

Drama Workshop

Jonah: The Prophet of Second Chances Lesson Plan

Focus: Obedience (and you get a second chance at it!)

Chapter Focus: Jonah 1 and 3

Jonah was disobedient when he refused God’s request to go to Nineveh. The Ninevites were also disobedient and that was why Jonah was sent with a message from God. Discuss why we need to be obedient, even when we don’t like what we are told to do.

God wants us to obey. “Anyone who refuses to fulfill the Lord’s orders joins Jonah in buying a ticket to Tarshish.” In what ways are we like Jonah?

Overview of the Workshop: Children will explore the concept of obedience while telling the story of Jonah through a drama. The drama will be recorded for them to watch (and may be shown in Gathering Time next week).

Time Guidelines: Please start on time!

Welcome and Introductions	5 minutes
Bible Study	10 minutes
Drama	30 minutes
Review the Drama Script	5 minutes
Decide roles/get Costumes	5 minutes
Act out the Drama	15 minutes
Play back from camera	5 minutes
Reflection/Closing	5 minutes

Preparation and Room Set Up:

Review the Background Information and Lesson plan and dramas.
Note that the lesson plan and drama are different depending on the age of the children.
Copy the drama script (JK-Gr1 for readers, Gr2-7 enough for everyone).
Video camera and TV set up in room ready for use.
Gather the costumes and props required.

Materials required:

- Drama scripts
- Costumes
- Props
- Video camera and tripod, cables, extension cord
- TV (to play back video)
- Snack (will be provided)

Important Teacher Notes:

Each workshop includes the Bible story. One of our primary goals is to improve the children’s Bible literacy. Use the Background Information to help you introduce the story.

Remember that as the rotation progresses, the children will become more familiar with the story. When this happens, allow the children to tell you what they know. The children should still locate the story in their Bibles every week. Use the bold headings in their Bibles to guide your discussion. You may want to review some of the Bible notes as well. Be sure to fill in any missing information and add additional details using the Background Information to help you. One of the greatest advantages of this model is that children who come regularly learn the story in great depth.

General Tips for Drama Workshop Facilitators

- ◆ You may wish to organize costumes and props ahead of time to cut down on a flurry of activity and possible hurt feelings. This is especially important for the younger children. The older children often are very creative with props and costumes.
- ◆ You will want to limit the amount of time the children are allowed to dress-up. (They can easily spend the entire class time selecting costumes!)
- ◆ Be sure that all children are involved in some way. Some children are intimidated by the prospect of being on a stage. Offer them alternative roles as well as the children who do not have main parts. They can always be “sound effects” or “crowds” or stagehands to help change scenery (if applicable). Remember as well that children can draw the backdrop for the drama on the blackboard or videotape the plays (older children).
- ◆ To eliminate competition, you may wish to place the names of characters in a hat and have children choose their parts.
- ◆ Be aware that some children are not readers and may find certain parts too challenging.....make sure they are included in suitable roles.
- ◆ Be sure to explain the activity to the children and ask for questions.
- ◆ Even though videotaping the activities may seem unnecessary, videotaping seems to encourage better behavior from the children.
- ◆ Have fun and make this fun for the children!
- ◆ The purpose of the drama workshop is not to create a polished performance. Through the activity, children will explore the story in depth. Feel free to pause and discuss details as they arise, add more information (using the Background information and resources) and answer questions along the way.

Welcome/Introduction:

Welcome the children and introduce yourself. Make sure everyone is wearing a nametag.¹ Please include the Shepherd in introductions.

Give the children a simple one or two-sentence synopsis of what you will be doing during the workshop, for example: “Today you’re going to act out part of the Jonah story. Together we will do a small drama that we will film on the camera, so that we can all watch it. I know you’re going to have fun acting out this story!”

Prayer: Please begin your class with prayer each week. Pray your own or use the following prayer.

Father, We thank you for this day and this time we spend together learning about you. Guide us to be obedient to you. Help us to share the forgiveness you have for us with others. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen

Introduce the Story:

Jonah was a prophet. What is a prophet? (God’s messenger, someone very close to God.)

