

Lesson 191

TEXT Jonah 1; 2; 3

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURE Matthew 12:39-41

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain the danger of refusing to obey the commands of God. They will learn that it was only the divine mercy and forbearance of God extended to Jonah which preserved his life and gave him another opportunity to do as the Lord instructed.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh. — Jonah 3:1,2

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. — Jonah 3:1-3

**ANSWER
TITLE:** **Those Big, Sharp Teeth!**
**SEARCH
TITLE:** **Jonah**

REFERENCE INFORMATION

Jonah, the son of Amittai, was of the village of Gath-hepher, a town on the border of Zebulun, not far from Nazareth. Jonah (also called Jonas) was a prophet of Israel (2 Kings 14:25), sent to warn the people of Nineveh, a capital of the Assyrian empire or world empire for three hundred years. It had absorbed and destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel, and took tribute of Israel. Thus Jonah was called of God to preach unto an enemy nation

to prolong the life of the enemy which was destroying his own nation. The Lord used Jonah to foretell the recovery of territory lost to Israel because of their idolatry, and under the reign of Jeroboam II this came to pass.

It was nearly two hundred years before Nineveh was eventually overthrown.

YOUR OPENER

Jonah

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RESPONSES

1. Possibly Jonah reasoned that he wanted an enemy destroyed. After all, if Nineveh repented they would no longer be a threat to Israel's national security. Whatever his reasoning, it was not a valid excuse for not answering the call of God or for not obeying Him in any matter. See Proverbs 24:17,18.

2. God's displeasure was indicated by the events which happened to Jonah. Discussion should bring out that the way of a transgressor is hard. Trouble came to Jonah as the Lord sought to bring him to the point of obedience. Ask your students to enumerate ways people may attempt to alleviate the problems they face when they disobey God.

3. Jonah was likely trying to quiet the consciousness of his disobedience. The question should cause the student to see that many times people will try to ignore their guilt or seek insensitivity to their sins. They may do this through alcohol, drug abuse, or simply by refusing to heed the voice of their conscience until the Spirit of God no longer strives with them. However, insensitivity does not bring about security. Just ignoring our responsibility does not make it go away.

Why would a prophet like Jonah, who had been called by the Lord, suddenly want to flee from his duty and from the presence of the Lord? We find that the man who runs from the Lord runs into trouble every time.

1. Jonah was a prophet of God, called to preach to the people of Nineveh. Consider the fact that Nineveh was a political enemy. How might this have affected Jonah's thinking?

2. How do we know that God was displeased with Jonah when he refused to go to Nineveh?

3. Inasmuch as Jonah was running from God, how do you suppose he could go to the lower part of the ship and sleep, apparently oblivious to the storm? What behavioral patterns of people in today's society reflect the same kind of attempt to escape from God's call?

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

4. Which verse in our text shows the turning point in Jonah's attitude? Explain.

5. What were Jonah's feelings in the belly of the fish regarding his own spiritual condition? How did he react on this occasion?

6. When Jonah prayed, the Lord heard his prayer. What was the result?

7. What was the message which Jonah delivered to Nineveh? What were the results?

8. The truth of this account is challenged by many. Find a New Testament Scripture which confirms the story of Jonah as an actual happening.

Thought Provoker: Have you ever come to a point in your life when you reacted to God's call in a manner similar to the way in which Jonah first reacted? What did you learn from this experience?

4. Even though we have no record of Jonah's praying until he was in the fish's belly, in verse 12 of the first chapter he acknowledges his guilt and confesses that he is the one who brought the trouble upon them. Discuss with your class why coming to a realization of guilt and admitting it, is a necessary step in turning to God. See 1 John 1:9.

5. He felt that he was in Hell. Godly sorrow is brought about by Holy Ghost conviction. Jonah saw himself as God saw him and began to act in conformance to God's will, asking for mercy. Discuss with your class the fact that even though Jonah had admitted his guilt, he still needed to ask God for mercy and forgiveness.

6. The result of Jonah's prayer was the intervention of God. God spoke to the fish and caused it to vomit Jonah onto the dry ground. Then God called Jonah a second time, giving him another opportunity to obey and go to Nineveh. Discuss with your class the fact that God's call does not change. Jonah's attitude was what changed—he became willing. God uses and blesses the efforts of those who are willing and pliable in His hand.

7. The message was, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." This was a message of judgment, but the people repented and were saved from destruction. The students should draw the conclusion that God is giving men and women the same warning today. Judgment is coming, and "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:5).

8. Some Scriptures which verify this account are Matthew 12:40,41; 16:4; Luke 11:29,30,32. These are all Jesus' words and there can be no greater authority.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

Jonah wasn't happy when he disobeyed God. Why are you happier when you obey God?

God delivered Jonah. How can we prove God will still deliver today?

What is the danger of refusing to obey the Lord?

Does the Lord always give a person another chance? Why did He give Jonah another chance?

Name some other Bible characters who disobeyed God. What were the consequences of their disobedience?

In what way did the mariners change as a result of taking Jonah into their ship?

What did the king of Nineveh ask the people to do?

What would have happened if the people had been as unwilling to obey the king as Jonah had been unwilling, at first, to obey God?

In our ANSWER story, how was Perry's conduct on Saturday similar to Jonah's experience?

THINGS TO DO

With your class, make a list of things that we can do for the Lord at home, at school, at play, or at work. Have the students circle one that they will try to work on this week and report the results next week. Ask them to think about Jonah. Are we willing to do what God asks or will we be like Jonah and try to run away from the task?

Have students do a skit on Jonah showing obedience to God is far better than going our own way. Have one student be Jonah. Make a cardboard whale. Rock it back and forth showing how seasick Jonah must have been. Have Jonah behind the whale praying to God as a narrator reads, "And the LORD spake unto the fish," etc. When Jonah gets to Nineveh, have him shout, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Another student as the king should give the order to the people, ending with, "Who can tell if God will turn," etc. (Jonah 3:9). Then have the narrator read "And God saw their works," etc.

Has anyone ever told you a story that sounded "fishy," not quite true? Try this True and Fishy test on your class.

- _____ Jonah was told by God to go to Nineveh.
- _____ Jonah did what God said without delay.
- _____ Jonah sailed on a cabin cruiser to Nineveh.
- _____ The storm stopped when Jonah was thrown into a lake.
- _____ A great fish swallowed Jonah.
- _____ Jonah prayed while he was inside the fish.
- _____ Jonah was inside the fish for two days and three nights.
- _____ Jonah preached to Nineveh after the fish spit him out onto dry land.
- _____ The people of Nineveh repented and God destroyed them.

Answers for ANSWER

Don't Be a Jonah!

There is danger in refusing to obey God, but He is merciful and loving. Below are some questions about Jonah, a man who received mercy even though he ran away from God's call. Answer them and then answer the questions that relate to you. Remember, God loves you!

God asked Jonah to preach to Nineveh. Did he go? <u>No!</u>	→ Do you obey God when He asks you to do something? _____
What did Jonah ride on that was going in the wrong direction? <u>A Ship</u>	→ What would keep you from going in God's direction? _____
What happened when Jonah disobeyed God? List at least two things. <u>He was thrown into sea.</u> <u>He was swallowed by fish</u>	→ What will happen to you if you disobey God? _____
What did Jonah do while he was in the belly of the fish? <u>He prayed</u>	→ What should you do if you want God's blessing? _____
How does this lesson show God's mercy to Jonah? <u>God talked to him a second time.</u>	→ How does God show His mercy to you? _____