



MINOR PROPHETS

JONAH

Scripture: Jonah 1:1-16, 3:1-5, 10, 4:1-10

Open: Greet, Praises, Requests, Pray

Supplies: Table, boxes (optional), bed sheets, chairs, fake plant, pillows, streamers.

Ask and Explain:

Last week we began our journey through the Minor Prophets. Can anyone remember who we learned about? (Joel). Who remembers what Joel prophesied? (He claimed the locusts would come, he also spoke of the Day of the Lord)

Today, we're going to talk about the story of Jonah. Now I know that some of you may know the story, and that's great! He's one of the Minor Prophets that many people remember. If you don't know it, that's okay too. Today, we'll all learn and act out his story together.

Before we get started, I need you to know that Jonah was a prophet and God asked him to go to Nineveh. Nineveh was a city in Assyria. At this time, Assyria was one of Israel's biggest enemies. Let's read and find out what God wanted Jonah to do.

And here is an interesting fact. Jonah's name means "dove," and dove in Hebrew can mean peace and purity like we think of today. But it can also mean silliness. Let's learn and see what that name represents for Jonah.

Read: Jonah 1:1-16

Explain:

So here we have a prophet of God that disobeys God. Most prophets try to turn people from disobedience, but here, Jonah is doing the disobeying. He flees on a ship to run from God and gets on a boat with men who don't fear God. In the end, they even learn of God through Jonah and choose to worship the True God.

Act It Out:

Have kids volunteer for (or select) roles from the story. There can be a narrator who reads or explains the story. Also select someone to be Jonah and the people on the boat (If you can fit the whole class on the boat, go for it). The teachers or other students can be the storm.

Lay a table on the ground and have the kids pretend it is their merchant ship on the way to Tarshish. Have them act out the story. The “storm” will be streamers and loud wind sounds. Throw the cargo boxes overboard first, then have them gently toss Jonah to a big fish. You can lay pillows down for added cushion. Once Jonah is out of the boat, have all the kids “swim” over to the chair fort in the room. This is our big fish. Have all the kids sit in the belly of the fish together.

Explain:

While Jonah was in the belly of the fish, he prayed to God. Even in his disobedience, he knew that he could turn to God. He trusted him and prayed, singing praises to him. Then, God ordered the fish to spit Jonah out.

Act it Out:

We’re going to take a second to pray to God and thank him that he listens to us and has compassion on us, even when we disobey.

Read: Jonah 3:1–5, 10

Explain:

God tells Jonah to go again. This time Jonah goes and the people of Nineveh—Jonah’s enemies—repent and turn to God. But Jonah doesn’t like this. He feels like it’s unfair. He wants these people to face judgement. He doesn’t want God to forgive them. Have you ever had a hard time forgiving someone who did something wrong to you? Have you ever wished someone would get in trouble? It’s normal to want justice and to want the wicked to be punished, but God is trying to teach Jonah and us a bigger lesson. He wants us to know that he can forgive even our biggest enemies. He can have compassion and mercy on the worst of people. In the same way he forgives us, he forgives others. To help Jonah understand, he gives him one more visual.

Read: Jonah 4:5–10

Act It Out:

Have your Jonah sit and complain to God. Then, place the tree near him. Explain that the tree was used to shade from the burning sun and shelter from the desert winds. Then, knock the tree down. Jonah again is angry, feeling like it is unfair that his tree is gone. But God reminds Jonah that he didn't make the tree grow or have any part in it, so it wasn't up to him whether or not the tree lived. In the same way that God can even care for and make a tree grow, he can do that for people. He can grow them and change them and help them. It isn't for Jonah to decide who gets mercy and compassion from God; it is only for him to tell the message.

Explain:

You may meet people in your life that you don't feel like deserve the grace and mercy of God. But our job is to tell the people about his grace and mercy anyway. It may be difficult, but the beauty is that God is generous. He is compassionate and kind and longs to show his love to all people. Instead, Jesus calls us to pray for our enemies (Matthew 5:44) and he tells a parable of workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16) who all receive the same pay, even though some don't work as long. In the end, the owner asks, "Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money?"

