



March 10, 2024
JONAH

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Has Good News for the Whole World

SCRIPTURE: [Jonah 1–4](#); [Matthew 12](#)

GOD'S BIG STORY: Jonah spends three days and nights in the belly of a great fish. God has compassion on Jonah, who shares God's message, and the people of Nineveh, who repent of their evil ways.

WORD OF WONDER: He saved us. It wasn't because of the good things we had done. It was because of his mercy. He saved us by washing away our sins. We were born again. The Holy Spirit gave us new life. —[Titus 3:5](#)

CURIOSITY (PRE-SERVICE) Small Group

An object lesson, experiment, or activity that sparks curiosity, encourages exploration, and gets kids thinking about the wonder of God.

- Welcome Question: What would you do if you were asked to go on a mission that would save the world but might cause you to lose all your belongings?
- STEM Experiment: Swimming Fish
- Declaring God's Wonder

**BELIEF (WORSHIP & BIBLE LESSON) Large Group**

A deep and interactive dive into Scripture that guides kids into knowing God more deeply, exploring His big story, and marveling at His wonder.

- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- In Awe of God's Wonder
- Word of Wonder: [Titus 3:5](#)

FAITH (APPLICATION) Small Group

An intentional conversation that helps kids see the wonder of God's story and how it connects to their own, emboldening their faith and fostering a deeper understanding of their place in God's kingdom.

- Discussion Questions for Younger Kids
- Small Group Prayer Time

IDENTITY (RESPONSE & CLOSING) Small Group

An interactive worship response activity that creates space for God to remind kids of these core truths: I am known, I am loved, I am led, and my life can tell of God's wonder.

- Responding in Worship: Coloring Prayer
- Game: The Blob
- Blessing Your Kids

Wonder@Home™

Designed for families to engage in the wonder of God together at home. This resource includes a video, worship playlists, activities, and more! [WONDER@HOME \(PDF\)](#)

INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

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WORD OF WONDER: [Titus 3:5](#)

Have you ever driven through a torrential downpour? With your windshield wipers going at full blast, you slowly navigate the blinding rain. Maybe you've had to pull over until the storm passed. It can be difficult to navigate when you can't see what lies ahead.

But guess what? The storm eventually passed. There were clear skies and possibly a rainbow awaiting you on the other side. It's amazing how what was once dark becomes light-filled.

The beauty of dark skies is in knowing that the sun will shine again. After three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, Jonah saw the sun and returned to the one place he had run from, the place where people most needed to hear God's good news. (Read his story in [Jonah 1–4](#).) Similarly, the sun shone brightly when Jesus emerged from the tomb after three long days and three dark nights. (Read [Matthew 12:38–41](#).)

Jesus' resurrection was good news to the whole world. He didn't stay in that dark tomb. He brought light and a renewed sense of hope.

- When has God met you in a dark place?
- How has your life changed because of the good news of Jesus?
- What has been the result of your obedience to God?

Take heart, friend. You will come out on the other side. The sun will shine again.

—**Kathie Phillips**

Senior Director of Next Gen Ministry

Contributor to Wonder Ink

DID YOU KNOW?**FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS****WHO?**

Jonah was a reluctant messenger of God, but his reluctance was different than other prophets who feared rejection. Jonah feared acceptance! He ran because he wanted God to judge Nineveh harshly. He knew God to be forgiving and gracious beyond measure ([Jonah 4:2](#)).

WHAT?

God asked Jonah to prophesy to the people of Nineveh and to warn of God's coming judgment. Although the Ninevites were ruthless and cruel, God was concerned for the people and their animals ([Jonah 4:11](#)). When the people repented, God forgave them.

WHERE?

Nineveh was the capital of the ancient Assyrian empire. The Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 BC, sending 10 tribes into a permanent exile. God told Jonah to go to Nineveh, but Jonah fled in the opposite direction, toward Tarshish.

WHEN?

[Second Kings 14:25](#) mentions Jonah as a prophet during the reign of Jeroboam II, in the eighth century BC. The book could date later, for memories of Jonah would be preserved by a school of prophets (called "company of the prophets" in [2 Kings 2:3 \[NIV\]](#)).

CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY

Jonah was reluctant to communicate God's mercy to his enemies. Jesus is a different kind of messenger. He was willing to give His own life for people who remained sinners ([Romans 5:8](#))! Jesus shows God's overflowing and abundant mercy.

