

3-6 | November 9

Today's Bible Story: Jonah • *Jonah 1–3*

Conversation Starter: What keeps people from doing what's best?

Today's Bottom Line: God knows what's best.

Monthly 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)

1. Opening Activity

Pray for your group before they arrive. Pray for kids who will visit your group for the first time. Thank God for never giving up on you, even when you've tried to run or hide. Recall an age-appropriate story about a time when you felt like you were far from God, but He kept reaching for you! Ask God to remind each kid that His love isn't based on our performance. Pray that kids would be confident that He is with them at school, at home, on hard days, and on good days. Pray they would feel God's love chasing after them, even when they make bad choices.

What You Need:

- ☐ Offering container
- ☐ Index cards
- ☐ Pencils

What You Do:

- Greet each kid by name with a fist bump, high-five, smile, or wave as they arrive!
- Invite any kids who brought an offering to place it in the offering container.
- Give each kid one index card and a pencil.
- Say, "Think of a place you love to go to or something fun you love to do! You're going to write or draw it on your card. Just one idea per card!"
 - *Provide examples to get them started, like "The beach," "a cousin's house," "playing on the playground," or "reading a book."*
- Collect all the cards, place them in a pile, and mix them up.

Imagine Together:

- Instruct the kids to sit in a circle.
- Mix up the index cards face down, and put them in a pile in the middle of the circle.
- Explain how to play:
 - One kid will draw a card.
 - Without speaking, they'll act out what they think is on the card.
 - Everyone else will try to guess what they're doing or where they are!
- Continue until everyone who wants to act has had a turn, or as time allows.

What You Say:

"It's fun to imagine all the places we can go and things we can do. Was it tricky acting out something that wasn't your idea? Some of the things we acted out might have felt easy, or even tricky! Especially when you're acting out something someone else came up with. Some of you had to guess, get creative, or just give it your best shot.

"Today, in our true story from the Bible, we'll learn about a guy named Jonah who didn't want to do what God asked him to do. He had his own idea of what was best. But guess

what? God always knows what's best! Not just for Jonah, but for the people around him—and for us too! Let's go find out more!"

Inclusive Pro Tips:

- Instead of writing, invite kids to quietly tell a leader their idea to write or draw it for them.
- Give kids the option to pair up and act out the cards together.

[Lead your group to do worship and watch today's video lesson.]

2. Which Way Will I Go?

What You Need:

- ☐ "Jonah & the Big Fish" Activity Page
- ☐ Markers/crayons/color pencils
- ☐ Optional: Metallic pens

What You Do:

- Before you begin:
 - Have each child write his/her name on their paper

Craft time:

- Review the Bible story of Jonah
- Have the children color and decorate their activity page
- When they are done coloring, show them how to fold their paper so that the fish's mouth opens and closes to show it swallowing Jonah.

What You Say:

"What an adventure! Jonah's journey to Nineveh was one wild ride. God gave Jonah a mission to go to the city of Nineveh and tell them to turn from their sins, but Jonah went the opposite way. LITERALLY! He jumped on a boat, and God brought a giant storm. When Jonah was thrown into the sea by the people on the boat, God sent a big fish to rescue him! And after three days, Jonah finally listened to God. He traveled to Nineveh and shared God's message. And the people of Nineveh actually listened and changed!

"Why did Jonah not want to tell the Ninevites to turn from their sins? Well, the Bible tells us. Jonah said this to God:

"I knew that you are gracious. You are tender and kind. You are slow to get angry. You are full of love. You are a God who takes pity on people" (Jonah 4:2 NIV).

"Jonah knew that God is kind. He knew that God would forgive the Ninevites if they turned from their sins. And that's exactly what happened!

"Do you know what Jonah's journey tells us about God? Well, God knows what's best! We should always follow God's direction. 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 even when Jonah decided he himself didn’t want to follow God’s ways, God didn’t give up on him—and God won’t give up on you either! Even when Jonah wasn’t listening, God was still patient and kind in saving him and redirecting him.

“Even when things feel confusing or you feel like you don’t understand what God is asking you to do, you can always be confident that **God knows what’s best!** You might not see the full picture, but you can take a deep breath and trust God. He is good. His ways are good. He is always working for your good. So even if you don’t understand, you can always hold His hand and trust His heart. He is doing something good, that is the only thing He can do! Remember: **God knows what’s best.** Always!”

3. Pray and Dismiss

What You Need:

- ☐ Markers or pencils
- ☐ Scrap paper
- ☐ Bible marked at John 14:6

What To Do:

- Gather the kids together in a circle.
- Give each kid:
 - One piece of scrap paper.
 - A marker or pencil

Reflect Together:

- Say, “Jonah had a tough time trusting that God knew best. Sometimes we do too, but God invites us to trust Him anyway! God promises to give us strength even when it’s hard.”
- Invite kids to write or draw one thing that’s been hard to trust God with lately.
 - Maybe they are feeling anxious about schoolwork or a decision they have to make. Or maybe they’re struggling to feel confident around their friends.
 - “Did you know the biggest way we can trust God is by choosing to follow Jesus? (Read John 14:6 from the Bible.) Jesus came to make a way for us to be close friends with God, FOREVER! We don’t have to earn it, we just have to believe that God’s Son, Jesus, gave His life for us! Jesus is the ultimate way we can trust God, because He died and rose again for our sins, making a way for us to be in relationship with God forever!
 - When we follow Jesus, He gives us strength daily through the Holy Spirit.
- Once everyone is finished, direct the kids to say, “God, I trust You. You know what’s best!”
- Close in prayer.

Prayer:

“God, we are so thankful that You know what’s best even when we don’t understand. Help each of us to trust You and follow Your ways no matter what. Thank You for sending Jesus so we can be close to You forever! Fill us with confidence through the Holy Spirit so that we can soar like eagles this week! We love You so much, God, and we pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen!”