

Small Group Leader Guide



THIS MONTH



Today's Bible Story

Jonah

Jonah 1-3

Bottom Line

God knows what's best.

Memory Verse

Those who trust in the Lord will receive new strength. They will fly as high as eagles. They will run and not get tired. They will walk and not grow weak.

Isaiah 40:31 (NIRV)



Inclusive Pro Tips

This leader guide is designed to be inclusive of children with a special need, learning difference, or disability who attend a group with their peers. See highlighted sections below for additional inclusive pro tips.

Today's Suggested Schedule

Greeting & Prayer (3 minutes)

The leader greets the children and asks how they are doing. After a brief time of sharing, the group participates in a short prayer activity to prepare their hearts for the lesson.

Small Group Activity (20 minutes)

Groups: Creating a safe place to connect

Activity 1: Moses's Journey

Activity 2: Courage Stick

Pray & Dismiss (2 minutes)

After small group time, the leader closes in prayer. Then the children are dismissed.



Greeting & Prayer



What You Need

- ☐ A Spinning Wheel
- ☐ Prayer Chart

①

What You Do

Pray for your group before they arrive -> Pray for kids who will visit your group for the first time. Recall a time when God gave you the courage to do something you didn't think you were ready for. Thank God for sending the Holy Spirit to live inside of you and help you take the next step! Ask God to help the kids trust Him when they feel nervous or unsure. Whether it's a big change or something small, pray that kids would know God is with them even when they don't feel ready.

- Choose a child to spin the wheel.
- Each color matches a prayer prompt on the chart.
- After spinning, the child finds the matching prompt, reads it, and prays.
- Let a few more children take turns spinning the wheel and praying.

②

What You Say

"Prayer is how we talk with God, our loving Father. The Bible tells us to pray without ceasing—talking to Him anytime, anywhere. Whatever you do, begin with prayer. When you do, you can trust that God is in control and working in every situation."

Transition -> Lead your group to the small group activity

ACTIVITY ONE

Let's Go Fishing!

Bible Story Review

MADE TO
Imagine

Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

- ☐ Prepared "Jonah Story Cards" Activity Page with paperclips
- ☐ Prepared fishing pole
- ☐ Blue tablecloths

Inclusive Pro Tips



To support the fine motor skills of kids in your group, let them select a card without using the fishing pole.

①

What You Do

1. Spread the "Jonah Story Cards" Activity Pages on the floor.
→ Optional: Place the blue towel or blue paper on the floor and then scatter the cards on top!
2. Explain that the kids will take turns using the prepared fishing pole to "fish" for one card from the pond.
3. After all the cards have been "caught," turn them face-up and work together to put them in Bible Story order. (The Bible Story order is included in the prompts below.)
4. Review each card using the prompts below.

Make It Personal -> Tell your few about an age-appropriate time as a kid when you thought you knew what was best, but like Jonah, you learned that God's way was better. How was God's way better?

Jonah Story Card Prompts:

- GO to NINEVEH sign: God told Jonah to go to Nineveh. Why?
(GOD WANTED JONAH TO TELL THE PEOPLE TO STOP DOING WRONG THINGS.)
- BOAT: What did Jonah do instead? (HE GOT ON A BOAT GOING THE OPPOSITE WAY.)
- PILLOW: What happened while Jonah was below deck and fell asleep? (GOD SENT A BIG STORM!)
- CALM SEA: How did the storm stop? (JONAH WAS THROWN OVERBOARD, AND GOD CALMED THE SEA.)
- BIG FISH: How long was Jonah inside the fish? (THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS.)
- PRAYER HANDS: What did Jonah do in the fish? (HE PRAYED TO GOD FOR HELP.)
- SANDY BEACH: What happened next? (GOD MADE THE FISH SPIT JONAH OUT.)
- NINEVEH with THUMBS-UP: What did Jonah do now? (GOD ASKED HIM AGAIN TO GO TO NINEVEH, AND JONAH WENT. THE PEOPLE OF NINEVEH LISTENED!)

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What You Need

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Activity Page with paperclips
- ☐ Prepared fishing pole
- ☐ *Blue tablecloths*

Inclusive Pro Tips



To support the fine motor skills of kids in your group, let them select a card without using the fishing pole.

②

What You Say

"Wow, Jonah went through A LOT—from running away to being swallowed by a big fish! Jonah didn't trust God at first. He thought he knew better than God! Instead of trusting and putting his confidence in God and in God's ways, Jonah decided he was going to go his own way.

"God wanted Jonah to go to Nineveh and tell the people there to follow God's ways! God wanted to give an entire group of people the chance to live better if they just turned from their ways. And God wanted to give Jonah a chance to share that message with them. But Jonah didn't want to do that. He thought the Ninevites were too mean to receive God's kindness.

"We can be like Jonah too. Sometimes, we think we know better than God. But God never gave up on Jonah. God gave Jonah a second chance, and Jonah decided to follow God's ways! And because Jonah did what God wanted, an entire city of people lived better lives! "Sometimes we don't understand why God wants us to do something. Maybe it feels scary or hard—like talking to someone new, telling the truth, or choosing to be kind. But here's what we can always remember: God knows what's best. Do you know why? Because God is GOOD. He is kind, He is loving, He is truthful. God is good, and that means His ways are good!

