

4.5 Large Group Lesson | Preschool



Uh Oh Topher

Jonah and the Giant Fish

BIG IDEA: God's way is the best way.

BIBLE BASIS: Jonah 1–3

KEY VERSE: "God's way is perfect. The LORD's word doesn't have any flaws." Psalm 18:30 (NirV)

SCHEDULE

2S & 3S CLASSES

ARRIVAL & PLAYTIME

10:30-10:55

2S & 3S LARGE GROUP

10:55-11:10

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

11:10-12:00

PRE-K & K CLASSES

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

10:30-11:15

PRE-K & KINDER LARGE GROUP

11:15-11:40

REVIEW ACTIVITIES

11:40-12:00

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LEADER DEVOTIONAL

I don't know about you, but I don't like to be told what to do. I make the same mistakes over and over again. I like to call myself "strong-willed," but that is putting it too nobly. The fact is, I am in desperate need of a patient God. I'm guessing you are, too. If you've ever doubted that God could forgive us or is patient with our many mistakes, let this verse bring you peace:

"Instead, he is patient with you. He doesn't want anyone to be destroyed. Instead, he wants all people to turn away from their sins." 2 Peter 3:9

God is rooting for us to succeed in our walk with Him! He is pulling for us and doesn't want us to suffer the effects of our stubbornness and sin.

As you prepare to lead the kids this week, let God speak into your heart and show you an area of stubbornness and sin. Thank Him for His patience with you as you strive to lead a life that honors Him.

Rebecca Crews
GO! Team Member



LARGE GROUP SKILL BUILDING

Five Steps to Becoming a Master of Group Management

There's a fine line between being a Large Group teacher and a zookeeper. If you make a few untimely missteps, it can start to feel like you're losing control of the room and slipping into the wild kingdom. Don't fret, though! We've all been there! And fortunately, there are a few things you can do to prevent your kids' wild side from breaking out.

Get some help: Hopefully you've got some dynamic adult helpers in the room who are willing and able to help you. They can be your first line of defense. Talk to them ahead of time and ask them to sit among the kids (as opposed to the back of the room). Encourage them to intervene any time they see distracting behavior.

Separate the fire and gas: Some kids just make for explosive combinations. If there are two (or more) kids seated together that historically have trouble being around one another, don't be afraid to separate them from the beginning.

Involve the kids: If you're too much of a "talking head," kids can start to zone out and get fidgety — especially preschoolers! Be sure to involve the kids in as much of the lesson as you can. Bonus points if you can get the kids moving physically. Fortunately, the GO! lessons are chock full of these kinds of interactive opportunities!

Don't get stale: Fidgety kids can also be an indication that it's time to move on to something different. If you're overly verbose and spend too much time on the same thing, you can start to lose the room. Again, the GO! lessons are written with this in mind, so the more you can stick to the script, the better!

Put your body and voice into it: Often, when a communicator is beginning to lose the attention of the entire room, the first response is to call for quiet and "eyes up here." There's a better way, though. By changing what you do with your body and voice, you can regain the kid's attention in a way that doesn't interrupt the flow of the lesson. For example, if you're standing, try sitting or kneeling near the kids for a moment. Resist the urge to talk over the kids. Instead, begin speaking in a quiet voice, just above a whisper. This body/voice combination can do wonders for regaining attention.

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UNIT DESCRIPTION

That mischievous little gopher has done it again! Topher the Gopher has burrowed his way into the preschool room while we weren't looking. He got his paws on the story pictures from the true Bible story and hid them around the room. But the story must go on! It's up to the kids to find the hidden pictures so the story can be told. During the silly search, kids will learn that God takes care of them and His way is the best way.

SET-UP INSTRUCTIONS

- Print the "Uh Oh Topher" story pictures on 8½" x 11" cardstock paper. Hide the pictures around the room in locations that are at least partially visible from where the children will be seated. You can make some of the pictures a little harder to find than others.
- Create a "Super Duper Bible Box" and place your storytelling Bible inside. This box will be used every week. See the Resource Folder for details on how to make the "Super Duper Bible Box."
- If using the non-video options for the Topher segments of the lesson, print the Topher's Story Time Rules signs and Topher's Big Idea signs on 8½" x 11" cardstock paper and place in the story time area. See "Getting Started" in the Resource Folder for the printable signs and for more instructions on how to perform the non-video options.
- Note: Any media repeated throughout the unit, such as the Topher videos and the title slide, is located in the Lesson 1 Resource Folder only.