Jonah lived in the northern kingdom of Israel. Now at that time Assyria, the southern kingdom, was a very powerful nation. They had strong armies who tried to take over lands and people. The people of Israel worried that the Assyrian army would take over their land too. The capital city of Assyria was called Nineveh. It was a huge city with great walls surrounding it. The people in Nineveh did not worship the one, true God. So, the people of Israel looked down on the people of Nineveh. They thought they were better than the Ninevites. They also didn’t like them because the Assyrian army was very cruel. The people of Nineveh were their enemies.

But, God wanted to teach his people a lesson. And so he called a new prophet, named Jonah to show his people that God loves everyone – no matter where they live or what they do. Let’s find out more about the story now.

¹ Nametags: When we started, we had everyone wear nametags. The nametags for the kids were kept in a box for each age group. For large groups and if there are new leaders for each story, this can be a good practise.

Bible Study:

*Where would we find a story in the Bible that takes place many years before Jesus was born?
(Old Testament)*

Let's find the story of Jonah in our Bibles now.

Help the children locate the book of Jonah. The Shepherd can help. You may want to say which page it's on.

Read or paraphrase the story as the children follow along in their Bibles. Focus on Chapters 1 and 3, where the story relates to obedience.

Memory Verse²: Each rotation we will encourage the children to memorize one verse. Locate the verse and review with the children at this time.

“When I was in trouble, I called out to you. And you answered me.” Jonah 2:2
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Discussion Starters re: “obedience”:

How did Jonah disobey God? (talk about what obedience means)
What ways were the Ninevites disobedient?
If you had been Jonah and God told you to go to a big city and tell the people there how bad they were, what would you have done?
When you know you're supposed to do something and you don't do it, how do you feel? What does it take to change your mind?
When you know you're supposed to do something and you do it, how do you feel?
“Anyone who refuses to fulfill the Lord's orders joins Jonah in buying a ticket to Tarshish.” In what ways are we like Jonah? (examples of how we are not always obedient to God, our parents, our teachers, others)
Why should we be obedient? Why should we do something we don't really want to do (like Jonah)?
If we have not been obedient, if we have not done what we were supposed to, what can we do?
If God gave Jonah a second chance, and he gave the Ninevites a second chance, will he give us a second chance too?

Discussion Questions: some suggestions for general discussion

What is a prophet?	(someone who speaks for God, God's messenger)
What did God tell Jonah to do?	(go to Nineveh to preach to the people there)
Why did Jonah run away?	(he didn't want to do what God asked)

² Jonah was our first story workshop. As things evolved with experience, we moved away from the practise of having a “memory verse”.

How did Jonah feel about the people of Nineveh?	(didn't like them, they were his enemies)
How did God feel about the people of Nineveh?	(loved them, wanted to save them)
What happened to Jonah?	(thrown overboard, swallowed by giant fish)
I wonder what Jonah thought about while inside that great fish?	
What did Jonah do inside the fish?	(prayed in thanksgiving to God, promised to obey)
What happened after Jonah preached in Nineveh?	(people repented, God showed them mercy)
How did Jonah feel about that?	(angry)
What can we learn about God from this story?	(God loves everyone, grace, mercy, forgiveness)

Drama (for non-readers, Kindergarten through Grade 2)

Jonah and God, to be read as a narrative while the children act it out. Can have up to 7 characters. See Attachment 1 for the script.

Directions:

1. Explain the activity.
2. Assign parts.
3. Teacher or older student can read the narration of the script. Do this as a “rehearsal” so that the kids know who they are and have an idea about what to do.
4. During the read-through, you can also discuss the story and the message. The kids can have a snack while this is happening.
5. Costumes can be handed out before the “rehearsal” read-through, or for the “filming”.
6. Do the skit from beginning to end, with the actors on stage and film it.
7. Be sure to pause often in the drama allowing children to act out the story and insert their own dialogue. Encourage them to be creative. The purpose is not to have a polished performance; it is to help the children explore the events of the story and the emotions and actions of the characters.
8. If time allows, perform the drama more than once, allowing children to switch roles.
9. Play back the film on the TV for the kids to see.
10. If time does not allow for both Scenes, choose one to do.

Drama (for readers, Grades 3 through 7)

The Ninevite Evening News, a drama with 4 spoken parts. See Attachment 2.

