

SEVENTH DAY CHURCH
OF GOD (REFORMED)

CHILDREN'S BIBLE STUDY

The Life of Jonah

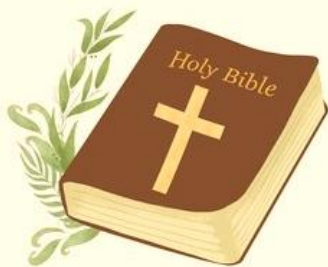


TABLE OF CONTENTS

EDITOR'S NOTES

LESSON # TOPIC

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | God calls: Fugitive on the run |
| 2 | Jonah has been caught: The chase is over |
| 3 | It's not too late to start again |
| 4 | Jonah's one-man protest |

EDITOR'S NOTES

Dear Children and Young People,

The Sabbath School Committee is pleased to present a series of lessons for your studying.

We pray that God will open your understanding of His holy words as you study and draw nearer to Him each day. Remember to seek His guidance and presence in prayer. Let His word be a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path (Psalm 119:105).

Happy Studying 😊

LESSON 1

GOD CALLS: FUGITIVE ON THE RUN

Scripture: Jonah 1

Memory verse: 2 Chronicles 16:9

Lesson Objectives:

- To understand that as vessels of the Lord, called into His service, we are under His control and always subjected to His commands
- To reinforce further understanding of the ubiquitous (omnipresent) nature of God by exploring occurrences in the life of the prophet Jonah

Introduction

Throughout time, God has always used different people to carry out tasks that need to be done. For example, Joseph was sold into Egypt to deliver his family and Israel (God's people) from famine; Moses was sent to Egypt to deliver Israel from the bondage of slavery and oppression; Joshua accepted the position of a leader in Moses's place and took Israel into the promise land of Canaan and so on. Jonah, like so many other prophets, was a mouthpiece for God. The situation in Nineveh was dire, the wickedness like all our transgressions came up before God and of such, he decided to pay them a visit through Jonah. It is important to remember that God is full of compassion, mercy and grace. He is always willing to forgive and give us the opportunity to repent through various means. God decided that the people of Nineveh needed a warning and Jonah was the medium through which he chose to do it.

Jonah had different ideas, no sooner the Lord spoke, he went in a different direction. Jonah's decision caused catastrophe. The memory verse teaches that the eyes of the Lord roam throughout the whole earth and there is no hiding from him. As it were with Jonah, our poor responses to the will of God often have impact not just on us but others can also get caught in the crossfire. Jonah boarding the ship to Tarshish jeopardised the lives of everyone onboard. According to Jeremiah 51:16, *when he thunders, the waters in the heavens roar; he makes clouds rise from the ends of the earth. He sends lightning with the rain and brings out the wind from his storehouses. (NIV)*. The occupants of the ship were experiencing the wind that God sent for Jonah. They became very fearful; they lost their wares and they recognised that this was not another normal tempest. They recognised that Jonah was the cause of God's power to be revealed in such a way and Jonah told them to throw him overboard. Despite being tossed into the sea, God's will still had to be done so he provided a place of refuge for Jonah. Jonah was in the fish's belly for three days, the exact amount of time it would have taken him to reach Nineveh. God's will must be done, so answer the call willingly today.

Questions (easy)

1. What was Jonah's nationality? Why was this important to the God that he served?
2. Explain verses 1 and 2 in your own words.
3. What information did Jonah give to the mariners? What did they do which caused them to be extremely fearful?
4. What specific instruction did the master of the ship give to Jonah while the tempest was raging?

Questions (harder)

1. The storm was just a coincidence and had nothing to do with Jonah's disobedience. To what extent do you agree or disagree

with this statement? Use scriptural reference to support your answer.

2. What does verse 7 tell you about the powers of this world and how they compare to the great power of God?
3. What does God's decision to protect Jonah in the fish's belly teach you about his grace and mercy?

