

date: **3/19/17****Bible Passage: Jonah 1—4**
(Jonah)

God Saves, Part 1

REMEMBER VERSE

**The LORD your God is with you, the
Mighty Warrior who saves.**

Zephaniah 3:17a

Inspire

Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives

Our God is a God who saves. He pursues us when we lose our way and forget who we are. As a kid I attended a Christian school, but my family didn't go to church on the weekends. The things I heard at school weren't what I saw being lived out at home. I found my identity in school, friends, and the sports I played.

My sophomore year of high school we moved to Germany. Exposed to new people and things at a time I was trying to establish my sense of self, I experimented. A year later we returned from Germany and I attended the same Christian high school, but I began spending time with a new crowd. Slowly I fell into a pattern of drug use that altered my identity. In college I started to lose myself. I knew I needed to be with my family. I moved home but continued making more of the same choices. Finally, I couldn't hide my use and told my family.

God used every situation and circumstance to bring me to Him. In the year that followed, I met and married my wife. Together we committed our lives to Jesus. God has truly created a new identity for me. God is engaged in my life, and I'm aware of His presence. I have a deep relationship with Him now, and not just knowledge of Him. I try to walk the path He has for me and let Him lead the way. My identity in Him continues to grow and develop. He has shown me who I am. God saves.

Jonas Barber
Tru Team

Equip

Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage

Jonah, a prophet of God, was given a message to take to the Gentile people of Nineveh. But Jonah ran from the Lord,

boarding a boat with plans to travel to Tarshish. When ships headed Tarshish, they weren't expected to return for three years—a trip of significant time and distance. Nineveh was the capitol city in the Assyrian Empire. Although the Assyrians and the Israelites had a tumultuous relationship for many years, at this time the Israelites had been free from Assyrian rule for approximately 50 years. In giving Jonah a message to take to the people of Nineveh, God would call this Gentile city to repentance.

It seems strange to think a prophet of God would flee from His clear commands—especially when the goal of the message was to bring repentance and grace to its recipients. Israel was gaining strength and enjoying their favored relationship with God. However, in this time of reprieve, the people were becoming complacent. It's possible Jonah's response was reflective of the heart of the Israelite people. Perhaps he was jealous for the relationship his people had with God and didn't relish the thought of the Lord extending grace and compassion toward the enemies of Israel, or he simply hated them because they were wicked and cruel.

The gift of relationship with God was never intended to be for Abraham's descendants alone; it was to come from Abraham's line to bring salvation to the world. God chose Abraham and his descendants to proclaim His truth and identity to all people. God would often send His message through prophets to awaken all the people so they would be moved to repentance and restoration. After hearing and believing His message, the people of Nineveh repented and were shown grace and mercy by the Lord.

Support

Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word

Through Christ you've been given a new identity. You've been spiritually reborn into a legacy and heritage of faith.

God richly blessed the Israelites that they might be a blessing to all nations and peoples. So too, has He richly blessed all who believe in Him and call Him Lord and Savior. Each follower of Christ has been blessed not only for themselves, but also to bless others.

The gift and truth of salvation is the greatest blessing we can share with those who don't yet know Christ. Look at the boundaries you have on your daily world. Is God calling you to push past those boundaries? How will you respond? How has He uniquely created you to serve Him and be a blessing to others? Take a walk around your neighborhood sometime this week. As you walk past each home, pray for those who live inside. Ask God how He would use you to be a blessing to the people in your neighborhood.

EXPLORE:: 10 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children engage in fun, creative activities designed to pique their curiosity about the day's portion of The Big God Story.

Underwater Magnet Fun

In today's part of The Big God Story, God sends a big fish to swallow Jonah and deliver him safely to Nineveh. Magnet play with underwater objects allows children to create their own interactive scenes.

SUPPLIES (per small group)

- [Underwater template \(see Resources\)](#)

- Card stock or paper (1 sheet for every 2–3 children, white)
- Scissors
- Self-adhesive magnets (7 for every 2–3 children)
- Metal cookie sheets (1 for every 2–3 children)

PREPARE AHEAD

Make copies of the Underwater template, one for every two to three children. Cut out the shapes and attach a magnet to each one. Attach each set of shapes to a cookie sheet.

SET UP

Place cookie sheets, complete with underwater magnet sets, on the table.

RELATE

Welcome children and ask them to work together with friends to create an interesting underwater scene using the magnets and cookie sheets. **What kind of scenes can you create along with your friends?** While children play, engage them in discussion. **Have you seen an ocean or sea? What does it look like? What does it smell like? Have you ever looked underwater? In a picture? In person? What types of things live in the ocean?**

DISCOVER:: 25 min.