Directions:

1. Explain the activity.
2. Assign parts.
3. Do a “rehearsal” so that the kids know who they are and an idea about what to do.
4. During the read-through, you can also discuss the story and the message, if appropriate.
5. Costumes can be handed out before the “rehearsal” read-through, or for the “filming”.
6. Do the skit from beginning to end, with the actors on stage and film it.
7. Encourage the children to be creative. The purpose is not to have a polished performance; it is to help the children explore the events of the story and the emotions and actions of the characters.

8. If time allows, perform the drama more than once, allowing children to switch roles.
9. Play back the film on the TV for the kids to see.

CLOSING:

Reflection after the Drama: Take a couple of minutes to remind the kids about the focus of this Jonah workshop. The following can be used to help:

Were you surprised that the people of Nineveh responded to Jonah's message?
I wonder if Jonah was surprised....
What do you think about Jonah disobeying God....
What do you think about God giving Jonah a second chance....
What do you think God was trying to tell Jonah (and US) at the end of the story?

Closing prayer: Gather the children together in a circle. Ask for prayer requests and close with prayer. Perhaps one of the children would like to pray? Or ask the children to pray out loud or silently one at a time. Have them say "Amen" when they are finished so the next child can pray.

Or you can use the following prayer:

Dear God,

Help us to remember that you are always watching us and with us in times of need. Help us learn to listen to the message. Help us to obey and do what we are supposed to, even when we don't want to. Thank you for giving Jonah and us a second chance.

Amen

Clean-up: Encourage the children to help you clean up. Put all props, costumes, and other materials away. Return leftover snacks to storage room.

Jonah goes to Nineveh



Accessible EasyEnglish

An EasyEnglish Drama Unit (Accessible Easy English) on the Book of Jonah

www.easyenglish.info

Frances Jones

Introduction for the teacher

Note about the play “Jonah and God”: Reading the play’s lines aloud several times helps actors grasp the whole story and helps them remember sequence.

References:

The New English Bible

Today’s English Bible

The Bible, New International Version

Jonah and God

Based on a drama by Frances Jones

www.easyenglish.info

CHARACTERS

Jonah

God (off stage)

Captain of the ship

Sailor 1

Sailor 2

Sailor 3

King of Nineveh

Citizen 1

Citizen 2

Other citizens of Nineveh

SCENES

Jonah on the ship and in the whale
Jonah in Nineveh

PROPS

Three chairs
Gold coin
Dice
King's crown
King's robe

SCENE ONE

Stage directions are on the actor's right and left.

(Three chairs are on the stage. They are a little right of centre stage. They are 18 inches apart facing the audience. Jonah stomps on stage from the left. He is angry. He turns and looks up.)

JONAH stood on the beach and yelled, "No, God! No! I will not go to Nineveh! I will not go there! The people in Nineveh are bad! I will not tell them to change! No! I will not go to Nineveh!"

Jonah looked up and said, "I know you are a loving God. If the people of Nineveh repent, you will forgive them. I do not want them to repent! I do not want you to forgive them! Those people are bad!"

(The ship captain walks on stage from the right. He goes to the chairs and looks at them. Jonah goes to him.)

The captain of a ship boarded his boat and Jonah called to him, "Is this your ship?"

The CAPTAIN replied that it was and that he was sailing to Tarshish in Spain.

JONAH then asked how much it would cost to go to Tarshish with him.

The CAPTAIN told Jonah it would cost one gold coin.

(Three men, sailors, walk on stage from the left. They sit sideways on the chairs, facing right.)

(Jonah takes a coin from his pocket. He gives it to the captain.)

After the sailors were in their seats on the boat, the CAPTAIN announced that they were ready to go. Jonah found a spot to lie down and sleep.

(Jonah goes to the chairs. He lies down in front of them. He goes to sleep.)

The CAPTAIN called out to his men, and told them to “Row! Row! Row!”

(The men row as the captain calls.)

(Suddenly the men and the captain rock back and forth. They jerk up and down. There is a bad storm.)

Suddenly, a bad storm comes out of nowhere. The boat is rocking back and forth. The captain is alarmed. Where did this wind come from? He calls out to the men to row. They have to keep the boat from sinking and must get out of the storm. The boat is rocking violently.

(The men are struggling to stay in the chairs. The captain is staggering. The men are all yelling at the same time.)

The captain keeps yelling to the men to “Row! Row!”

The first SAILOR calls back, saying, “We cannot row! The waves are too big!” He looks up to the black sky and says, “God of waves, save us! Save us!”