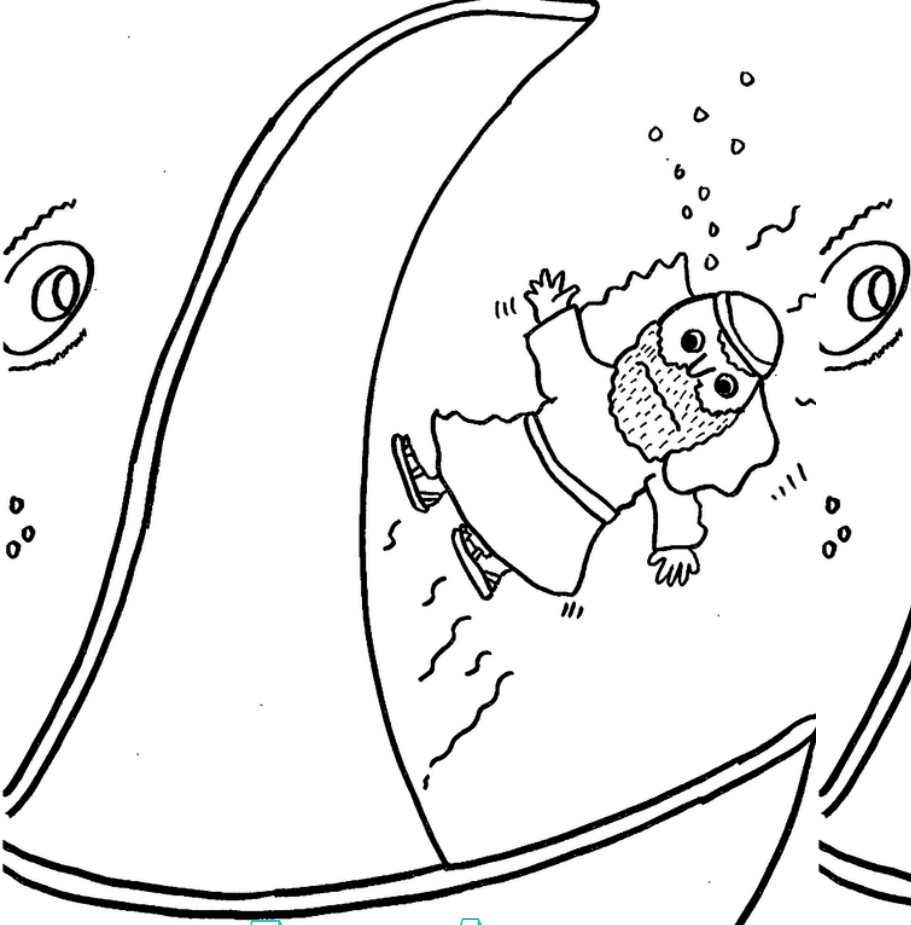
Our God is generous, longing for people to be saved. He was even patient with Jonah when he ran away and when his bad attitude continued throughout the book. We make mistakes. We harden our hearts. But let's learn from Jonah. Let's obey God's call and also not harden our hearts against even our worst enemies. If God's grace can change us, we should offer it to our worst enemies, knowing it can change them too.

Minor Prophet Timeline:

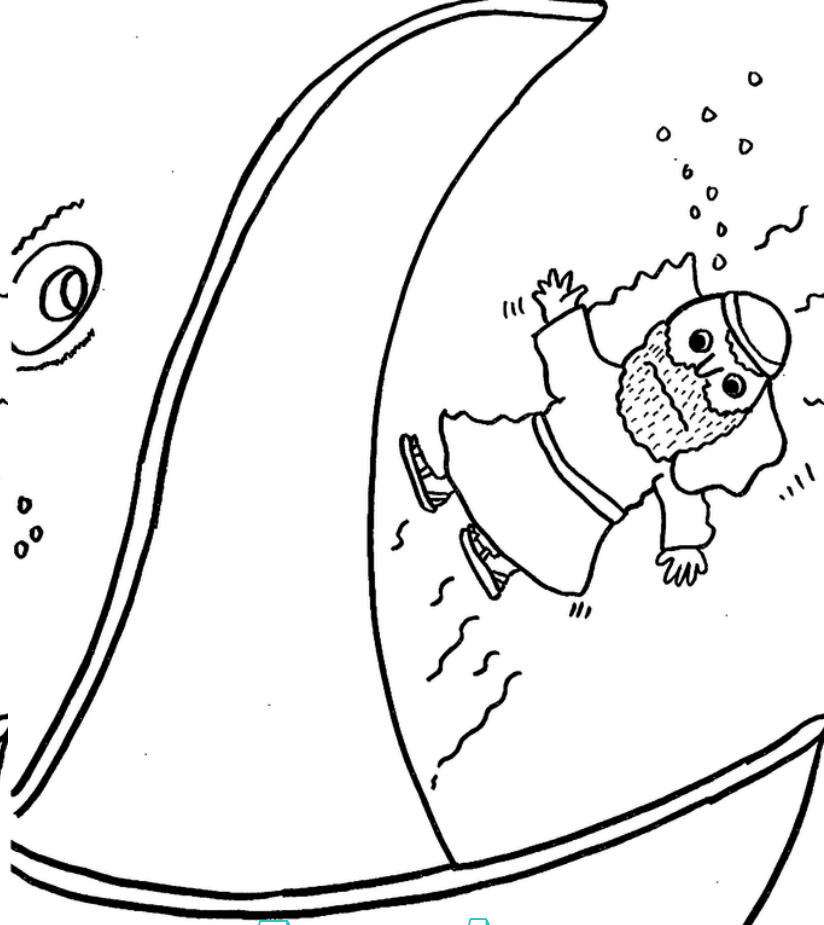
Have the kids color the picture of Jonah to add to their time line in the back.