Small Group

Spark curiosity, encourage exploration, and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

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Welcome Question

SUPPLIES: paper, colored pencils, whiteboard (optional), dry-erase marker (optional)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: Write the following question on a whiteboard: “What would you do if you were asked to go on a mission that would save the world but might cause you to lose all your belongings?” Set out paper and colored pencils.

As kids arrive ...

Warmly welcome kids by name, a fun high five, a big smile, or all three! Let them know you’re excited to see them and that they belong. See that kids have paper and pencils and direct their attention to the Welcome Question. Read it aloud to get them started.

Ask kids to think about their answers and write or draw their responses on the paper provided. Then pair up kids with a partner so they can share their thoughts. Drift around the room as kids draw/ write and ask them what they are drawing/writing. Remind them that this mission could come with a high cost! Give kids some examples to help them understand what they may have to give up for the mission—their favorite toys, the house or apartment they live in, their favorite food, etc.

At your start time ...

Ask kids to wrap up their drawings and responses as you read the Welcome Question once more: **What would you do if you were asked to go on a mission that would**

save the world but might cause you to lose all your belongings?

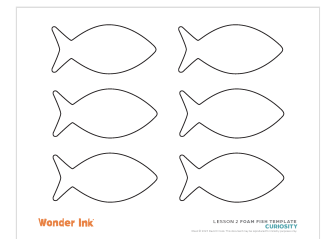
Then ask: **Who decided they would risk losing all their things and take the mission? What were you willing to give up and why?** Call on one or two kids to say what they would give up and why.

It can be hard to sacrifice or let go of things when it means being uncomfortable and doing something we may not want to do. Today we'll hear about two men who God sent on a mission with a message to the people God loved. But, first, it's time to be curious.

STEM Activity: Swimming Fish

SUPPLIES: craft foam (several sheets, each a different color), scissors (prep only), baking dish or other shallow container, water, small medicine measuring cup, liquid dish soap (1 tablespoon), cotton swabs (2–3), pitchers (2, optional)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [Foam Fish Template](#)



Before kids arrive, print the [Foam Fish Template](#) and use it as a template to cut several fish out of craft foam; each should be a different color. Fill the baking dish or shallow container with a few inches of water. Then fill your medicine cup with one tablespoon of liquid dish soap. Place cotton swabs near your experiment location with the other supplies.



Display the [Swimming Fish Slide](#). Choose two kids to help with the activity. Gather the rest of the kids where they can watch the STEM experiment.

Good news is too good not to share! We can't wait to run and tell a friend. But what if we couldn't run but had to swim? Let's do an experiment to see whether these fish can swim.



Have one kid volunteer place a fish in the container filled with water. Tell kids to watch to see whether the fish swims across the container. Next, have the second kid volunteer pick up another fish and use a cotton swab to place a small amount of liquid dish soap on the underside of its tail (along the V shape of the tail). Then the volunteer can place the fish soap-side down in the water. Kids will watch it swim away!

Thank your kid volunteers and ask them to return to their seats.

Wow! Why did the second fish swim but not the first? Allow kids to answer. **Great answers! The second fish swam because of surface tension. Water molecules are held together by surface tension. This means that they are more attracted to the other water molecules around them than to the air above. Together they form a thin layer of strongly attracted water molecules that are difficult to break through. When we added the soap, little holes were made in the layer of molecules, which changed the surface tension, making it easier for the second fish to swim.**



As the surface tension of the water needed changed before the fish could swim across the water, so God had to change the “tension” and disobedience in the heart of a man named Jonah. Jonah’s disobedience almost cost him his life and the lives of people who God loves. But with the help of a great big fish, Jonah learned a great big truth, which is also our Wonder Truth today.



Display the [Jonah Wonder Truth Slide](#). **Today’s Wonder Truth is GOD HAS GOOD NEWS FOR THE WHOLE WORLD.**

Leader Tip: This STEM activity works best the first time because once the soapy fish contacts the water, some soap will remain in the water. If you want multiple kids to try floating fish, prepare multiple containers of water or clean and refill the container each time. (If time allows, consider giving kids a chance to race their fish!)



Declaring God’s Wonder

Wonder Ink RESOURCES:

Read each line boldly and invite kids to repeat after you.

Thank You, God, that You are good! (Kids repeat.)

You made me on purpose, for a purpose. (Kids repeat.)

