the images from each side should merge together and make one image of Jonah praying in the belly of the fish.

### **DO activity**

While they are doing the activity feel free to tell them part or all of the below paragraph:

This effect on the eye is called *persistence of vision*. That's what we call the behavior of our eyes when an image is flashed on them and taken away suddenly. Our eyes retain the image for a fraction of a second, or even longer. If we quickly replace the first image with a second one, the eye blends the two together. If our eyes didn't work this way then movies and television would always have a jerky look to them that would probably make them difficult to watch. This type of device is called a "Thaumatrope." It's a Greek word. The "thauma" part means "wonder" and the "trop e" part means "to turn." So just like Jonah turned around in the belly of the fish, so does he turn around on our cardboard disk.

Thaumatrope info from: <http://www.west.net/~science/animate.htm>

### **CLEAN UP**

### **DISMISS FOR SINGING**

### **Suggested Variations for age groups**

For the youngest class, the more you have pre-made for them the better. Have some sails cut out and some cups cup up. Maybe even a few of the cardboard discs pre-strung.