LESSON 2

JONAH HAS BEEN CAUGHT: THE CHASE IS OVER

Scripture: Jonah 2

Memory verse: Psalm 139:8-9

Lesson Objectives:

- To understand that as vessels of the Lord, called into His service, we are under His control and always subjected to His commands
- To reinforce further understanding of the ubiquitous (omnipresent) nature of God by exploring occurrences in the life of the prophet Jonah

Introduction

From Jonah 1, we learnt that God chose Jonah as a vessel to deliver words of warning to the people of Nineveh. God wanted to remind them that he is the God who sits high and looks low. He has always been aware of all the wickedness that was taking place. Jonah was very unwilling and as a result, he went somewhere he was not sent. Have you ever been given a direct and specific instruction to complete a particular task by your parent or those who have charge over you? How did you respond – did you follow these instructions and complete the task to the best of your ability? Did you say that you would just so that they wouldn't ask again and then refuse to do it? It is likely that you were held accountable, regardless of your response to the task. Jonah was having a similar experience, where God, his Heavenly Father, gave a specific message to be delivered to the people of

Nineveh. God held him accountable on the ship and even further in the floods.

In chapter 2, Jonah was in a situation where he had absolutely no control. From his description, he was experiencing terror, fear and uncertainty about his life. he identified his location as hell and mentioned being afflicted. Can you imagine Jonah being in the belly of a fish in the middle of the sea? He had water within and water without. It surrounded him to the point where he was beginning to lose consciousness. He said “when my soul was fainting within me, I remembered the Lord...”. He had weeds wrapped around his head and at this point Jonah called out to his God in desperation. Thank God that he knows how to ‘untangle’ every tangle. We are blessed to have a God who sees, hears and helps us in our deep distresses, even after deciding to walk away from his will. Disobedience to God, the decision to flee, the ship, Tarshish, “throw me overboard” were all Jonah’s handywork. The fish swallowing Jonah gave him the opportunity to cry out to the merciful God. Jonah was running from God, but God came to his rescue. Jonah came face-to-face with death but was saved and grew a deeper understanding of God’s grace.

Questions (easy)

1. What does verse 2 tell you about God’s grace when His people need him?
2. Explain verse 9 in your own words.
3. In verse 10, God spoke to the fish and it vomited Jonah out onto dry land. What does this tell you about God’s powerful nature?

Questions (harder)

1. Imagine you are Jonah. Write a short monologue describing your current situation and how it feels to be in your position.

2. Jonah remembered the Lord when he was in trouble and needed help desperately. Why is it important to seek a friend in God before you need him?
3. In verse 2 (KJV) it says, "I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I...". Why was Jonah afflicted? Use scriptural reference to support your answer.

LESSON 3

IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO START AGAIN

Scripture: Jonah 3

Memory verse: Matthew 28:19-20

Lesson Objectives:

- To understand that as vessels of the Lord, called into His service, we are under His control and always subjected to His commands
- To reinforce further understanding of the ubiquitous (omnipresent) nature of God by exploring occurrences in the life of the prophet Jonah

Introduction

Regardless of what we have done, where we are or how far we have fallen from God, it is not too late to start again. We serve a merciful God who is willing and able to take care of our every need. He is a Father who loves us unconditionally and He is always waiting, always happy, always there, always caring and He is just waiting for us to surrender ourselves to Him. Give up our negative attitudes, our 'I know better than you' mentality and hand everything over to Him. He establishes His covenant from generation to generation. Even through this very lesson, your parents and teachers are embedding in you a deeper understanding of God's love and mercy. John 15:13 remind us that *'greater love have no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends'*. Additionally, John 3:16 says, *'for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not*

perish but have eternal life. **Reflect on the lyrics of the song 'If that isn't love' (find lyrics on page 16).**

The last verse in Chapter 2 says that the fish vomited Jonah out on dry land. According to marine biology, for large fishes to survive, they need to be in water at least 20 feet deep otherwise they would be beached and in danger of death. Without the upthrust of the sea water, the fish would not be able to manage the weight of its body. The fact that the fish vomited Jonah out on that particular type of ground demonstrates how much he must have been spewed out.

Regardless of the circumstances, it was time for Jonah to start again. The people of Nineveh needed a word from the God of heaven and the Lord recognised that the land was fertile. In Jonah 3:1, the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time. The word that God gave Jonah the first time hadn't changed so Jonah entered Nineveh the first day. God told Jonah that in 40 days Nineveh would be destroyed, so Jonah delivered the message and would have wanted to see the wrath of God on the enemies of Israel. The king of Nineveh came down from his throne, laid aside his robe and stooped low to the King of heaven. He commanded the entire land to seek the Lord peradventure he would repent himself of the evil pronounced against the city. The merciful God saw the sackcloth and ashes, he saw the babies hungry, he saw the beast hungry, he saw the women hungry, he saw the nobles, he saw the somebodies, he saw the nobodies. He saw a country on its knees pleading with him for help and he responded in the only way that God responds when we start again, with mercy and grace.