Host/Worship Leader/Storyteller

Children participate in discovering God's Word through Bible verse memorization, interactive storytelling techniques, and worship as response.

Ponder Point**God Saves, Part 1****Chloe's Rules**

Host/Worship Leader

SUPPLIES

- [Chloe's Rules videos](#)

Mail Time

Host/Worship Leader

SUPPLIES

- [Remember Verse image \(see Resources\)](#)
- [Remember Verse cards \(see Resources\)](#)
- Bibles (your personal and large children's)
- Mailbox

RELATE

Tech: Cue the Mail Time intro clip and image. Choose one volunteer to hide the mail and another to find the mail. Have the “Seeker” close her eyes while the “Hider” finds a good place to hide the Remember Verse. Once the mail has been hidden, the Seeker will begin to look for the mail while the children give clues to its whereabouts by calling out “hot” and “cold.”

Once the Seeker finds the mail, the Host invites her to pull out the enclosed Remember Verse. Next, the Host should find the Remember Verse in his Bible and read the words aloud. Talk about the meaning of the verse while interacting with the children.

Lead the children in reciting the Remember Verse several times together using a variety of engaging methods. Hand motions, different voices, various speeds, and character integration are all great ways to help commit the Scripture to memory. For longer verses, approach the verse one section at a time, increasing what the children repeat back each week.

REMEMBER VERSE

**The LORD your God is with you, the
Mighty Warrior who saves.**

Zephaniah 3:17a

REMEMBER VERSE DEFINITIONS

Mighty Warrior: A name for God that means He is powerful in battle.

REMEMBER VERSE MOTIONS

The LORD your God: Make “L” with right index finger and thumb. Move the “L” from right shoulder to left hip.

is with you: Put both hands in front of body and pull close to chest.

the Mighty Warrior: Make fists and flex to show muscles.

who saves: Make fists and fold arms across chest, then open arms.

Wardrobe of Wonder

Storyteller/Host/Worship Leader

SUPPLIES

- [Wardrobe of Wonder intro clip and image \(see Resources\)](#)
- [Wardrobe of Wonder sound effect \(see Resources\)](#)
- [What’sIt: Pair of Running Shoes \(see optional image in Resources\)](#)

What’sIt: Pair of Running Shoes

The Lord God told His servant Jonah to take a message to the city of Nineveh. Jonah refused and ran from God. He journeyed on a boat until a storm hit. In an attempt to save the crew, Jonah told the men to throw him overboard. Jonah began to sink, and God sent a large fish to swallow him—rescuing him from death. Jonah was no longer running from God, but back to Him.

RELATE

Tech: Cue the Wardrobe of Wonder intro clip and image. Invite a child volunteer to “spy” on the What’sIt by peeking into

the wardrobe. Each time the wardrobe door opens, *cue the Wardrobe of Wonder sound effect*. Have him whisper the identity of the What'sIt in your ear to ensure he knows what it is.

Invite your assistant to sit on the stools with you. Then lead the group in asking the assistant yes-or-no questions about the What'sIt. Once the children have guessed correctly, ask your assistant to retrieve the What'sIt from the wardrobe and bring it to you. Thank your volunteer and encourage him to sit with his small group.

ASK

(Child's name), **why do you think the What'sIt is a pair of running shoes?** Invite volunteer to give you some suggestions. **When would you use this type of shoes?** Children respond. **I wonder how the What'sIt will be connected with what we're going to hear today from The Big God Story! Friends, what do you think? Let's find out because, do you know what time it is?**

The Big God Story

Jonah 1—4

God Saves

Storytelling Technique: Storytelling Motions

SUPPLIES

- [The Big God Story intro clip and image \(see Resources\)](#)
- [What'sIt: Pair of Running Shoes \(see optional image in Resources\)](#)
- [Wardrobe of Wonder sound effect \(see Resource Files\)](#)
- [Optional: Storytelling video \(see Resources\)](#)

RELATE

Tech: Cue The Big God Story intro clip and image. **Hello, friends! It's so good to see you here today! Before we jump into The Big God Story, let's stop and ask God to teach us. Let's quiet our voices and rest our hands and feet as we close our eyes and talk to God.** Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds.

