



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: Jesus forgives our sins, saves us, and gives us new life. —from [Titus 3:5](#)

CURIOSITY (PRE-SERVICE)

Four options for interactive hands-on activities to help kids begin thinking about the wonder of God.

- Play Stations:
 - Go Fishing
 - Sea Sensory Bin
 - Jonah Coloring Sheet
- Declaring God’s Wonder



BELIEF (WORSHIP & BIBLE LESSON)

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

- Prayer of Invitation and Worship
- God’s Big Story
- Connecting the Wonder Truth
- Word of Wonder: [From Titus 3:5](#)

FAITH (APPLICATION)

An intentional interactive discussion that helps kids discover the wonder of God’s story and how it connects to their own.

- Circle Time: Fishy Questions
- Craft: Jonah in the Fish

IDENTITY (RESPONSE & CLOSING)

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: Psalm of Praise
- Prayer and Blessing
- Closing Game: Fish Bait

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 \(PDF\)](#)

Wonder Ink



FOR FIVESTONE KIDS LEADERS

INVITATION

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

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Has Good News for the Whole World

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

WORD OF WONDER: [From 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 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 a very important city in the ancient Assyrian empire. The Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 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.



Curiosity (Pre-Service)

PRE-K & KINDERGARTEN

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

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WONDER TRUTH: God Has Good News for the Whole World

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

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

Countdown Video

Play the countdown video at 10:55am. At the conclusion of the 5-minute countdown, take your small group to the worship room.



Play Stations

SUPPLIES: scissors (prep only), unsharpened pencils or dowel rods (4), string (4 pieces, each 24"), magnets (4), paper clips (4), bin (1), rice, plastic sea animals, plastic fish, coloring utensils, blue dye (optional), tablecloth or plastic tablecloth (optional)

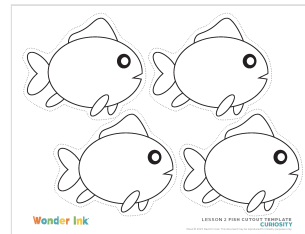
Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [Jonah Coloring Sheet](#) (1 per kid), [Fish Cutout Template](#)

Greet kids warmly as they arrive and briefly explain the play stations. Invite them to play at any of the play stations.

Welcome to church! While we're getting ready to start, you can play at any of these stations to help get ready for our lesson today. Do you have any ideas what we'll be learning about today?

Play Station: Go Fishing

Set-up: Print a copy of the [Fish Cutout Template](#). Cut out the fish shapes and attach a paper clip to each fish. Tie or tape each magnet to the end of a piece of string. Tie each string with a magnet to the end of a pencil or dowel rod.



Play: Invite kids to pretend to fish using the rod with a magnet. Kids can “catch” as many fish as possible using the magnets, which will be attracted to the paper clips.

Leader Tip: Keep the Go Fishing items nearby. You will use them again in the Circle Time section.

Play Station: Sea Sensory Bin

Set-up: Fill a bin with rice and plastic sea animals and fish. Hide some animals on top and some deeper for kids to find. If you would like to make the rice look more like the sea, you can dye the rice blue beforehand.

Play: Allow kids to play and explore the sensory bin.

Allergy Caution: This activity includes possible food allergens!

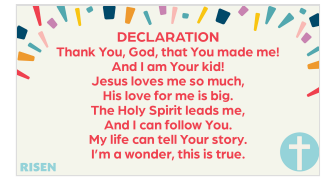
Leader Tip: Put a tablecloth or plastic sheet under the sensory bin for easy cleanup!

Play Station: Jonah Coloring Sheet

Set-up: Print one copy of the [Jonah Coloring Sheet](#) per kid. Set out the Coloring Sheets and coloring utensils.

Play: Let the kids color. They can also turn over the sheet and draw a large fish.

Declaring God's Wonder



Optional: Show the [Declaration slide](#) and encourage the kids to say the statements and do the motions with you.

Let's say these words together.

Thank You, God, that You made me! *(Kids repeat words and motions.)*

Make prayer hands, then point up to God and to yourself.

And I can be Your kid! *(Kids repeat words and motions.)*

Put your hands on your hips.

Jesus loves me so much; *(Kids repeat words and motions.)*

Spread your arms out wide to your side one at a time, then pull them in for a hug around your chest.

His love for me is big. *(Kids repeat words and motions.)*

Hold your arms up high and wide above your head.

The Holy Spirit leads me, *(Kids repeat words and motions.)*

Bring your arms down from the sky, making a path in front of you.

And I can follow You. *(Kids repeat words and motions.)*

March like you're following the leader.

