



## Children and Family Resources

### Jonah Sermon Series

Each week, we will move through the story of Jonah to learn more about ourselves, our God, and how we can have the courage to live out our faith in our daily lives in the midst of our doubts, and fears. Each week we will **SHARE** the story, we will **REFLECT** on what it means for our lives, and then we will **ACT** on what we have heard by doing an activity together that will help us reinforce the ideas of the week. Then we can **PRAY** to close out our time together.

These ideas are intended to be prompts to get you started as you plan your Lenten time together. You can use these resources with your Children's Ministry, when planning a Children's sermon or you can use it as an Intergenerational Piece with people of all ages reflecting on these themes together (who says people of all ages wouldn't enjoy a good game of hide and seek!). Feel free to take these ideas as a starting point, to create whatever will work best in your ministry context, and make it your own!

#### Table of Contents

Ash Wednesday - God Calls and Persists	2
Lent 1 – Intercepted & Redirected	3
Lent 2 – God in the Depth of Chaos	4
Lent 3 – Obedience and Preservation	6
Lent 4 – Faithful and Unfinished	7
Lent 5 – Jesus, the new Jonah	8

## Ash Wednesday - God Calls and Persists

### SHARE

Find the story of Jonah in Jonah 1: 1-17 or read it in your favorite Children's Bible. Read the story together.

### REFLECT

- Ask the group if they have ever run away when they were scared of something or when they were uncomfortable? Have they ever hid behind a parent in a room where there were lots of people they didn't know? Have they ever hidden when they didn't want to do something?
- Why do you think Jonah ran away? (He was scared)
- Why was Jonah scared? (He didn't know if he could do what God wanted him to do)
- What happened when Jonah ran away? (God went after him! God sent a storm to get his attention, and then when Jonah was thrown overboard, God had a big fish swallow him to keep him safe)
- Have you ever played Hide and Seek? What would happen if you hid, and no one came to find you? Would you be sad? Would you be scared? We have a God, that always comes after us, and always will find us when we are lost, when we run away and when we are scared! Isn't that Good news?

### ACT

If you have a big enough space, play a game of Hide and Go seek with the children, reminding them that God always seeks us out! If you are working in a smaller space, take turns hiding an object while everyone else closes their eyes. When they open their eyes, they can see if they can find the object.

### PRAY

Thank you, God, for never giving up on us, even when we are scared. Help us trust that you will always provide for us. Amen.

*\*Looking ahead – in Lent 2 we have a Service project suggestion to make care packages for the “helpers in your community”. If this is a project you are interested in doing make sure to get all your supplies starting this week!*

## Lent 1 – Intercepted & Redirected

### SHARE

Jonah had an encounter with God that changed his life. When we have encounters with God, they can be surprising, and can show us something new about ourselves, and can change the direction of our life in meaningful ways. Do a summary of the Jonah story for participants, and talk about how Jonah's encounter changed his life.

### REFLECT

Talk to the kids about a time when you tried something new, that you didn't want to do, and how it changed the direction of your life. Did you play a game that allowed you to discover a love for a sport that you wouldn't have otherwise experienced? Perhaps you went to a theater production that sparked a love for acting? Maybe you had to unexpectedly change vacation plans, and it allowed you to discover a new place, that you never would have discovered before. Share some example with the kids, and invite them to share a time when something they tried something new, or something unexpected happen to them, and it turned out to be a really good thing.

### ACT

Choose Your Own Adventure Bible Bag Skits – Maybe some of you are old enough to remember the choose your own adventure books that were popular when I was a kid. You would read a book and then there would be a question that would lead you to a specific page. Depending on which page you went to there would be a different outcome. For this activity, we will do a twist on that.

Prepare two paper bags of random items (the more random and goofy the better).

Divide your participants into small groups (think about how much time you have for groups to perform when you decide how many people should be in a group, and how many groups you will have). Put a bunch of bible stories onto slips of paper. Have each group pick a bible story. Groups will need to act out the bible story. At a certain point in the story, you will call out FREEZE, and someone in the group will choose bag A or Bag B – then they will have to take whatever item they get from that bag and incorporate it into their story. Depending on your time, you could have them act out their story one time with no props.

Afterwards, talk about how incorporating an unexpected prop changed the story, and whether it made it better or worse. Sometimes, those disruptions can be good!

### PRAYER

Thank you Lord for opening our eyes to new things. Help us be open to the possibilities in the disruptions. Amen

## Lent 2 – God in the Depth of Chaos

### SHARE

Sometimes bad or scary things happen to us or around us. When bad things happen, it is important to remember that God is always with us! Remind your participants of the Jonah story, and share that Jonah was probably very scared when he was in the belly of the fish. God sent the fish to protect and help Jonah. The fish was one of the “helpers” God used in the midst of a crazy storm.

### REFLECT

Talk about whether participants have ever experienced anything that scared them or made them nervous. Ask them what they did in those times. Who are the people/things that help them when they are scared?

We are all called to be “helpers” or God’s hands and feet in this world. There are lots of people in our community that work every day to be helpers to us, that we can go to if we need help! Who are the helpers in your community? Have kids brainstorm a list! This could include police, firefighters, medical professionals, teachers, public servants

### ACT

Have your participants choose a group of “helpers” they would like to honor, and put together survival kits for them.

**Tag Ideas** (*Choose any of the following*)

\_\_\_\_\_ Survival Kit

Life Savers – To remind you of the many times you have been one.

Tootsie Rolls – To help you roll with the punches.

Starburst – for a burst of energy when you need one.