Many years ago, there was a prophet named Jonah. What's a prophet? Wait for children to answer. **That's right! A prophet is a person to whom God gives a special message that He wants shared with His people. God may send a message for many people, or just one or two. No matter what God says in His message, it's the prophet's job to obey God and get the message to the right people.**

Jonah was a prophet who lived in the Promised Land of Israel. One day God told Jonah to take a message to the people in the city of Nineveh. Can you say that with me? NIN-e-veh. Children repeat. **God saw how badly the people of the city were acting and knew something had to be done. God told Jonah to take a message to the people. But Jonah ran away from the Lord instead.** Pump arms as if running, and cue children to follow along. *Tech: Cue Wardrobe of Wonder sound effect and What'sIt image.* **Wait a minute. I just heard a sound from the Wardrobe of Wonder. Cup hand around ear as if listening, and cue children to follow along. Running shoes were our What'sIt today in the wardrobe. Why do you think we found a picture of running shoes? Is someone running in The Big God Story?** Pause for answers. **Yes, you're right! Jonah was trying to run away from God. Let's see what happened.**

Jonah got on a boat that would take him far, far away, because he didn't want to take God's message to the people of Nineveh. Wave good-bye. Friends, can we ever really run away from God? Children answer. **No** (shake

heads no), we can't! We can turn away from Him and try not to listen, but we can't ever really run away from God. And that's a good thing, because we need God. While the boat was sailing away, a great storm hit the sea. Waves crashed and the boat swayed back and forth (sway from side to side). The sailors on the ship were very scared. They didn't know what had caused this great big storm.

The captain went looking for Jonah and found him sleeping below deck! Jonah told them it was his God, the Creator of the heavens, sea, and land, who had sent the storm. Jonah told the men that he was running away (pump arms) from the Lord. The sea kept getting rougher and rougher (sway from side to side). "What should we do to calm the sea?" they asked. "Pick me up and throw me into the sea," replied Jonah, "and it will become calm. I know it's my fault this storm has come to you." The men didn't like Jonah's answer, not one bit. So, first they tried to row the boat back to shore (row oars), but the storm was getting worse. Finally, the sailors did what Jonah said and they threw him overboard. Once Jonah was off the boat, the storm quieted (big sigh of relief). When the men saw this, they knew God was mighty and powerful. God saved them.

What do you think happened to Jonah? Interact with children's answers. God didn't forget Jonah and let him die in the sea. He sent a great big fish to swallow Jonah up. Use hands to make swallow up motion. A giant fish! Can you imagine that? Only God could send a giant fish to save one of His people! And that's where Jonah stayed for three whole days and three whole nights. Hold up three fingers. What would you do if you were in the belly of a great big fish? Pause for responses. Those are all very good ideas! Jonah prayed! He thanked God for saving him. Jonah knew he could've died in the sea, but God saved him. As he prayed, Jonah told God he'd obey Him and take God's message to the people of Nineveh. Then the Lord commanded the fish, and it spit Jonah out onto dry land. Who saved Jonah? Children answer. God did!

God told Jonah a second time, "Go to the city of Nineveh and tell them the message I give you." So Jonah went. He told the people the message God gave him, and the people believed God. They stopped doing harmful things and turned away from their bad choices. When God saw this, He showed them mercy. God cared for them and loved them, even though He could've punished them for the way they were behaving. God saved the people and their city from being harmed.

Who saved the sailors from the great storm at sea? Children answer. God did! Who saved Jonah? Children answer. God did! Who had mercy and saved the people of Nineveh from being harmed because of their sin? Children answer. God did! God saves! When we cry out to Him, God will save us. God made you and He loves you. He wants you to know Him and know that you belong to Him. God is full of mercy and saves those who call on Him.

Wonder Questions

Small Group Enhancements, coloring pages, and discussion questions help your group go deeper into today's portion of The Big God Story.

SUPPLIES (per small group)

- [Wonder Questions coloring pages \(see Resources\)](#)
- Crayons

RELATE

Jonah was a prophet who was given a special message from God to deliver to Nineveh. At first Jonah tried to run from God, but God sent him back. The people of Nineveh heard God's message and cried out to Him. He showed them mercy and saved them.

I wonder ... How did Jonah feel when God found him and sent the storm?

I wonder ... What did Jonah say to God inside the fish?

I wonder ... Why does God save me?

BLESS:: 5 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing may be a prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.

SUPPLIES (per small group)

- [Remember Verse cards](#) (see [Resources](#))

RELATE

Before your children leave today, join them in a circle and encourage everyone to hold hands. **Today we learned that God saves. That truth is for everyone! Let's bless each other right now by sending a hand squeeze and words of blessing around the circle. I'll start by squeezing the hand of the person on my right and telling her, "God saves." She will then squeeze the hand of the person on *her* right and repeat the words. We'll go around the circle until everyone has had a chance to squeeze a hand and say, "God saves."**

When everyone in the circle has been blessed, encourage children to hold out their hands in front of them as you speak a blessing over the group:

Children, may you always remember you are God's child. When you call out to God, He will save you.