Still trying to row, the second SAILOR calls out, “Save us, God of winds!”

The third SAILOR cries out, “We call, God of storms, help us! Help us!”

The CAPTAIN goes to Jonah and shakes him. “Wake up! Wake up! How can you sleep? Pray for help! Pray to your God for help! Our ship is going down! Who is your God? Pray!”

Jonah slowly gets up. He begins to rock back and forth in the storm, too.

The third sailor looked at the second sailor and said, “Someone on this ship is bad luck. Is it you?”

The second sailor shook his head and cried out, “No”.

The first SAILOR took some dice. He thought the dice could tell them who was bad luck.

(The men throw the dice. They look at Jonah. The storm is still bad. The men rock back and forth.)

The CAPTAIN looked at Jonah and asked: “Who are you? What did you do? Why did you bring this storm on us?”

JONAH answered, “My name is Jonah. I am a Jew. I pray to God who made the world.”

(The men are more afraid. They cover their faces with their arms. The storm is still jerking them around.)

The third SAILOR cried out, “Oh, God Who Made the World, save us!”

JONAH looked at him and said, “It will not help for me to pray. I am running away from God.”

Together the SAILORS and CAPTAIN called out, “Why did you do it? Stop the storm! Do something! Stop the storm!”

The storm is worse. Two of the men fall down. They get up and one of them falls again.

JONAH looks at the Captain and says, “Throw me into the sea. Then the storm will stop.”

The three sailors help Jonah over the side of the boat and into the stormy sea.

(The three men help Jonah over the back of the chairs. He falls on the floor.)

The CAPTAIN looks up and says, God Who Made the World, you sent this storm. If Jonah dies, please don't blame us.”

The storm stops, as suddenly as it started.

Jonah is in the sea, trying to swim, but the waves are too strong and he is tossed and turned. Then there is something big in the water. He tries to push it away. The next thing he knows, he is no longer in the water.

(The storm stops. The men pick up the chairs and go off the stage right.)

(Jonah is in the sea on the floor. He tries to swim but he is rolling over and over. He tries to fight something from off his head. He gets to centre stage, on the floor. He suddenly sits up. He rocks gently.)

JONAH feels around him, all sides, top and bottom. He feels the edges of a round place. He is rocking gently. “Where am I?” he wonders? He realises he is in a fish! He is in a great fish!

JONAH cries out, “Oh, save me, God! I am in a great fish.”

JONAH goes down on his knees. He is still rocking gently. Jonah speaks to God, saying, “The sea was over me, God. Your storm covered me. I was going to die, and I called to you. I will never pray to any god but you. You saved my life in a fish. I pray to you alone. I will obey you. I will go do as you ask.”

After 3 days of praying, suddenly there is a loud sound. *AARRGH-ph-t-t-t-t!* And Jonah is spit out of the great fish. He staggers on the beach.

(There is a sound from off stage: AARRGH-ph-t-t-t-t! Jonah tumbles to the left and jumps up. He staggers off stage, left.)

CURTAINS CLOSE.

SCENE TWO

(Several people are on stage. They are citizens of Nineveh. Two people are fighting. Some people are arguing, pushing and shoving. Others are laughing and singing too loud. The king stands in the back. He has a crown on his head and is wearing a good robe.)

Jonah arrived in Nineveh to find the people fighting. Some were arguing, others were pushing and shoving. Some were were laughing and carrying on singing too loudly.

JONAH: *(Walking on stage from the left)* announced, “People of Nineveh! You will be destroyed in 40 days!”

A few people turn and look at him. Others do not listen at all.

One CITIZEN looked at him and asked, “What? Who are you?”

A second CITIZEN replied, “He is a crazy Jew man. He says his name is Jonah. He came the day before yesterday. Our city is going to be destroyed, ha. We are the biggest city in the world!”

JONAH continued to call out his message, saying: “The God who made the world sent me. He will destroy you in 40 days. *(He turns to the other people.)* Get ready! God will destroy you in 40 days! He will destroy Nineveh in 40 days!”

The citizens talked to each other, saying ‘That is what he thinks!’ ‘I don’t believe him.’ And ‘He is just a crazy man.’

The king walked over to Jonah. The people stepped back and stopped talking. They listened as the king talked to Jonah.