Thank You, God, that You are good! (Repeat)
You made me on purpose, for a purpose. (Repeat)
And I am Your kid! (Repeat)
You know me, love me, and lead me. (Repeat)
You invite me every day (Repeat)
To share Your good news with the world! (Repeat)
My life can tell of Your wonder! (Repeat)



And I can be Your kid! (Kids repeat.)

You know me, love me, and lead me. (Kids repeat.)

You invite me every day. (Kids repeat.)

To share Your good news with the world! (Kids repeat.)

My life can tell of Your wonder! (Kids repeat.)

Large Group

Guide kids into knowing God, exploring His big story, and marveling at His wonder.

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SCRIPTURE: [Jonah 1–4](#); [Matthew 12](#)

WORD OF WONDER: [Titus 3:5](#)

Connecting the Wonder Truth

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [Jonah Wonder Truth Slide](#)

Display the [Jonah Wonder Truth Slide](#). Pose the following question to kids to help them connect the Wonder Truth to God's big story:



Our Wonder Truth today is GOD HAS GOOD NEWS FOR THE WHOLE WORLD. Where did you see our Wonder Truth in the story? Allow kids to answer freely.

Jonah was hesitant to communicate God's mercy to his enemies, the Ninevites. But Jesus is a different kind of messenger! He was willing to give His own life for people who remained sinners! (See [Romans 5:8](#).) Jesus shows God's overflowing and never-ending mercy.

In Awe of God's Wonder

Spend a few moments allowing kids to think about the wonder of God's story, ask questions, and simply be in awe of Him!

Turn to a neighbor and tell him everything you remember about today's part of God's big story. Pause for kids to share with each other.

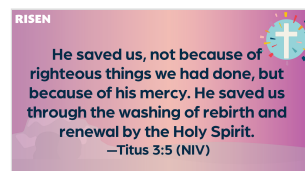
What part of the story is the most amazing to you? Give kids time to think quietly. Encourage kids to close their eyes and imagine that part of the story like a movie in their minds. **What is it about that part that amazes you?** Give kids an opportunity to share if they would like.

Word of Wonder

SUPPLIES: Bibles (1 per kid)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: Word of Wonder Slide [NirV](#)

The Word of Wonder is [Titus 3:5](#). Today, we learned that God sent Jesus to earth to share the best news ever with the whole world—our sins can be forgiven, and we can live as God's kids forever because of Jesus' death and resurrection! Let's read our Word of Wonder together.



Have kids open their Bibles to [Titus 3:5](#) and display the [Word of Wonder Slide](#) on the screen. Encourage kids to stand where they are and center themselves by taking a deep breath in and breathing out slowly. Then invite kids to read the passage aloud together three times. The first time have kids crouch and start at a whisper. The second time, encourage them to stand up normally and speak in a normal voice. The third time, have kids stand on their tiptoes and say the verse as loudly as they can!

For an optional discussion, gather kids to talk about these questions:

- **Jesus saved us from our sins by dying on the cross and rising again! What is not a reason He did this? What is the reason He did this?**
- **What do you think it means that the Holy Spirit gives us new life?**

Small Group

Help kids see the wonder of God's story and how it connects to their own story.

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Divide your group into smaller groups based on age. If your group is already small, stay together for this time.

WORD OF WONDER

He saved us. It wasn't because of the good things we had done. It was because of his mercy. He saved us by washing away our sins. We were born again. The Holy Spirit gave us new life.

—[Titus 3:5 \(NIRV\)](#)

Questions: Younger Kids

- What did God ask Jonah to do? How did Jonah respond?
- What did God tell the people of Nineveh to do? How did they respond?
- Jonah spent three days and three nights in the belly of the fish. According to [Matthew 12](#), how many days would Jesus spend in the grave?
- Jesus gave His life for us so we can be saved from our sins and live with God forever! What does this show us about Jesus? How do you think He feels about you? How do you think He feels about other people in your life?
- How can you share the love of Jesus and the good news of what He did on the cross with your friends at school? Your family at home?

Even though Jonah didn't obey God the first time, God gave Jonah another chance to obey. As a result, many people heard God's message. God has good news for the whole world, and He wants everyone to know that Jesus came to save them! Let's spend some time praying, asking God to help us share His good news with others!

Prayer Time: Younger Kids

Invite kids to share the names of three people they know. Then encourage them to pray for each person they named. If that person already knows Jesus personally, kids can thank God for that person's faith. If someone on their list doesn't know Jesus, kids can ask God to help them share His good news with that person.

Small Group

Create space for God to remind kids they are known, loved, led, and their lives can tell of God's wonder.

