

Jonah and the Big Fish

Sunday School Lesson for Preschool (Ages 3–5), 20–30 minutes

Main point: God hears me when I pray, and I can obey God.

Bible passage: Jonah 1–3. Read Jonah 1:1–3:10 yourself before class.

Memory verse: "Salvation is of the LORD." *Jonah 2:9 (KJV)*. The old word **salvation** means God saves us.

You need: a Bible, a blue sheet or blanket for the sea, crayons, and one take-home sheet for each child. If you have them: a toy boat and fish stickers.

Before class: put a bookmark in your Bible at Jonah 1. Spread the blue sheet on the floor.

1. Opening game: Follow Me (5 minutes)

Kids walk behind you around the room. Call "Go!" (walk), "Stop!" (freeze), "Swim!" (swimming arms) and "Pray!" (fold hands). Praise the kids who listen right away. Say: "You listened and did what I said! Today we will hear a true story about a man who ran away when God told him to go."

2. Bible story (5 minutes)

Hold up your Bible open to Jonah 1. Say: "This story is true. It is in God's Word." Read each line slowly and do the motion. When you see **Say it with me**, the kids say the line back to you.

God said, "Jonah, go to Nineveh" (Jonah 1:1–2). *(Point far away.)*

But Jonah ran away. He got on a ship (1:3). *(Run in place.)*

God sent a big wind. The sea went up and down (1:4). *(Wave the blue sheet.)*

Jonah was fast asleep in the ship (1:5). *(Hands under your cheek.)*

The sailors threw Jonah into the sea (1:15). *(Make a big splash with your hands.)*

The sea was calm again (1:15). *(Hold the sheet very still.)*

God sent a great fish. Gulp! The fish swallowed Jonah (1:17). *(Open and shut your arms like a big mouth.)*

Jonah was in the fish three days and three nights (1:17). *(Hold up three fingers.)*

Jonah prayed to God inside the fish (2:1). *(Fold your hands.)*

Say it with me: "God hears me when I pray!"

The fish put Jonah on dry land (2:10). *(Jump onto "dry land" off the sheet.)*

God said again, "Jonah, go to Nineveh." This time Jonah went (3:1–3). *(Walk in place.)*

Say it with me: "Jonah obeyed God!"

Jonah told the people about God. They were sorry for the wrong things they did (3:4–5). *(Make a sad face, then bow your head.)*

God did not destroy the city (3:10). *(Big smile!)*

Say it with me: "God gives second chances!"



3. Questions to ask (3 minutes)

1. Who ran away from God? (*Jonah, Jonah 1:3*)
2. What swallowed Jonah? (*A great fish, 1:17*)
3. What did Jonah do inside the fish? (*He prayed, 2:1*)

4. Memory verse (3 minutes)

Say: "Jonah said, 'Salvation is of the LORD.' That means God saves us." Teach the motion: lift both hands up high on "Salvation," then point up on "of the LORD." Say the verse with the motion three times: in a normal voice, in a whisper, and in a happy loud voice. Then say "Jonah 2:9" and clap three times.

5. What this means for us (3 minutes)

Say: "God loves you! Everyone has done wrong things. That is called sin (Romans 3:23). Jesus is God. He came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Jesus died for our sins. He was buried. Then He rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)! The Bible tells us what to do (Acts 2:38). We repent: we tell God we are sorry, and we stop doing wrong. We are baptized in Jesus' name, down under the water, and our sins are washed away. And God gives us the Holy Ghost. That is God's own Spirit in us. When people are filled with the Holy Ghost, they speak in other tongues, words God gives them (Acts 2:4)."

Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

6. Activity: Jonah in the Fish (5-10 minutes)

Give each child a take-home sheet. In the drawing box, help them draw a big fish shape. Then they draw Jonah inside it with his hands folded to pray, or add fish stickers around it. While they color, ask: "Where was Jonah when he prayed? Does God hear you when you pray?" Kids who finish early can "sail" the toy boat across the blue sheet.

7. Prayer

Say each line, and the kids say it after you:

"Thank You, God, for hearing me when I pray.

Help me obey You right away. In Jesus' name, amen."

Tips for little ones: keep the story moving and let every child help wave the blue sheet. If they get wiggly, do the storm and "gulp" motions again. Send the take-home sheet home so parents can tell the story again this week.

If a child asks "Could a man really live inside a fish?": answer simply. God made the fish and took care of Jonah inside it (Jonah 1:17). It was a miracle. God can do anything.

