



Illustrations created with Grok (AI) and reviewed by our team

Jonah and the Great Fish

Jonah 1:1–4:11 · Sprout · Ages 5–8

Long ago, God spoke to a prophet named Jonah. A prophet carries God's messages to people. God told Jonah to go to Nineveh, a huge city far to the east. The people there were doing many cruel things, and God wanted Jonah to warn them.

But Jonah did not want to go. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, the enemy of his people. So Jonah went to the port of Joppa and paid for a place on a ship sailing the opposite way, to a faraway land called Tarshish. He thought he could get away from God.

Out at sea, God sent a powerful wind, and a terrible storm tossed the ship. The sailors were frightened. Each one prayed to his own god, and they threw cargo overboard to make the ship lighter. And where was Jonah? Sound asleep down in the bottom of the ship! The captain woke him and begged him to pray too.

Jonah told the sailors the truth: he was running away from God, who made the very sea they were sailing on. He said the storm would stop if they put him into the water. The sailors rowed as hard as they could to reach land instead, but the storm only got worse. At last they did what Jonah said, and the sea grew calm.

God did not let Jonah drown. He sent an enormous fish that swallowed Jonah whole. Jonah stayed inside it for three days and three nights, and there he prayed and thanked God for saving him. Then, at God's command, the fish spat Jonah out onto the shore.

God gave Jonah the same job again, and this time Jonah went. He walked through Nineveh warning that the city had only forty days left. And the people listened! From the king to the poorest servant, they stopped eating, dressed in rough cloth to show they were sorry, prayed, and turned away from their cruelty. God saw that they had changed, and he spared the city.

Jonah was angry that God forgave his enemies. So God gently asked him: shouldn't I care about all those people, and even their animals?

God loves everyone, even people we think of as enemies, and he is always ready to forgive.

Talk about it

1. Why did Jonah run away from God?
2. What did the people of Nineveh do when they heard Jonah's warning?
3. God forgave Nineveh. Who is someone you can forgive?

Key verse: Jon 3:10. Look it up in your Bible.