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Responding in Worship: Coloring Prayer

SUPPLIES: coloring utensils

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [Coloring Prayer Sheet](#) (1 per kid),

[Risen Elementary Spotify playlist](#)

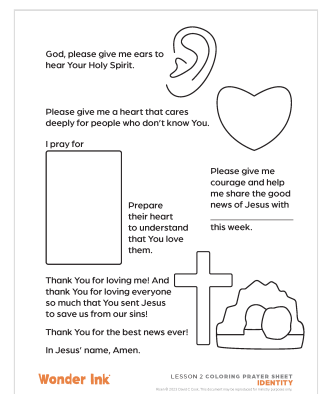


Ahead of time, print one copy of the [Coloring Prayer Sheet](#) for each kid.

Set out coloring utensils and display the [Responding in Worship Slide](#).

Gather kids together.

Even though Jonah was reluctant to share God's message with the people of Nineveh, God gave Jonah a second chance. As a result, the people heard God's message and their hearts were changed. The greatest news of all time is that God sent Jesus to earth to live, die, and rise again so that we can be saved from our sins—the wrong things we do—and be with God forever. That's how much God loves us! Now, like Jonah, we have the opportunity to share God's good news with the world!



Let's spend some time talking with God in prayer. Hand a [Coloring Prayer Sheet](#) and some coloring utensils to each kid. Read through each section of the prayer

together, pausing after each for kids to color, draw, or write.

God, please give me ears to hear Your Holy Spirit. Pause as kids color the image.

Please give me a heart that cares deeply for people who don't know You. Pause as kids color the image.

I pray for _____. Prepare their heart to understand that You love them. Pause and encourage kids to write the name or first initial of someone in their life who might not know that Jesus loves them.

Please give me courage and help me share the good news of Jesus with _____ this week. Pause and encourage kids to draw a picture of the person whose name or initial they wrote.

Thank You for loving me! And thank You for loving everyone so much that You sent Jesus to save us from our sins! Pause and encourage kids to color the image.

Thank You for the best news ever!

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Consider playing a worship song from the [Risen Elementary Spotify playlist](#) softly in the background during this prayer time.

GAME 2: THE BLOB

In this modified version of Tag, every time a kid gets tagged, he gets incorporated into the Blob. The Blob grows and grows until all the kids are a part of it.

To start, we need someone to be Baby Blob. Allow one of the kids to volunteer or pick one to start the game. **Baby Blob is trying to get you. If Baby Blob tags you, then you become a part of the Blob. You must hold onto one of Baby Blob's arms, and then the two of you continue hunting for others to get.**

**Works well with
the Jonah
lesson!**

Leader Tip: Before this game begins, offer some guidelines for appropriate touch: tags should be gentle, on the arm, shoulder, or upper back. When someone gets tagged and must join the Blob, they should hold onto someone's arm, preferably between the elbow and the wrist.

As each new person is tagged, they too join the Blob by holding onto the arm of someone who is already a part of it. As the Blob grows, it will include more and more kids, but each will only be able to tag with one of her hands because she'll be using the other to hold onto the Blob.

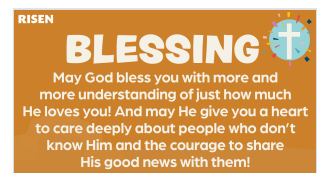
Those of you who have not been caught by the Blob, your job is to stay away! But here's the catch: you have to crawl on your hands and knees. Alternatively, you can have students hop on one foot, crab walk, or do something similar. Adjust the difficulty as needed, depending on the age of your kids. Just be sure the kids who are trying to stay out of the Blob have their movement restricted in some way, because as the Blob grows, it'll become slower (and more hilarious) while catching the last remaining kids.

When Jonah tried to run away from God, he was swallowed by a huge fish. God has good news for the whole world, but Jonah did not want to bring God's message to the people of Nineveh. In the end, Jonah went to Nineveh and shared the good news. God has good news for the whole world—including us!

Blessing Your Kids

Wonder Ink RESOURCES:

Speak this blessing over your kids, as a group or as individuals. If you bless kids individually, insert each name into the blessing.



Leader Tip: If you bless kids individually, do so using their names. Ask their permission to place one hand on their head or shoulder. You'll have kids' full attention, and the blessing will have maximum impact.

Blessing: May God bless you with more and more understanding of just how much He loves you! And may He give you a heart to care deeply about people who don't know Him and the courage to share His good news with them!