Gum- to help you get through sticky situations / or to help your unit stick together.

Snickers or Laffy Taffy – To remind you to always keep your sense of humor.

Mint – To help you always keep your cool

Payday or 100 Grand – Since you aren’t doing it for the money

Playing card – to help you ‘deal’ with the public.

Paperclip – To help you hold it all together.

Rubber Band – For when you are stretched to your limit.

Crayon – To help make each day bright and colorful.

Hershey Kiss- To show our love and appreciation.

Signed, Name of Church Kids

Place all items in a bag with the label and then have someone deliver them to the group your participants chose!

## **PRAY**

God, we pray for the helpers that will receive these bags. Help them know that we appreciate them. Lord, help us be helpers for others when things seem chaotic and let us never forget that you are always with us. Amen

*\*Looking ahead – In Lent 4 there is an activity that talks about seeing others with “God Glasses”. Look ahead to this activity to the options presented, as one option will require you to order inexpensive sunglasses, and if you do, you should do that this week!*

## Lent 3 – Obedience and Preservation

### SHARE

Jonah disobeyed God and it put him in some tricky situations. Remind participants of the story of Jonah (even reading it again from your favorite Children's bible or from Jonah 1 if you need to).

### REFLECT

What happened when Jonah disobeyed God? What had God asked Jonah to do? Ask kids the following questions.

- Do you have any rules to follow at your house?
- What happens when you disobey?
- Do you have any consequences?
- What rules do you have at school or work?
- Why do you think you have rules?
- What would it be like if there were no rules?
- Do games that you play have rules?

### ACT

Have the participants in your group make up a game that you can play together (depending on your time/space, decide whether this will be a board game, a large active game, or a game you can play around a table). Ask them to come up with at least three rules. Decide if there are consequences or rewards for following or breaking the rules. If you are making a board game, provide materials for them to help make the game. Consider providing several props groups could use for active or table games when creating their games.

After playing the game, talk about what would happen if God was deciding who was the “winner” of the game. Would God allow those who broke the rules to try again? Why or why not?

### PRAY

God, we know you give us guidelines and rules because you love us, and we know that even when we break those rules, we can say we are sorry, and you can help guide us back in the right direction. Thank you for always loving us. Amen.

## Lent 4 – Faithful and Unfinished

### SHARE

In the story of Jonah (summarize it, if participants need a refresher), Jonah didn't see the Ninevites the same way God did. In the beginning of the story, he just thought they were bad people, and didn't really think they could change. Jonah just thought God should punish them.

### REFLECT

In this story, God looks at Jonah and the Ninevites, and has faith that they can change, even though Jonah ran from God, and even though the Ninevites had done a lot of bad things.

God looks that way at all of God's creatures. We sometimes have a hard time doing it though!

Ask –

- When is it hard to see the good in other people?
- What can you do to see the good in other people?
- If someone met you on your worst day (maybe when you were throwing a temper tantrum) is that how you would want them to remember you? How would you want them to think about you?
- How can we see others the way God sees them?

### ACT

Tell participants that we are going to make a pair of “God Glasses” to remind us to help see others the way God sees them. Then, purchase enough inexpensive sunglasses for your participants to decorate (use markers, small stick-on jewels). If purchasing sunglasses is out of your budget, print a pair of sunglasses on a piece of paper and label it “God Glasses” and have participants decorate them using small jewels, feathers, markers (empty out your craft closet!).

### PRAY

Gracious God, help us see others the way God sees them. Remind us to put on our “God Glasses” whenever we look at our friends, our neighbors and all of creation. Help us have love and compassion for everything we see. Amen

*\*Looking ahead to next week – if you want to do the activities you will need oil, baking soda, vinegar and 12 oz clear cups. As with all science experiments, try it out in advance, so you are prepared for how it will work!*

## Lent 5 – Jesus, the new Jonah

### SHARE

Share the story of Jesus calming the storm from Matthew 8:23-27 (you could find it in your favorite children's Bible too). Have a group act out the story as you read it. Imagine what it would be like to be on a boat in the middle of the storm, you can incorporate sounds (swoosh, splash) and movements (swaying, rocking) as you read the story.

### REFLECT

Ask –

- What were the disciples scared of?
- How did Jesus calm the storm?
- How did Jesus make the disciples feel better?
- What are you scared of?
- How can Jesus make you feel better?

### ACT

Be prepared, this can be messy, decide whether you will do this as an upfront activity, or whether you will allow each participant to do this activity in small groups. To prep, put a few inches of vinegar in every clear cup you plan on using, and put 1 tablespoon baking soda in a small cup, and 1 tablespoon oil in another cup. You will need all these supplies for each group or experiment that you do. Place a towel or something underneath your experiment, because it can get messy! Tell participants you want to see what happens when you let Jesus take care of your fears. Say that you will pretend that the clear cup represents each of us, and that the baking soda is the things that scare us. The oil is Jesus.

Have one person sprinkle the baking soda (the things that scare us) into the vinegar (that represents us). While that is happening, think about how you feel when you are scared? Then have someone else pour in the oil. Watch what happens and think about Jesus.

Talk about what happened. Was Jesus able to calm down the fear? Is it ok to be afraid?

Jesus loves us so much he wants to help us calm our fears. Whenever we are afraid we can ask Jesus to be with us, to help calm our fears, much like the oil calmed down the fears in our experiment.

### PRAY

Thank you, Jesus, for calming our fears. Help us remember to ask you to be with us whenever we are afraid. Thank you for giving us peace and reminding us of how much you love us. Amen.