"When we tell the truth, it shows that we are honest people. When we are kind to someone, it shows them God's love. When we follow God's ways, it is good and it spreads goodness! That's why God wants us to follow Him and His ways—even when it's hard.

"Sometimes we might feel unsure about following God and His ways like Jonah, but remember, friends, God knows what's best. He is always working for something good! We can trust Him every time!"

ACTIVITY TWO

Jump If You ...

Application Activity



Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

What You Need

→ No Supplies Needed

①

What You Do

1. Invite the kids to stand in a big circle.
2. Explain how to play:
→ Say, "I'm going to say a sentence that starts with, 'Jump in the middle if you ...' If the sentence is true for you, take a big jump into the middle of the circle, then jump back to your spot."
3. Demonstrate by reading the first statement.
4. Read the statements slowly, one by one, and give the kids time to respond.
5. After the final statement, invite the kids to sit down, and discuss.

Jump in the Middle If You ...

- Have brown eyes
- Like broccoli
- Have a brother
- Like chocolate ice cream
- Like roller coasters
- Love to read
- Like to eat tacos
- Don't like sour candy
- Have a younger sister
- Love math the most
- Are wearing red
- Are at church today

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Inclusive Pro Tips



To adjust to the mobility of your group, instead of instructing the kids to "jump," lead them to raise their hand, nod their head, or spin in place.

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Faith Skills

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② What You Say

“Some of these things—like what you’re wearing or what ice cream you like—are things people can see or hear about you. But other things about you are more personal, like how you feel when you’re nervous, or who you pray for at night.

“We have to ask each other to find out those things about each other. BUT God knows it all! He knows every little thing about you—even the number of hairs on your head! (LUKE 12:7)

“God knows every little thing about you! And there’s something else God knows about you—He knows every little thing that is going on in your life!

“He knows if there is a mean kid whom you are trying to be kind to. He knows that you’re nervous about your spelling test. He knows that you’re trying to do your math work instead of playing video games. God knows when you’re happy or sad, when you need help, or when you’re trying really hard to make a good choice.

“God is your closest, closest friend. He knows everything about you, and He loves you so much! And He goes through every bit of life with you. So talk to Him about everything!

“In everything you are facing in your life, He wants to guide you to goodness. God is good and His ways are good.

“That means He’s the best One to lead us. When you’re not sure what to do, or when things feel too big or confusing, you can stop and pray to your friend who is right with you, ‘God, I trust You. Show me what’s best.’ God is with you, so take a deep breath and follow Him wherever He leads you! Do whatever He tells you to do. Because God is always guiding you to goodness. God knows what’s best.”

GROUPS 4/4

Pray and Dismiss

Prayer Activity



Faith Skills

Hear from God

Pray to God

Talk about God

Live for God

Prayer

"Dear God, we are so grateful that You are always good and we can trust You and follow Your ways no matter what! Sometimes it's hard to do what's right. Sometimes we want to run away from things we don't like or don't understand. Help us to trust that You are good, and You know what's best. Help us to stop and pray when we feel afraid or unsure. Help us to trust You and obey. We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen!"

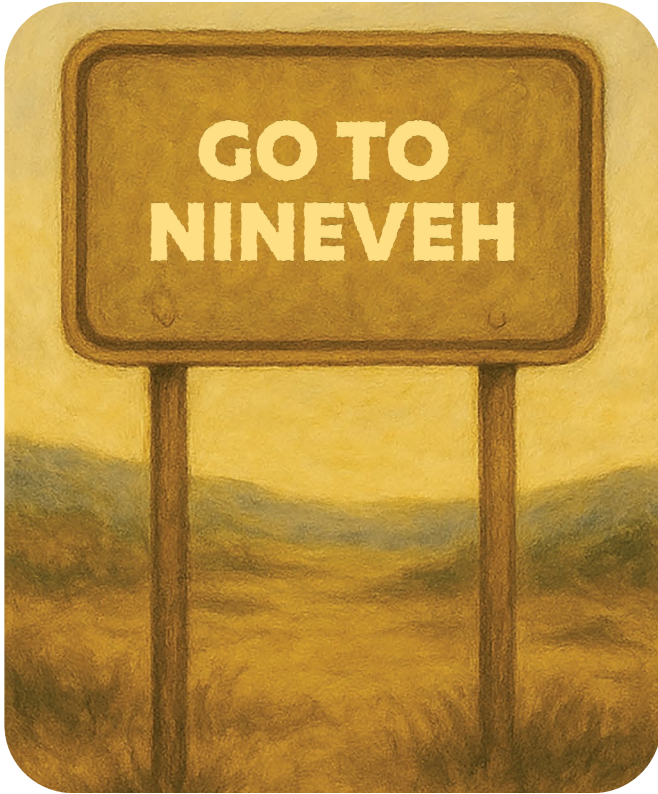
Transition → As adults arrive to pick up, encourage the kids to talk to their parents about how Jonah finally chose to trust God after some crazy circumstances because God knows what's best. If you optionally want to send the kids home with an individual-size package of Swedish Fish®, don't forget to give those to the kids too!

Inclusive Pro Tips



Offer index cards and coloring supplies for kids who may prefer to draw or write their prayers to God instead of praying silently! This gives visual and kinesthetic learners a hands-on way to reflect and connect with God.

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