



## STORY: Jonah Running from God (Jonah 1:1-3)

### INTRODUCTION:

Today we're going to start looking at the Book of Jonah.

The Book of Jonah reads like a fairytale. But it is a true Biblical record.

It is named after the prophet Jonah.

And as we go through the book over the next few weeks, we'll see a beautiful story about God's grace!

### READ: Jonah 1:1-3

**TELL THE STORY:** (source: <http://www.essex1.com/pages/paul/bible37.html>)

*"I don't want to!"*

Would you ever say that to God?

Jonah did.

God said to Jonah, "Go to Ninevah!"

And Jonah said, "I don't want to!"

Well, he didn't exactly SAY that to God — but that's what he was thinking.

Back in Jonah's day — this was a LONG time ago, about 800 years before Jesus was born — the greatest city in the world was Ninevah. Everyone had heard of Ninevah. And everyone knew it was an evil place.

So, God had a job for Jonah.

"Jonah," God called, "Get up! Go to Ninevah!"

"Tell the people there that I know all about the terrible things they are doing. They think no one can see the evil things they do. But I see!"

But Ninevah was a big, scary place, and Jonah didn't want to go!

Besides, the Assyrians lived in Ninevah, and the Assyrians were big bullies. They were always beating up on everybody, especially Jonah's people. They deserved to get in trouble from God.

If Jonah warned the people of Ninevah, they might change their evil ways — and then God might forgive them (God is always forgiving people!) — and then they might get away with all the terrible things they have done.

That wouldn't be fair!

So, do you know what Jonah did?

He ran away.



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# JONAH: RUNNING FROM GOD

Jonah went down to Joppa and jumped on a ship that was sailing for Tarshish. Tarshish was a city in Spain, or maybe it was what we call the whole country of Spain now, I am not entirely sure, but whatever, it was about as far away as a person could go. Jonah thought, "God will never find me there."

But God knows where every gnat, ant, and bug on the face of the earth is. He knows when a mosquito lands on your nose. He knows where it came from, and where it goes. Of course God would know where Jonah went!

But that's another story. *To be continued ...*

(photos can be sourced from: <http://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/jonah-nineveh/>)



## LESSON

**Jonah 1:1-3** *The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: <sup>2</sup> "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."*

<sup>3</sup> *But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.*

### 1. God knew Jonah

The Bible records that God spoke to "Jonah son of Amittai".

Our God is so big. The God who made the heavens and the earth. And He knows each of us by name.

### 2. God knew Nineveh

Nineveh was the greatest city then. It was full of wickedness. And God wanted Jonah to go to Nineveh and tell them about Him.

God knew individuals. And God knew big cities, too. Nothing is too small or big for Him.

### 3. Jonah didn't want to go

Jonah didn't like big wicked cities. They were bad and mean.

And they were full of gentiles (non-Jews) who were not even God's special people ... so why was God wasting time with them?

Jonah didn't want to tell them about God.

God must have made a big mistake, Jonah thought.

### 4. So Jonah ran away

The Bible records that Jonah "ran away" and tried to "flee from the Lord". He caught a ship towards Tarshish ... the opposite direction from Nineveh.

How many of you play catching or hide and seek in school? Can you imagine trying to outrun God? Or to hide from Him?

Well Jonah thought he could. Next week we'll see if he succeeded or not!

### 5. Jonah & Jesus

Like Jonah, Jesus was sent to save a sinful people (all of us!).

But while Jonah was reluctant and didn't want to go, Jesus came willingly — He left heaven for earth and gave His own life to save us out of love for you and me.

**Romans 5:8** *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Aren't you thankful that when God told Jesus to come down to earth to save us, Jesus didn't answer, "I don't want to!"?



## ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS

**GAMES:** Running games to go along the lesson's theme.

e.g.

### **Tag/Catching**

Choose one kid to be "it"; have to try to catch the other children. The child who is "tagged" will become the new "it".

Variations include putting a "tail" behind each child, and the "it" has to catch the "tail"; or the "it" has to hop to catch others.

### **Duck, duck, goose**

Variation: The "it" has to say memory verse (Romans 5:8) while tapping each kids' head (ie one word per head) and the child who is tapped with the last word will have to run to chase the "it".

### **What is the time Mr Wolf?**

### **Catch the Balls** (for Red class)

Empty box of balls in room and have kids run after them to pick them up and return to box.