

PPT Title

Jonah Goes to Nineveh

Main Point: We should share God's grace with others.

Key Verse: *I want to complete the work the Lord Jesus has given me. He wants me to give witness to others about the good news of God's grace.* - Acts 20:24b

Props: One Ziploc bag with a fresh piece of Play-doh inside; Second piece of Play-doh that is dried out, in no particular shape; an extra ziplock bag.

BACKGROUND/REVIEW



Say: Last week we learned about the prophet Jonah. God told Jonah to go to the large city of Nineveh to tell the people there to turn from their sin. Jonah did NOT obey God! Jonah did not want the Ninevites to turn to God, so he went in the opposite direction. He got on a boat going to the south of Spain. Jonah didn't get too far before he realized that God was STILL with him - even though he was trying to run away! Now, God didn't **need** Jonah to preach to the Ninevites. He could have used someone else. But God chose Jonah. And by His grace, God went after Jonah to give him another opportunity to obey. Over and over in the Bible we see that God is loving and full of grace and mercy. God pursues people.

God caused a fierce storm on the sea. The boat was tossed around on the waves to the point of sinking. Even when his life, and the lives of the sailors, was in danger, Jonah did not repent. He didn't change his mind about his sin. When the sailors learned who Jonah was and what he had done, they had no choice but to throw him overboard. The sea instantly became calm. That day the sailors realized that the Lord was the one true God and they put their trust in Him.



God sent an unlikely rescuer for Jonah. **Ask:** What did God send to keep Jonah from drowning? *God sent a really big fish to swallow Jonah.* **Say:** Jonah lived in the fish for three days and nights. Finally, Jonah called out to God. Jonah's prayer was not a prayer of repentance. It was a prayer for help - to save his life. God heard Jonah's prayer and caused the fish to spit Jonah out on the land - probably right back where Jonah started out.

Remember, God didn't **need** Jonah. It was an honor and a blessing for Jonah to be chosen by God to preach truth to thousands of people of Nineveh (Romans 10:14-16). As a believer, there is no greater joy than to be a part of someone coming to know and follow the Lord. It was only because God is full of grace that He went after Jonah to give him another chance to obey.

JONAH GOES TO NINEVEH (Jonah 3)

Say: After Jonah squeezed the salt water out of his sandals, God spoke to him once again.

A message came to Jonah from the Lord a second time. He said, "Go to the great (big) city of Nineveh. Announce to its people the message I give you." - Jonah 3:1-2

Well, Jonah knew exactly what could happen if he ran away from the persistent God, so this time, he obeyed.



Nineveh was a huge city. Experts estimate the population of Nineveh to be well over half a million people. The Bible says it would take three days to see all of Nineveh. As we said last week, Nineveh had a great wall that ran around the city for protection.

Note to Teacher: In verse 4:11, God numbers those who can't tell their right hand from their left hand to be 120,000. This more than likely refers to the number of young children in the city. (God rebuked Jonah for not having compassion on these people in particular - those young citizens who had not yet reached the age of accountability.) According to recent CIA world fact book numbers (9/4/08), children aged 0-14 make up 27% of the world's population. Therefore, approximately 15% of the population is aged 0-8. Applying this modern-day figure to the Ninevites, we can calculate 800,000 citizens in the entire city. Of course, many factors figure into the actual number - longer life span, higher infant mortality rate, etc. But we can conservatively estimate around half a million people.



On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He announced, "In 40 days Nineveh will be destroyed."

The people of Nineveh believed God's warning. They decided not to eat any food for a while. All of them put on black clothes. That's what everyone from the least important of them to the most important did. - Jonah 3:4-5

Say: Jonah boldly announced to the people of Nineveh that their city was so full of wickedness and violence that God was about to destroy it. God is very patient and He wants everyone to come to Him (2 Peter 3:9). But there came certain points when the wickedness became so bad that God had to remove it from the earth (Genesis 6:3). This is what happened in the days of Noah, and in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 6:1-13, 18:20, 19:24-25). Be certain that our loving, patient God always sends a warning for those who are willing to hear it (Amos 3:7). Jonah was that warning for the people of Nineveh.