Questions (easy)

1. According to the memory verse (Matthew 28:19-20), what does Jesus say we should be doing as believers?
2. How does the memory verse relate to God's instructions to Jonah?

3. How many lives were impacted by Jonah's obedience to God the second time?

Questions (easy)

1. Research the history and significance of wearing sackcloth and ashes.
2. Sing 'If that isn't love'. How does this demonstrate God's willingness to reaccept us after we fail?
3. Where in today's scripture does it show that Jonah did not delay going to Nineveh the second time? How would you feel if you were in Jonah's position, a chance to start again?

LESSON 4

JONAH'S ONE-MAN PROTEST

Scripture: Jonah 4

Memory verse: Jonah 4:2

Lesson Objectives:

- To understand that as vessels of the Lord, called into His service, we are under His control and always subjected to His commands
- To reinforce further understanding of the ubiquitous (omnipresent) nature of God by exploring occurrences in the life of the prophet Jonah

Introduction

The omnibenevolent God saved the people of Nineveh because they heeded the warning that was sent through Jonah. This is very reassuring for us as believers, reminding us that even when we believe that we are too far gone, God is still receptive of us. Often, we become our own judges, jurors and executioners. We condemn ourselves because we think the things that we have done are more sinful than anyone else, forgetting that all sin is sin irrespective of how visible or invisible they may be to others. In John 8:10-11, the Lord spoke to a lady who was being judged by others *'when Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.'* The same way in which we are hard on ourselves is the same way we become hard and harsh on others when they make mistakes.

The people of Nineveh did evil, and they had a 40-day notice period. The king and his subjects saw this time as an opportunity to repent. Jonah knew they were evil, God said he would pronounce judgement on them so all he wanted to see was judgement. In Jonah's eyes, the city should have been overthrown, the men, women, children and animals too. Jonah did not get his heart's desire, so he decided to lead a one-man protest, being angry against the mercies of God. Can you imagine, Jonah would have rather died than to see the people of Nineveh saved! What he failed to recognise was that this was never about him. It's never about us, we have a responsibility to share, preach and teach the word of God to others. We cannot fold our hands and say we have done enough, or we are tired of telling and warning others of the implications of sin. Romans 10:17 (AMP) puts it this way *'so faith comes from hearing [what is told], and what is heard comes by the [preaching of the] message concerning Christ'*. For others to hear, we need to tell. God's plan for the deliverance of the people of Nineveh was far beyond Jonah's limited understanding. His job was to warn and likewise our task as people that he has called out of darkness and into his marvellous light.

God's response to Jonah's protest was very subtle, he did not add fuel to the fire. God asked him if he did well to be angry. Jonah was then able to speak from the abundance of his heart. We are so limited and transient. Let us trust God and leave all to him because we cannot find a way without him.

Questions (easy)

1. Explain verses 10-11 in your own words.
2. What is grace?
 - a. What can you learn about grace from the story of Jonah?
3. What can you learn about God's love from the story of Jonah?

Questions (harder)

1. What is the moral of the story of Jonah?
2. Jonah prayed a very angry prayer to the Lord because he was upset about God's mercies to the people of Nineveh. What advice would you give to a friend who might feel angry at the Lord?
3. Based on your understanding of these lessons, summarise the story of Jonah in your own words. Be creative with your summary (e.g. a poem, song, storyboard, role play)

SONG LYRICS

IF THAT ISN'T LOVE

He left the splendor of heaven
Knowing His destiny
Was the lonely hill of Golgotha
There to lay down His life for me

[refrain]

If that isn't love
The ocean is dry
There's no star in the sky
And the sparrow can't fly
If that isn't love
Then heaven's a myth
There's no feeling like this
If that isn't love

Even in death He remembered
The thief hanging by His side
He spoke with love and compassion
Then He took him to paradise

[refrain]