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★ LARGE GROUP LESSON

WELCOME AND MUSIC

Music: Play one or two upbeat worship songs

BIG IDEA AND BIBLE VERSE

Large Group Leader: Hello, everyone! I'm so glad to see you at church! I hope you brought a strong pair of looking eyes with you today, because we've got a whole lot of looking to do. Let's get started by looking for Topher the Gopher. Does anyone see where our furry friend is hiding? *(Allow children time to look for Topher. If they have trouble finding him, give them clues. Once Topher is found, remove him from his hiding spot.)*

Say: Great work! This is Topher the Gopher. Once again, Topher has taken our Bible story pictures and hidden them around the room. In a little bit, we'll work together to find the pictures so we can tell our Bible story.

Say: Today's true Bible story is going to teach us that **God's way is the best way**. That's our Big Idea for the day. Let's say it together. *(Repeat Big Idea with children.)* **God's way is the best way.** It's true: **God's way is the best way.** In fact, that's what our memory verse from the Bible tells us. Let me teach it to you.

*"God's way (walk in place)
is perfect (two thumbs up).
The LORD'S word (cup hands around mouth like you're calling out)
doesn't have any flaws (brush hands off).
Psalm 18:30 (extend hands like you're holding a book)."*

Say: Let's do that together. *(Repeat memory verse with children two or three times.)*

STORY TIME RULES

Say: Wow — nice job! I think you are ready for the Bible story. Before we get started, though, I think we should go over our three story time rules.

Video: Play "Topher the Gopher Story Time Rules" video

(Note: Play the "Topher the Gopher Story Time Rules" video or use the Story Time Rules script found in the Resource Folder.)

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UN OH TOPHER INTRO

Say: Do your parents ever tell you to do something you DON'T want to do? Sometimes mommies and daddies say, "It's time to go to bed," but you don't want to. Sometimes mommies and daddies say, "Clean up your room," but you don't want to. Can you think of anything else your mommy and daddy tell you to do that you don't want to do? (*Take answers.*) If your mommy or daddy tells you to do something and you don't do it, sometimes you get sent to your room for a timeout. That's kind of what happens in today's true Bible story.

Say: In today's true story, God tells a man named Jonah to do something that he does NOT want to do, and when he doesn't do it, God puts him in a timeout. Not timeout in his bedroom, though. God puts Jonah in timeout in the belly of a GIANT fish.

Say: If you're ready to hear that true story, let me see you make fishy lips like this. (*Make fishy lips with children.*) Great! First, let's get our Bible out of the Super Duper Bible Box. Then we can look for the missing story pictures. (*Move to Bible Box.*) I need your help getting the Bible out, though. We need to say our special Bible words together. Repeat these special words after me: It's true, it's true, the Bible is true!

Slide: Show the "Jonah and the Giant Fish" slide

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BIG BIBLE STORY — JONAH AND THE GIANT FISH

(Note: Ahead of time, hide the story pictures around the room in locations that are at least partially visible from where the children will be seated. You can make some of the pictures a little harder to find than others.)

Say: I think it's time to find our first missing picture. Does anyone see the picture of a **boat**? *(Allow children time to look for the picture. Give clues if needed. Once found, remove the picture from its hiding place and hold it up for children to see.)* In the Bible, in the Book of Jonah, God said to Jonah, "Go to the town of Nineveh and tell the people to stop being bad." But Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh, so he ran away from God and got on a boat that was sailing away in the other direction.

Say: Let's see if we can find the next picture. Does anyone see the picture of a **storm**? *(Children look for picture. Hold it up once it's found.)* God sent a big storm to stop Jonah from sailing away. The boat rocked this way. *(Lean to one side.)* Can you rock this way with me? *(Children lean to one side.)* The boat rocked that way. *(Lean to other side.)* Can you rock that way with me? *(Children lean to other side.)* The storm was so big and so bad that the boat started falling apart.

