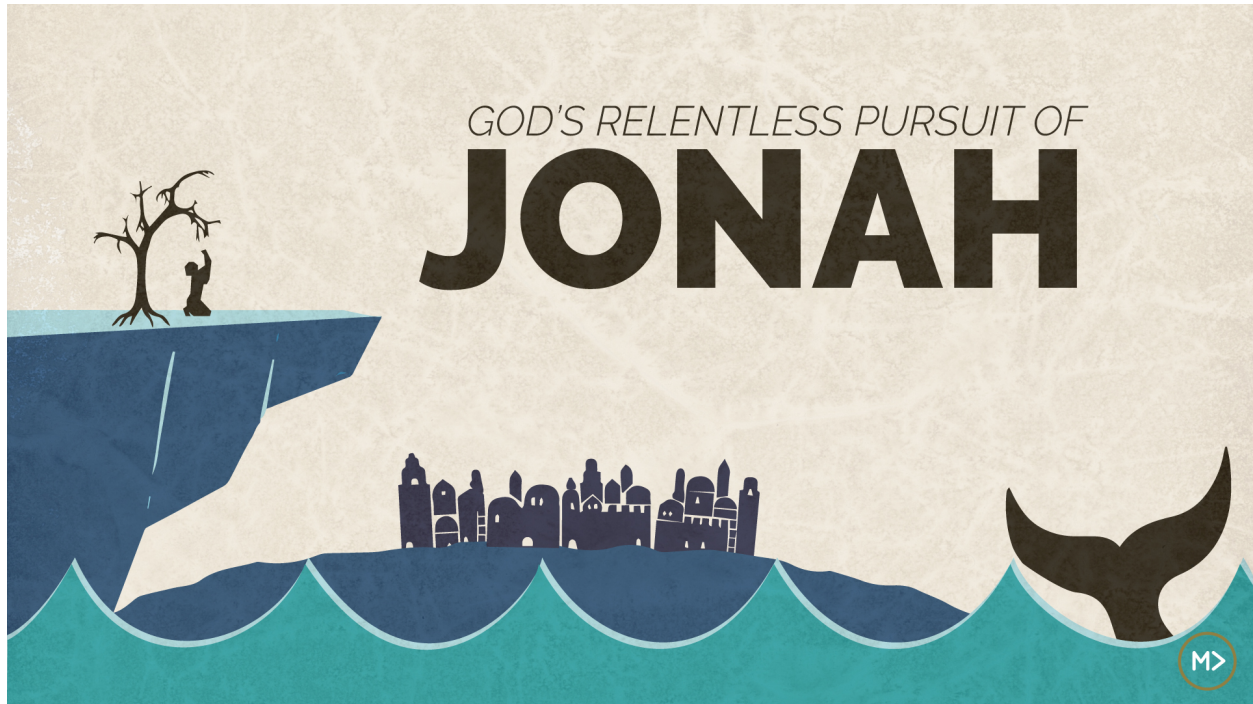


GOD'S RELENTLESS PURSUIT OF JONAH



Chapter One

A Note to the Parents/Teachers

The story of Jonah is one many think they know - you've heard of Jonah and the whale, right? - but many have not actually read the full story, or if they have they have often misunderstood it (for example the word whale is never used and the 'big fish' is only mentioned in 2 verses). Pray that we can enter into this story with fresh ears and eyes and hear what God is really trying to say to His people.

- **Big Idea:** God is relentlessly on a mission to restore ALL people

Starter

Question: Have you ever heard of the story of Jonah? What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of Jonah's story? (you will likely hear 'whale') What else do you know about the story?

Did you know that the story of Jonah is about so much more! The big fish is only mentioned in two verses, but the full story shows us a God who wants to bring peace and restoration to the whole world!

Sing Together

He's Got the Whole World In His Hands - <https://youtu.be/-T1CLIMjiTw>

Story

One day God spoke to a prophet named Jonah and said, “I have something I want you to say... but not to my people, Israel. Go and say it to your enemies in Nineveh. Tell them I have heard about their violence and oppression and I want them to stop!”

Well, what do you think Jonah did? He bought a one way ticket to the other side of the world - far away from Nineveh! Jonah didn't want anything to do with Nineveh, or with the job God had given him. He decided to run from God! Do you think you can outrun God? Do you think you can go some place where God is not there? Well, Jonah tried.

While he was traveling to Tarshish on a boat, a great storm came. The sailors knew they were in trouble because it seemed like the sea would swallow them right up! They were tossing things overboard and everyone said, “Everyone pray to their own gods. Maybe one of them will be able to save us!” They found Jonah down at the bottom of the ship asleep! “Get up! How can you sleep at a time like this? We're all going to die! Maybe your God can save us,” they said.

Then they cast lots (kind of like the old way of drawing straws or flipping a coin) to see who was responsible for bringing this danger to them. Wouldn't you know it, the lot fell on Jonah. “Who are you and where are you from?”, they asked. “I'm a Hebrew and I worship the true God, the One who created the land and the sea,” Jonah said. Then they knew they were in real trouble. Jonah told them the only way they would be safe is if they threw him overboard into the sea, but they did not want to harm him. They did everything they could to avoid it, but it became clear Jonah had to go. “Forgive us, Jonah's God,” they cried, and they threw Jonah into the sea. Then they sacrificed to the true God and feared Him above all other gods.

It seemed like Jonah would have rather drowned in the sea than go and do what God asked him to do. But God had other plans. Instead of Jonah drowning, God sent one of His creations, a great big fish, to swallow Jonah whole! The big fish swallowing Jonah was actually what saved him from death. He stayed in the stomach of that fish for 3 days and 3 nights.

Many years later Jesus was on a boat during a storm sleeping, but when he was awoken he commanded the storm to stop. Jesus was also swallowed up for 3 days and nights, but by the grave instead of a fish. Jesus did not run from bringing God's word. Instead, he gave up his life to bring God's salvation to all!

[Dialogue Questions - you may use some or all]

- Could Jonah get away from God's plan? Why do you think God pursued Jonah instead of just getting someone else to do the job?
- Why do you think Jonah ran from what God asked him to do?
- Jonah actually tells God in chapter 4. It's not that he was afraid of Nineveh, but he didn't think they deserved God's forgiveness! Is there anyone in your life you don't think deserves God's forgiveness?
- Nobody *deserves* God's forgiveness, but He offers it to all of us anyway because of His great love. Just like Jonah spent 3 days in the fish, Jesus spent 3 days in the grave. The fish was Jonah's salvation from drowning, but Jesus' death is our salvation from sin! What if God asked you to give this news to your worst enemy?

Breakout Time

- **Prayer:**

God, forgive us for running from You. Thank You for running after us! Thank You that Jesus went into the grave to save us from death and thank You that he came back to life through the Spirit. Help us to live in Your Spirit now. Amen.

- **Craft:**

Use the sheet attached to create a storm wheel. Have the kids color it, then cut out the ship and the circle. Use a brad to attach the boat on top of the circle where the dot indicates. The boat should be able to rotate through the storm into nice weather.

- **BLESS Activity:**

For kids to do during the week

Because this Story is true, we want to be faithful to live in it. We ask the Spirit to help us to *Bless, Listen, Eat, Speak*, and *Sabbath* (rest & celebrate) in ways that tell the good news of God's Story.

This week, focus on the **Speak** rhythm. God wanted Jonah to go speak to Nineveh, but he ran away. Who might God want you to speak the good news of Jesus to this week? Pray that His Spirit will give you strength to not run away from that.

Other Resources

- **Bible Project:**

Watch this video overview of the book of Jonah: <https://youtu.be/dLLabZc0O4c>