My life can tell Your story, *(Kids repeat words and motions.)*

Hold your hands in front of you like an open book.

I'm a wonder; this is true. *(Kids repeat words and motions.)*

Put your hands up, shaking your fingers, celebrating ("praise hands").



Belief (Worship & Bible Lesson)

PRE-K & KINDERGARTEN

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

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Has Good News for the Whole World

SCRIPTURE: Jonah 1–4; Matthew 12

WORD OF WONDER: From Titus 3:5

Prayer of Invitation

Before entering into God's big story, lead kids in a prayer of invitation. Use the prayer here or your own words: **God, thank You for the good news that Jesus saves us.**

Help us hear Your voice as we listen to Your big story and see how sharing Your good news can change people's lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.

God's Big Story

SUPPLIES: Bible

Hold up a Bible and show the kids. Tell them today's story comes from the books of Jonah and Matthew in the Bible. Open a Bible and show them where the story is found.

Bible Time Rhyme

Say the Bible time rhyme (with motions) each week before the Bible story to remind kids that what they're about to hear is part of God's big story.

I open my Bible and what do I see? *(Hands together then opening palms up, like opening a book.)*

God's big story, waiting for me! *(Point to yourself.)*

Let's hear part of God's big story, which comes from the books of Jonah and Matthew in the Bible.

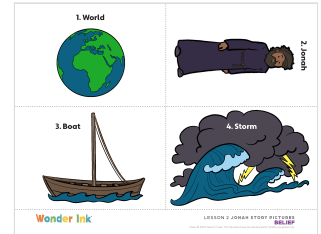
Read the God's Big Story Script provided, or read [Jonah 1:1–4, 11–17; 2:10–3:5](#). Also read [Matthew 12:40](#) from the Bible.

God's Big STORY SCRIPT: JONAH

SUPPLIES: Bible, plastic Easter eggs (8), scissors (prep only), permanent marker (prep only)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [Jonah Story Pictures Sheet](#)

Before the kids arrive, print and cut out the pictures from the [Jonah Story Pictures Sheet](#). Put the pictures inside the eggs. Use a permanent marker to number the eggs (corresponding to the number on the picture inside the eggs) so you can open each egg in order to tell the story. Then hide the eggs around the room or recruit a leader to do it while the kids are distracted. Make the eggs pretty obvious so they can be found quickly.



I have hidden eight colorful eggs around the room. Each egg will help us tell part of God's big story. Can you help me find them? Give kids time to find the eggs and put them in order in front of you.

Let's see what the first egg shows us. Open egg #1 and show the kids a picture of the world. **God created the whole world and humans as His most special creation. But humans didn't listen to God and disobeyed Him. That's called sin. Sin separates people from God. God had a plan to save the world. A long time ago, God chose the Israelites to be His special people—a family who would bring blessing to the whole world.**

The Israelites also sinned. They forgot about God and did whatever they wanted. So, God sent His messengers, called prophets, to speak to the Israelites and give messages and warnings to come back to God.

Sometimes God even sent prophets to give messages to other people who weren't Israelites, because God loves all people. God asked a man named Jonah to be His messenger to the people of Nineveh. Open egg #2 and show the picture of Jonah.

The Ninevites were mean—they were enemies of God's people. Jonah refused to go and didn't want to bring them God's warning, so he ran away. Jonah got on a ship going the opposite direction of where God wanted him to go. Open egg #3 and show the picture of the ship.

God sent a big storm to where Jonah's boat was sailing. Open egg #4 and show the picture of the boat. **The sailors didn't know what to do, but Jonah knew God had sent the storm. So, Jonah told the sailors to throw him overboard. They threw him into the water, and God sent a huge fish to swallow Jonah.** Open egg #5 and show the picture of the big fish.

He stayed in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. What do you think it would be like to be inside the belly of a fish? Allow the kids to respond. **Then the fish spit Jonah onto dry land.** Open egg #6 and show the picture of Jonah on dry land.

God had a message for the people of Nineveh: He wanted them to ask forgiveness for all the wrong things they had done. So again, He told Jonah to go to Nineveh. Finally, Jonah obeyed. Jonah went to Nineveh and gave them a warning. He told them God would destroy the city in 40 days. Open egg #7 and show a picture of Jonah talking to people.

Surprise! All of the people of Nineveh listened to Jonah! They believed God's warning. They called on God and were sad for the way they had acted. Their king told them to stop being cruel and doing evil. God saw their hearts had changed, and He didn't destroy them. God cared about the people of Nineveh.