Say: Let's find another picture. Does anyone see a **scared face**? *(Children look for picture. Hold it up once it's found.)* The sailors on the ship were afraid the boat was going to sink. Can you show me your very scared face? *(Make scared face with children.)* The sailors asked Jonah, "What terrible thing have you done to cause this trouble?" Jonah said, "I'm running away from God. If you throw me into the sea, the storm will calm down." So that's what the sailors did. They picked up Jonah and threw him into the water, and the storm stopped.

Say: Let's see if we can find another picture. Does anyone see a **giant fish**? *(Children look for picture. Hold it up once it's found.)* God sent a giant fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. Can you count to three with me? *(Count to three with children.)* While Jonah was inside of the giant fish, he prayed to God and said, "I'm sorry." He told God, "Lord, you are the one who saves!" Can you say that with me? *(Repeat with children.)* Then God made the fish spit Jonah out of its mouth and onto dry land.

Say: Let's find one more picture. Do you see an **old city**? *(Children look for picture. Hold it up once it's found.)* God said to Jonah, "Get up and go to the city of Nineveh. Tell them the message I have given you." This time, Jonah did what God said. He went to Nineveh and told the people to stop doing bad things. Then the people did something Jonah wasn't expecting — they listened to him. They stopped doing bad things, and they said to God, "I'm sorry." When God heard the people cry out, he felt sorry for them and forgave them for doing bad things.

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MUSIC AND CLOSING

(Encourage the children to stand up. Lead them in a worship song of your choice. Following the song, use the rhyme from earlier to help the children sit down again.)

Music: Play one worship song

Say: In today's true Bible story, Jonah didn't want to do things God's way. But then God sent a giant fish to swallow Jonah, so Jonah STOPPED and said, "I'm sorry, God." The people of Nineveh didn't want to do things God's way either. But then Jonah gave them a message from God, so the people STOPPED and said, "I'm sorry, God."

Say: Sometimes we don't want to do things God's way. When we do bad things, though, we can STOP and tell God, "I'm sorry," just like Jonah and the people of Nineveh did. Let's practice. When I point to you, say "STOP (*motion stop with hand*). I'm sorry, God (*palms up in posture of repentance*). When we disobey our parents. (*Point to children and say, "Stop. I'm sorry, God."*) When we say mean words to our friends. (*Point to children and say, "Stop. I'm sorry, God."*) When we take something that doesn't belong to us. (*Point to children and say, "Stop. I'm sorry, God."*)

Say: Jonah spent three days in the belly of a whale, but Jesus spent three days in a dark tomb. Jesus didn't stay in the tomb, though — He came back to life. And because of that, when we stop and say, "I'm sorry, God," God forgives us. Then we can do things God's way again, because **God's way is the best way!**

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TOPHER'S BIG IDEA

Say: Hey — that's our Big Idea for today! I think we should tell it to our parents when we see them. Maybe we should practice first. *(Appear to be thinking.)* Hmm...who could we practice telling? I know! We could tell our friend, Topher the Gopher. Let's see if we can find him.

(Play "Topher's Big Idea Video 1" or, for a non-video option, print out the "Topher's Big Idea Cards" ahead of time and hold up card #1. See the "Topher's Big Idea" document in the Resource Folder for more suggestions on how to perform the non-video option.)

Video: Play "Topher's Big Idea Video"

(Whisper.) Uh-oh. It looks like Topher is asleep. I think we should wake him up. When he wakes up, we can all tell him that **God's way is the best way**. On the count of three, let's all yell, "Topher the Gopher, wake up, wake up!" *(Count to three and yell with kids. Then play "Topher's Big Idea Video 2" or hold up card #2.)*

Topher: Hey, what's the Big Idea?

Children and Large Group Leader: **God's way is the best way.** *(Repeat the Big Idea several times. When finished, play "Topher's Big Idea Video 3" or hold up card #3.)*

Topher: Wow! That is a Big Idea! Thanks for telling me! Goodbye, kids. *(Encourage kids to wave goodbye to Topher as he disappears back into his hole.)*

Large Group Leader: Let's say a prayer together and ask God to help us do things His way. *(Encourage kids to repeat the following prayer after you.)*

**Dear God,
I'm sorry for doing bad things.
Please help me to stop
And to do things Your way.
I love You, God!
Amen.**