The KING asked Jonah, “Why is your God going to destroy our city?”

JONAH answered, saying “Your people fight and kill. They steal. Children are not taken care of. Old people and the lame and the sick are not taken care of. You pray to idols.”

The KING, hearing this, starts walking back and forth, thinking. He turns back to Jonah and asks, “What can we do? What does your God want?”

JONAH tells the King that God wants them to be sorry for what they have done. He wants the King and his people to change.

The KING walks and thinks some more. He turns to Jonah and says “Your God is right. Bad things happen in Nineveh. We do need to change.”

The KING then turns to the people. He tells them, “This man from God is right. Bad things do happen here in Nineveh.”

The people nod to each other. Some of them say ‘Yes, yes!’

The KING declares, “I say we will be sorry. We will tell the God of Jonah that we are sorry.”

The Citizens look the King and ask, "Sir, how can we do that?"

The KING takes off his crown and says to his people, "Tell this to all the city: Do not eat. Do not wear good clothes. Do not let your animals eat. Sit in the dust. This will show that you are sorry. It will show that you have changed."

The KING sits down and declares, "I will not eat. I take off my good robe. (*He takes it off.*) I sit here in the dust to show that I am sorry. I will pray that God will not destroy us."

CURTAINS CLOSE

The Ninevite Evening News

The Scene: a television news studio

Characters:	Announcer	Props:	desk
	Newscaster		chair
	Reporter		microphone
	Jonah		
	Professional Athletes		

(The desk and chair are centre stage, facing the audience. The Athletes are on stage playing a game – the kids can decide the sport. After a few seconds, the Announcer and Newscaster walk to center stage. The Newscaster sits behind the desk. The Announcer stands in front of the desk. As soon as the Announcer speaks, the game “freezes”.)

Note: Ninevite is pronounced Ni-nah-vite

ANNOUNCER:

We interrupt our regularly scheduled game for this special report from the Ninevite Evening News.

(The Athletes hurry off the stage. Announcer follows them off. Reporter and Jonah enter and stand with their backs to the audience. Reporter should carry a microphone.)

NEWSCASTER: (In a news-anchor voice)

Good evening. Here’s what’s happening. Just hours ago, a man calling himself “Jonah, Prophet of God” started a near riot in the downtown area. Witnesses report they heard this man screaming, quote, After 40 days, Nineveh will be destroyed, end quote. Apparently, the king and all the people have taken this man seriously. The king has ordered city residents to publicly show how sorry they are for the wrong things they’ve done. We go to our top reporter for a live report.

REPORTER: (Turns, holding microphone, to face the audience along with Jonah.)

I’m standing here on the city streets with the man who calls himself “Jonah, Prophet of God”. Today this man has turned our city upside down. In response to Johah’s message of doom and gloom, the people have put on rough clothing and have nowed not to eat. Jonah, tell me how all this got started. (Points microphone to Jonah.)

JONAH:

Well, I’ll tell you. The last few days haven’t been all that great for me. First, God told me to come to this rotten old city and tell you all how rotten you’ve all been. Well, that didn’t sound all that fun to me, so I hopped aboard a ship going the other way. Boy, was that a bad move!

REPORTER:

Why is that?

JONAH:

Well, once we got out to sea, God started this big storm that almost tore apart our ship. When the other sailors found out that I was running away from God, well, they just up and chucked me overboard. That's when a big old fish came along and swallowed me up.

REPORTER:

Excuse me? I must've heard you wrong. I thought you said a fish came and swallowed you.

JONAH:

That's right. Just take a whiff of my shirt. (Reporter sniffs shirt, then makes a sick face.) Smells just like the inside of a fish, right? Well, I'll tell you. It's not every day I'm sittin' in a fish's belly. Kinda makes you think a little. I was wrong to try to run away from God, and I told him so. Next thing I know (*pantomimes coughing up something*) I'm outta there. That's how I ended up here in Nineveh.

REPORTER:

That's quite a story, Jonah. I've got to say I probably wouldn't have believed it myself if I hadn't smelled.....I mean heard it myself. That's it from here. Back to the Newsroom.

NEWSCASTER:

Thank you. Remember to tune in here for the latest developments in this story.

ANNOUNCER: (Enters and stands in front of the desk.)

We now return to our regularly scheduled game.

(Athletes return to the stage and start playing again.)