Application: God is dead serious about sin. Just a quick word about one sin in particular: God absolutely hates violence. The city of Nineveh was very violent (Jonah 3:8). In the days of Noah, the entire earth was full of violence (Genesis 6:11). You must be very careful what you expose yourself to. Tons of movies and video games are centered on violence. You have to ask the question - If God hates violence, can I sit through a two-hour movie, or sit and play hours of video games that are filled with violence?

Say: Right away, the Ninevites believed Jonah's message. As a way of showing God that they had changed their minds about their sin, they stopped eating and drinking. They also wore black clothing, just like someone might do at a funeral, because they realized how sad and serious their sin was.



When the King of Nineveh heard Jonah's message, he also repented. He fasted and dressed in black. He even sent out an order for all the people and their animals to be covered in black cloth. He said:

All of you must call out to God with all your hearts. Stop doing what is evil. Don't harm others. Who knows? God might take pity on us. He might turn away from his burning anger. Then we won't die. - Jonah 3:8b-9

The people had TRULY repented. They changed their mind about their sin. They agreed with God that their sin was wrong. They called out to God for mercy. Since the very beginning of Nineveh, people there had always worshipped false gods and goddesses. For years and years, the people ignored the true God and lived in sinful ways. They actually deserved the punishment that Jonah spoke about. But God is SO GOOD! He

is SO full of GRACE, He was about to do something AMAZING!

*When God saw what they did and **how they turned from their evil ways**, He had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction He had threatened. - Jonah 3:10 NIV*

Our all-knowing God can read the hearts of men (1 Kings 8:39). He knew that they had repented - they changed their minds, and they turned from their evil ways. Upon seeing this, God had compassion, or pity, on the people. God actually changed His mind about their punishment! He did not destroy the city.

Application: Every person has sinned - just like the people of Nineveh. And just like the people of Nineveh, we have earned a terrible punishment for our sin. Our sin brings death and eternal separation from God. But God is good and full of grace. So God sends out His message to each person. He uses His word and He uses believers to tell the message that we must repent of our sin and put our trust in Jesus. When a person turns from his sin and puts his trust in Jesus, God forgives him and gives him new life. Be sure of this: there is no one who has sinned too greatly to be saved by God. All it takes is realizing that you are a sinner and that God has made a way for you to be forgiven. Accept what Jesus did for you on the cross, and you will be saved!

JONAH'S ANGER (Jonah 4:1-4)



The Bible says there is rejoicing in heaven when one sinner repents (Luke 15:10). So what do you think happened when half a million people turned from their sin and followed God? What a party there must have been in heaven that day! WOW! I can't even imagine it! Jonah had been the mouthpiece of God. By God's grace, he was the blessed one who carried God's message to these people! How do you think he responded? Did he jump for joy? Did he dance with happiness? Read with me in Jonah 4:1:



But Jonah was very upset. He became angry. - Jonah 4:1

How can this be? How could Jonah possibly be angry after God used him in this miracle?

He prayed to the Lord and said, "Lord, isn't this exactly what I thought would happen when I was still at home? That's why I was so quick to run away to Tarshish. 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. You don't want to destroy them. Lord, take away my life. I'd rather die than live."

But the Lord replied, "Do you have any right to be angry?" - Jonah 4:2-4

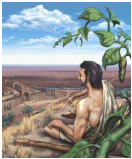
Jonah was angry with God for doing exactly what God always does! God is always patient and kind, graceful and forgiving. Jonah was furious that the Lord forgave the Ninevites because he was sure that the Ninevites did not **deserve** to be forgiven. But that's EXACTLY what grace is all about! Grace is God forgiving those who do not deserve forgiveness. Jonah did not think about the fact that he, too, needed God's grace. In fact, he was only alive at this time because God gave him a second chance after he disobeyed God! But Jonah couldn't see these truths. He missed out on so much joy because his heart was hard.

Application: Let's look at it this way. **Teacher:** Take out your ziplock bag of fresh Play-doh. Pull out Play-doh. **Say:** Let's say this Play-doh is a symbol for your heart. It is soft and can be easily molded. Squeeze the clay to show the kids how soft and pliable it is. God wants to mold your heart to be just like His heart. Shape the clay into a heart. This is an on-going process. Every day, God will teach you and mold you. Hold up your ziplock bag. The way to keep your heart soft and moldable is to **remain in**, or **abide in**, God. Put the clay in the bag and zip it closed. As long as you **abide in** God, then no matter what happens in your life, your heart will be soft and teachable.