God cares about all people! Later in the Bible in the book of Matthew, we learn about when Jesus came to earth. He brought good news for the whole world. Open egg #8 and show a picture of Jesus. **Jesus knew that God's good news should be shared with everyone!**

In order to defeat death, Jesus spent three days and three nights in the grave—the same amount of time Jonah was inside the fish! Just like God sent Jonah to Nineveh, God sent Jesus for the whole world. Jesus spoke good news: Through Him, people can turn from their sin and be saved. And, unlike Jonah, Jesus didn't run away from what God asked Him to do. Jesus chose to give His life for the sins of the world. When He rose to life again three days later, He proved that God's good news is for everyone!

Make It Inclusive!

If you have a child unable to hunt for the hidden eggs, invite her to be the one to hold the gathered eggs.

Connecting the Wonder Truth

Ask 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 didn't want to share God's message of love and forgiveness with 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 love.

Word of Wonder

SUPPLIES: ball

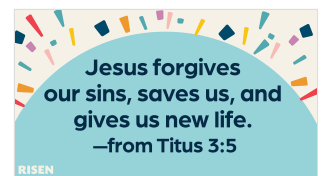
Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [Risen Word of Wonder Slide](#) (optional)

Invite the kids to form a circle. Hold the ball until it is time to play.

WORD OF WONDER

**Jesus forgives our sins, saves us,
and gives us new life.**

—from Titus 3:5



Our Word of Wonder comes from [Titus 3:5](#). Our Word of Wonder says, “Jesus forgives our sins, saves us, and gives us new life.” This verse describes how Jesus came to earth to save us from our sins and change us. Say the verse again slowly and have the kids repeat it back to you. Then add in the motions.

Encourage the kids to do the motions and say the verse with you.

- **JESUS**—Point up.
- **FORGIVES OUR SINS,**—Palms together (praying hands motion).
- **SAVES US,**—Arms out to your sides (make a cross).
- **AND GIVES US**—Hold your hands in front of you as if receiving something.
- **NEW LIFE.**—Bring your arms up and out to your sides.
- **FROM [TITUS 3:5](#)**—Hold your hands open, as if holding a book.

Now we're going to play a game. Let's sit in our circle. I'm going to roll the ball to a friend, and that person will say the first word of our Word of Wonder.

Then that person will roll the ball to someone else to say the next word. We will keep rolling the ball until we say the whole Word of Wonder. Are you ready? Let the kids roll the ball and say the verse, one word at a time.

Leader Tip: Encourage the kids to do the motion as the child with the ball says the words. If it seems like they are struggling to remember the words, do the motions for them and see if they can remember the words.

Gather kids to discuss these questions:

- **Why did Jesus come to earth?**
- **Our verse says that Jesus gives us new life. What do you think a new life means?**

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

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Has Good News for the Whole World

SCRIPTURE: Jonah 1–4; Matthew 12

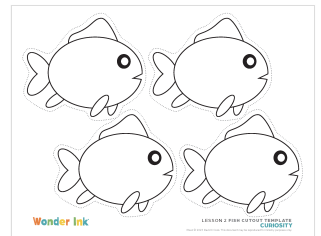
WORD OF WONDER: From Titus 3:5

Circle Time: Fishy Questions

SUPPLIES: scissors (prep only), items from Go Fishing Play Station (fish cutouts, paper clips, tape, magnets, string or yarn, pencils or dowel rods)

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

If you haven't already, print a copy of the [Fish Cutout Template](#). Cut out the fish shapes and attach a paper clip to each fish. Scatter the fish on the ground. Tie or tape a magnet to the end of each piece of string. Tie each string with a magnet to the end of a pencil or dowel rod.



Set up the Go Fishing items again. Allow kids to take turns using the “fishing poles” to fish. Each time a kid catches a fish, ask one of the questions below about God's big story.

Let's pretend to go fishing as we think about our story from today and how God used a fish to protect the prophet Jonah.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- **What is a prophet?** (a messenger from God)
- **Why do you think Jonah ran away from Nineveh at first?** (He didn't want to obey God or help the people of Nineveh.)

- **What happened to Jonah when he was on the boat?** *(A big storm came, and the sailors threw him into the sea.)*
- **How many days was Jonah in the fish?** *(three days)*
- **How many days was Jesus in the grave?** *(three days)*
- **Have you ever run from something you didn't want to do?**
- **How are the stories of Jesus and Jonah alike?** *(Jonah was in the fish for three days like Jesus was in the grave for three days. Jonah had good news for the Ninevites, and Jesus has good news for the whole world.)*
- **What is God's good news for the whole world?** *(Jesus was sent to earth to die for our sins and give us new life.)*

Jonah and Jesus had similar stories. Jesus gives us a new life, and we can tell others about Him! God's good news about Jesus is for the whole world!

