



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



SMALL GROUP SKILL BUILDING

Keeping Kids Engaged During Small Group

Eyes can tell you a lot about the engagement level of a kid. Is the kid staring off into the distance? Is the kid looking at the ceiling? Are the kid's eyes closed? Is the kid snoring, and does he have a bit of drool seeping from the corner of his mouth? If so, there's a decent chance you may have lost his attention! No worries, though — this can be fixed! One of your goals as a small group leader is to capture (rather than demand) the attention of your group so that life-changing conversation can happen. Here are a few suggestions to help you achieve that:

Be prepared: Your eyes are a tell-all. Are they buried in your small group lesson during group time? It probably means you didn't read the lesson carefully enough ahead of time. Read the lesson and be familiar with its activities before arriving to church. It's okay to reference the lesson during group time, but if you're reading the lesson and trying to make sense of it for the first time, it's easy to lose your group's attention.

Facilitate! Don't dominate: Learn how to facilitate conversation as opposed to dominating it. When kids don't feel like they get to talk or participate enough, they eventually begin to lose interest.

Seat the kids in a circle: When kids are seated in a clump, the kids in the back often lose interest because they feel like they are on the outside of the group (which they are quite literally). However, when kids are seated in a circle, everyone has equal access to the conversation and activities.

Keep it moving: As a wise man once said, "You've got to know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em." If it appears your group is totally into the conversation or activity, keep it going. If, on the other hand, they're becoming restless or bored, move on. Even the best small group lessons can be driven into the ground.



☆ PLAY TIME ACTIVITY

Along with your other play time activities, present the following activity to children as they first arrive in the preschool room. Choose a leader to facilitate the activity. The activity is designed to introduce kids to the Bible story and Big Idea for the day.

PIN THE TAIL ON THE WHALE

Supplies: Whale printout (1), Whale tails (1 per child), blindfold (1), tape (1 roll), markers (1–2)

Directions: Tape the whale picture on a wall at about shoulder height for a preschooler. The whale is missing its tail. Give each child a card with a whale tail on it. Have them write their name on the card, then place a loop of tape on the back. One at a time, blindfold the children, spin them around, face them toward the wall, then let them try to pin the tail on the whale picture. After every child has had a turn, announce whose tail was closest to the whale.

Say: We just put a tail on a whale, but today's true Bible story is a whale of a tale! We're going to hear about a giant fish that swallowed a man named Jonah. We're also going to learn that **God's way is the best way.**

Question: What do you think it would be like to be inside of a whale's belly?

SAY IT LIKE (Bible Memorization Activity)

Supplies: Picture Dice (1 per group)

Today's Bible verse:

"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*).

Psalms 18:30 (*extend hands like you're holding a book*).

Directions: Practice the Bible verse together until the children can remember it. When ready, choose a child to roll the picture dice, then have all of the children say the Bible verse like they are the picture that is face-up on the dice. If the dice lands on Topher the Gopher, have all of the children say the verse with buck teeth like a gopher. Continue playing until all of the children have had a turn rolling the dice.

2s & 3s – Large Group at 10:55
Pre-K & K – Large Group at 11:15



☆ SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

After the large group story time is over, help the children transition into the small group activity time. There are multiple activity options designed to help kids remember the Bible story and Big Idea, discover personal application, and to respond to God through art, prayer, and Bible reading. Offer as many activities as your time and space allows.

ROUGH SEAS (Application Activity)

Supplies: Blanket (1 per group), Action figure or doll (1 per group)

Say: In today's true Bible story, we learned how to STOP doing the wrong thing and say, "I'm sorry, God." We're going to play a game that helps us think of some things we can tell God "I'm sorry" for.

Directions: Have the children spread out around the blanket while holding onto the edges. Toss the action figure or doll into the middle of the blanket. Tell the children to imagine the blanket is the stormy sea and the action figure is Jonah. Choose one child to be the whale. Have the whale stand at the edge of the blanket *without* holding onto it. Tell the children holding the blanket to begin shaking it so that Jonah is tossed to and fro. The whale must wait for Jonah to come close and catch him. When the whale catches Jonah, have them answer the question below. Choose another child to be the whale and play again. Continue until every child has had a turn as the whale.

Question: What do you need to stop doing and say "I'm sorry" to God for?

UH OH TOPHER! (Bible Story Review Activity)

Supplies: "Uh Oh Topher" story review page (1 per group), Topher the Gopher character cards (1 per child)

Say: I'm going to read you today's Bible story again, but there's a little problem. Topher the Gopher got into the story and chewed up some of the words, then he replaced them with the wrong words. Listen carefully to see if you can hear the wrong words. If you hear something that is wrong, hold up your "Topher the Gopher" card, then say, "Uh Oh, Topher. That's not right!" Then you can tell me what really happened in the story.

Directions: Use the "Uh Oh Topher" story review page to read today's story to the children. The page will indicate in bold which words are wrong, followed by the right words. If necessary, help the children remember what really happened in the story.

4.5 Small Group Lesson | 2s & 3s Class



I'M SORRY (Response to God Activity)

Supplies: GO! Home Guide (printed on back of coloring sheet, 1 per child), crayons.

Directions: Give each child a GO! Home Guide and some crayons or markers. The sheet will have a space for children to draw. Tell the children to draw a sad face. While they're drawing, have them think about something they need to say "I'm sorry" to God for. When finished, allow the children to show their picture and say what they are sorry for.

Say: Whenever we say "I'm sorry" to God, He forgives us. That's because Jesus died on the cross and came back to life. Let's say a prayer to God and tell Him "I'm sorry" for the things you told me about.

Prayer: Begin by asking if any of the children would like to pray. Allow any children who want to pray the opportunity to do so. When they're finished, close the prayer by thanking God for giving us Jesus and for taking away our sins.

Question: Why do you think Jonah ran away from God instead of going to Nineveh?

Question: Jonah said "I'm sorry" to God for running away. What do you need to say "I'm sorry" to God for?