Show that in the bag, the clay is soft. However, if you do not abide in God, if you run away from God like Jonah did, it will be like leaving play-doh out of its proper container. What will happen? Show your second, dried out piece of Play-doh. Hold it far away from the empty ziplock bag. Your heart will be hard. You will be unmoldable and unteachable. Your heart will look more like the world than like the heart of God. But when you remain in God, your heart will be more like His, and you will rejoice over the same things that He rejoices over.

Say: Gently, God rebuked Jonah by asking, "Do you have any right to be angry?" So often, God asks questions to make people face the truth of their sinfulness (Genesis 3:9, 4:9). Of course Jonah did not have the right to be angry! Jonah needed God's grace every bit as much as the Ninevites.

THE VINE & THE WORM (Jonah 4:5-10)



Say: Stubborn Jonah went out to a spot where he could look out over the city to see what would happen. Undoubtedly, he was hoping God would once again change His mind, and destroy the city after all. Jonah built a small shelter and sat in its shade.

Then the Lord God sent a vine and made it grow up over Jonah. It gave him more shade for his head. It made him more comfortable. Jonah was very happy he had the vine. But before sunrise the next day, God sent a worm. It chewed the vine so much that it dried up.



When the sun rose, God sent a burning east wind. The sun beat down on Jonah's head. It made him very weak. He wanted to die. So he said, "I'd rather die than live."

But God said to Jonah, "Do you have any right to be angry about what happened to the vine?"

"I do," he said. "In fact, I'm angry enough to die."

But the Lord said, "You have been concerned about this vine. But you did not take care of it. You did not make it grow. It grew up in one night and died the next. Nineveh has more than 120,000 people (who) can't tell right from wrong. Nineveh also has a lot of cattle. So shouldn't I show concern for that great city?" - Jonah 4:6-11

Say: God pointed out that Jonah did not make the plant; he didn't water it or care for it. Yet Jonah was crushed that it had died. But God had created each and every person in Nineveh (Psalm 139:13). Every Ninevite was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). They each had a soul that would last for eternity. They were incomparably more important than a vine. Jonah was dead wrong not to be concerned about the Ninevites.

Application: Jonah was far more concerned about his own comfort than about the lives of hundreds of thousands people. Jonah was self-centered, not God-centered or other-centered. Jesus said the two most important things we can do are to love God with all our heart and soul, and then to love others more than ourselves (Matthew 22:36-40). Jonah did not live his life this way. How can we?



First, we love God by knowing Him. "Once we know God, we can't help but love Him. He is utterly lovable." (Greg Boone) Everything about God is good. He embodies every quality that we were created to love. We will know God and love God when we trust in Him, read His word, and abide in Him daily.

Next, pray for God to give you a deep love for other people. Put aside the things that are all about you. Show a genuine interest in other people. Look for ways to help others and put them first. You don't have to be the first in line at the water fountain. You don't have to sit with the "cool people" at lunch when there is someone else sitting alone. You can help your little sister tie her shoes. And above all, remember the grace that

God has given to you. When you remember how much God has forgiven you, you will be more patient with others, and you'll want to share God's love and grace with them. The #1 way you can show love to others is by sharing the message of God's love and forgiveness through Jesus.

PPT Verse

Key Verse: *I want to complete the work the Lord Jesus has given me. He wants me to give witness to others about the good news of God's grace. - Acts 20:24b*

PPT Main Point

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Note to Teacher: Note the similarities between Jonah and the big brother of the prodigal son (Luke 15:28-32). Both were bitter and angry that the wayward one(s) had been readily received by the Father. Both Jonah and the brother had a gross underestimation of their own sin and the grace with which God covered it. (See also the parable of the workers in the vineyard in Matthew 20:1-16.)

The incident with the vine confirms that Jonah's ultimate problem was pride. He despised God's grace. To accept the doctrine of grace, he would have to admit that he was in need of it. No, Jonah thought he *deserved* to have the vine that shaded him. Likewise, he thought he *deserved* God's blessing while the Ninevites did not. Jonah believed that he deserved God's favor because he was an Israelite. But Jonah forgot that God chose Israel to be His people only by His grace! (Deuteronomy 9:6) May we never forget how in need of God's grace we are, so we will never tire of sharing His grace with others!