

Purpose

- To learn about Jonah
- Review character in the Old Testament

Materials

- Bibles
- Handouts

Background Information**JONAH**

Jonah was a prophet of the Lord in the northern kingdom of Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II. Jonah liked his job and even gained some respect from Israel's king. It was God's call for Jonah to go to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, and deliver a message of God's approaching judgment. Now there were no people more deserving of God's revenge than the people of Nineveh. The people of Nineveh flaunted their power before God and the world through numerous acts of heartless cruelty. Jonah felt that Nineveh was not deserving of God's forgiveness and he did not want to do as God commanded him.

Jonah got up, but he headed in the opposite direction. Nineveh was to the east; Jonah booked passage on the first ship headed west. Before you condemn Jonah, think about what God had asked Jonah to do. He wanted his prophet to go into enemy territory, to the main political and military center, and announce to the people of Nineveh that the God of Israel was giving them six weeks to repent. They had to change their evil, violent ways within forty days or Nineveh would be toast. Jonah ran away because God was calling him to go to the enemies of God's people.

Jonah paid his fare, went into his cabin, and fell asleep. A few hours from Israel's shore, however, God sent a storm unlike anything these sailors had seen before. In panic they woke Jonah and asked him to pray. Jonah knew right away that the storm was God's chastening hand. At Jonah's insistence, the sailors threw him overboard, and the storm settled down. They thought it was the end of Jonah, but God had other plans. When Jonah hit the water of the Mediterranean Sea and began to sink God was ready. God had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah.

In the stomach of the fish, Jonah began to pray. He didn't pray when God's call first came. He didn't pray when he boarded the ship to run away. He didn't even pray when the sailors threw him overboard, but when he knew God was there with him he prayed. God made the fish vomit Jonah up onto the shore.

Jonah went to Nineveh and saw one of the greatest reveals in history. He preached God's message and the whole population repented!! Now Jonah was angry. He went outside the city and waited for God to destroy the city and it never happened.

God revealed Jonah's prejudice by allowing a vine to grow up to shade Jonah from the hot sun – and then by sending a caterpillar to cut the vine at the root and cause it

to wither. When Jonah complained, God pointed out that Jonah was more concerned with his own comfort than he was with an entire city of people who needed to hear the message of God's love and forgiveness.

God was pointing out to Jonah that his love and forgiveness is for everyone, not just the Jews.

CONCLUSION OF OLD TESTAMENT

We have covered many people and events that are in the Old Testament. For the fifth graders they will get the rest of the story next year when they are sixth graders. We have only scratched the surface, but many now they will be a little curious to read and find out some things on their own.

Next week we will start with Advent and the New Testament.

Procedure

- Read the background information on Jonah.
- Handout 51-1 is to be finished and sent to me
- Check out handout 51-2. See what you remember about them. Jot down a few comments and keep it in your folder. Handout 51-3 may be helpful doing this.
- Handout 51-4 is just for fun. Do as you please.