Let's talk to God now in prayer and thank Him for the good news of Jesus.

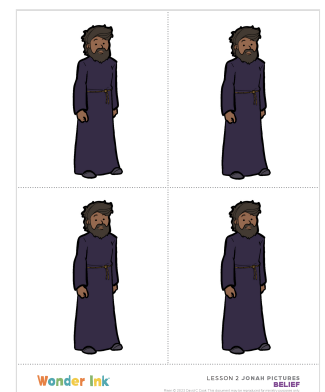
Invite kids to share prayer requests and praises and to pray for each other. Some kids may not be comfortable praying out loud. That's OK! Encourage them to pray silently and thank God for giving us the good news of Jesus.

Craft: Jonah in the Fish

SUPPLIES: paper plates (2 per kid), paper (several sheets), scissors (prep only), coloring utensils, glue or glue sticks, stapler (leader use only)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: [Jonah Pictures](#) (1 card per kid)

Ahead of time, cut a "V" shape into the paper plates to create the mouth of the fish. Be sure to keep the pieces you cut off the plates. Print the Jonah Pictures and cut the cards apart so that you have one per kid. It may be helpful to staple the two paper plates together (see photo) before the kids come so they can simply color and glue in this craft.



What was the name of the prophet who shared God's good news with the people of Nineveh? Allow the kids to answer. **Yes, Jonah! He was inside a big fish for three days like Jesus was in the grave for three days. We're going to make our own fish with Jonah inside!**

Give each child two plates, a triangle piece from the paper plates for a tail, and a Jonah card. Allow kids to color the backs of the plates as their “fish.” Staple the plates together if you didn’t do that ahead of time. Next, the kids can color and glue the tail (triangle piece) to the end of the fish.



When finished, the kids can put Jonah inside through the mouth of the fish and then shake the fish to get him out. They can use their crafts to tell the story of Jonah.



Identity (Response & Closing)

PRE-K & KINDERGARTEN

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

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: God Has Good News for the Whole World

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

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

Responding in Worship: Psalm of Praise

SUPPLIES: white construction paper (1 sheet per kid), watercolor paint set (1 set per kid or enough for kids to share)

Wonder Ink RESOURCES: songs from the [Risen Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#)

What kind of news does God have for people? Allow answers. **Yes, it's good news! Even though the Ninevites didn't follow God, He had good news for them too. He offers this good news to everyone in the world, and that includes us!**

Let's praise God for His good news by reciting a psalm from the Bible together. I will say the words to each line, and you can repeat them back to me. Then I'll play a song, and you can paint a picture about God's good news.

Sing a new song to the Lord. (Invite kids to repeat line.)

All you people of the earth, sing to the Lord. (Invite kids to repeat line.)

Sing to the Lord. Praise him. (Invite kids to repeat line.)

Day after day tell about how he saves us. (Invite kids to repeat line.)

Tell the nations about his glory. (Invite kids to repeat line.)

Tell all people about the wonderful things he has done. (Invite kids to repeat line.)

([Psalm 96:1–3](#), NIV)

Give each kid a sheet of construction paper and a watercolor paint set. Play songs from the [Risen Early Childhood Spotify playlist](#) and allow the kids to paint anything that reminds them of God's good news. When the paintings are dry, the kids can take them home, or you can display them in your room or ministry area.

Prayer and Blessing

After the kids finish their activity, pray with them, thanking God for loving us enough to share good news that Jesus came to save us and give us hope!

God, thank You for the great plans You had for Jonah and the plans You have for us! Thank You for sending Jesus to be our Savior. We praise You for the good news of Jesus. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Encourage the kids to hold their hands out in front of them, with palms up, as if their hands were open to receive something. Tell them to listen and receive the blessing as you speak it over them.

Blessing: May God's good news of Jesus coming to save you bring you great joy today and every day. May you have courage to share the good news about Jesus with others!

Closing Activity: Fish Bait

In God's big story, Jonah was thrown into the sea, and a fish came along and swallowed him. We're going to play a game where I am the big fish, and you are Jonah. You will try to "swim" away from me (which really means you'll run, since we're on dry land!). If you get caught, you can sit down until the next round and pretend to be like Jonah when he was in the belly of the fish.

Have the kids stand on one side of the room, preferably a large playing area. Tell them to "swim" across to the other side without getting caught (and eaten!) by the big fish. Any kids who get caught will sit down until that round is finished. Then invite them to stand up and play when the next round starts.