Memorize: Jonah 3:10

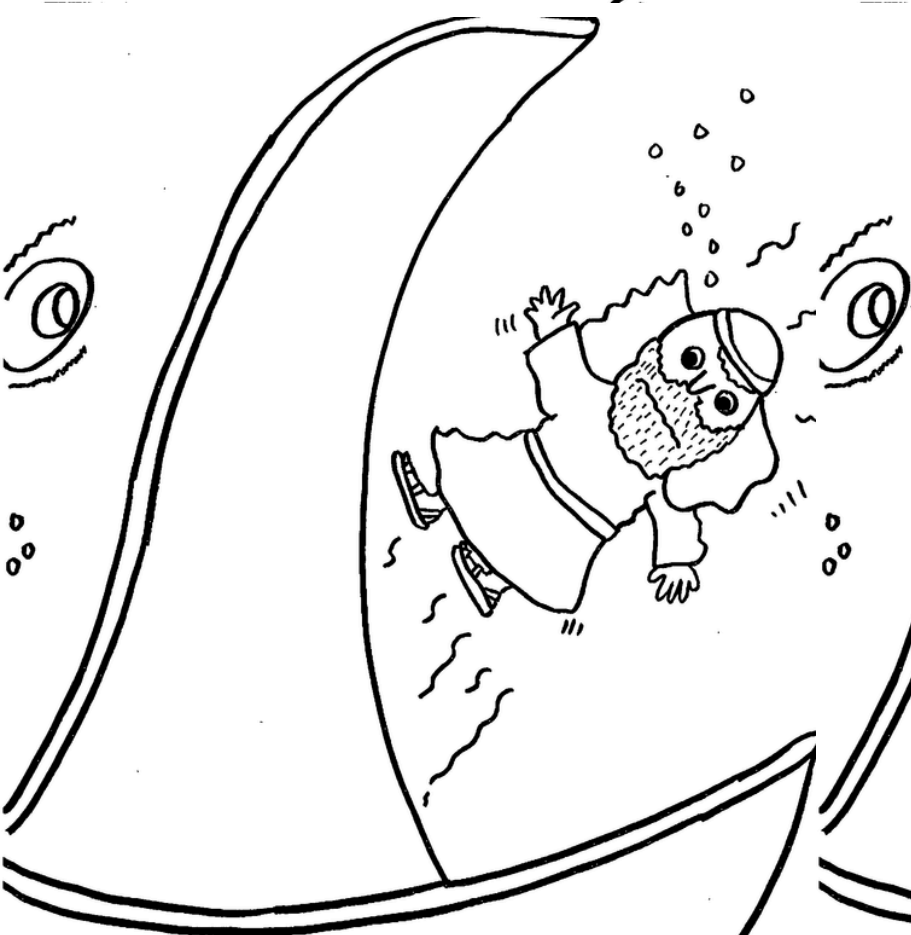
Close in Prayer



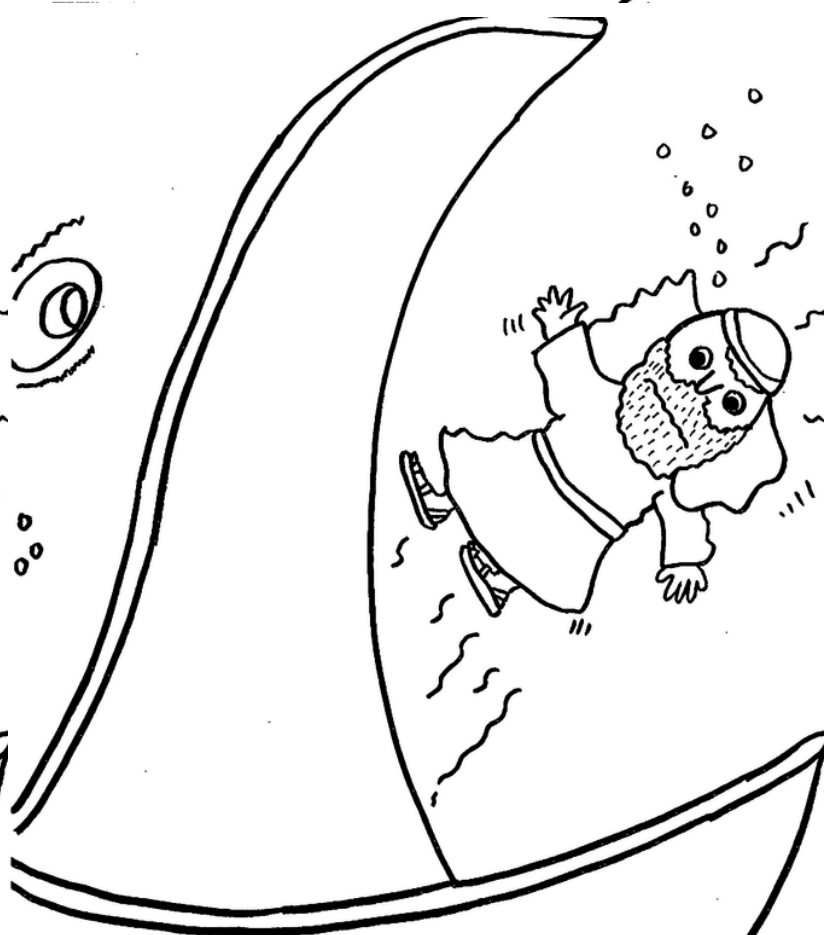
Jonah



Jonah



Jonah



Jonah