

A Good Shepherd Sacred Story

Jonah

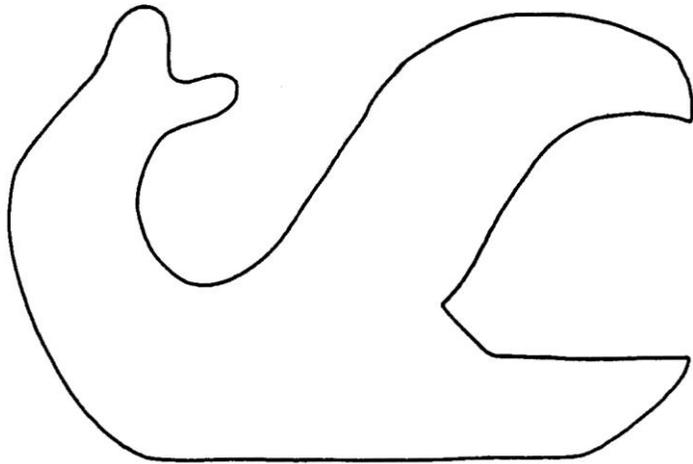
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JONAH MATERIALS

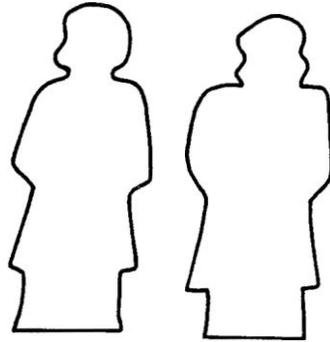
- large wicker basket to hold:
 - wooden Jonah figure
 - 2 wooden sailor figures
 - wooden boat
 - wooden fish
 - 2 wooden people of Nineveh figures



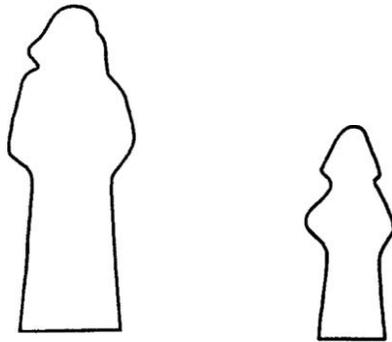
Fish



Jonah



Sailors



People of Nineveh

JONAH JONAH 1, 2, 3, 4

ACTIONS

After speaking, stand and get the story basket from the shelf. Return to the circle and sit down, placing the basket slightly to your side.

During the few seconds of silence gently stroke one of the wooden figures to center yourself and the children.

Place the Jonah figure in the center of the storytelling area.

Gently touch Jonah.

Shake your head as you speak.

Place the boat next to Jonah. Put him into the boat and move it to the left.

Pick the boat up slightly and move it as though on waves. (The wood figures may fall down into the boat.. .that's ok).

Set the boat down and touch one of the sailors and then the Jonah figure.

Stand Jonah in the boat.

Lift one hand next to your head to indicate God.

Touch one of the sailors.

WORDS

Watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

Children of God, all the words to this story are inside of me. Will you please make silence with me so I can find all the words to share this story of God's people with you?

Once there was a prophet named Jonah.

God came to Jonah and told him that he was to go to Nineveh to speak the words of God.

Nineveh was a very evil city and Jonah did not want to go there.

So he paid to get on a boat that would take him away from the presence of God.

When he and the sailors were on the boat at sea God caused a terrible storm to happen.

The sailors were very afraid, but Jonah slept through the storm.

The sailors finally woke him and told him to pray to his God.

They wanted to know who had caused the storm. Jonah told him that he worshiped Yahweh who made the sea and land.

Then the sailors were very afraid.

Touch the Jonah figure.

"Row" with both hands. Then take the Jonah figure and throw it over the side of the boat. Put the boat and sailors back in the story basket.

Place the fish near Jonah and put the Jonah figure inside it.

Touch the Jonah figure inside the fish.

Fold your hands as though praying.

Move the Jonah figure from the fish to the center of the area.

Move the fish to the left and into the story basket. Move the Jonah figure to the right.

Move your arm quickly as though wiping out the whole city.

Nod your head as you speak.

Place the two people of Nineveh figures to the right of Jonah. Touch each one and shake your head when you say "didn't eat".

Look up to God, then back down to the people and shake your head.

Hit one fist into the palm of the other hand.

Throw both hands outward, palms up.

The storm got worse and worse. Finally Jonah told the sailors, "You must throw me overboard if the sea is to be calm."

The sailors tried to row back to shore, then because the storm got worse, gave up and threw Jonah into the ocean.

God caused a great fish to come and swallow Jonah.

For three days and nights Jonah sat, alive, in the belly of the fish.

Jonah prayed to God and promised to do God's will if God would get him out of the fish's belly.

Then God caused the fish to throw Jonah up on dry land.

Then God told Jonah, again, to go to Nineveh. This time Jonah went.

Jonah told the people of Nineveh, "If you don't stop doing evil things your city will be overthrown in forty days. "

The people of Nineveh believed Jonah's words and became very scared.

They dressed in sackcloth and didn't eat and changed the way they lived.

When God saw what the people of Nineveh did, God decided not to destroy them after all.

That made Jonah very angry. He wanted God to punish the people of Nineveh.

And now God was going to forgive them!

Move Jonah a short distance to the right of the people.

Starting at floor level, wind an imaginary plant around Jonah.

With thumb and index finger together, have the "worm" eat the "plant".

"Touch" the Jonah figure.

Shake your fist toward heaven.

Touch the imaginary plant.

Gesture to indicate the whole city area.

Pause and then nod and smile as you speak.

Jonah went outside of the city and made a little shelter out of branches to keep himself out of the sun.

God made a plant grow up around the shelter to shade Jonah and keep him cool in the hot sun. Jonah liked the shade from the plant.

But the next day God made a little worm come and eat the plant until there was no shade.

Then the hot wind began to blow and Jonah became very weak from the heat.

He became very angry at the plant and told God "It would be better for me to die!"

Then God said, "You feel sorry for this little plant even though you did nothing to make it grow. "

"So why shouldn't I feel sorry for Nineveh and the people who are there. There are even many young children there who don't know what the adults have done. "

And so God spared Nineveh.

WONDERING QUESTIONS:

I wonder why Jonah got angry when God was kind to the people of Nineveh?

I wonder if the fish who swallowed Jonah and the worm who ate the plant could hear God's voice?

I wonder if Jonah ever became happy about Nineveh?

Carefully place all the figures back into the basket.

Watch carefully how I put these materials away so you will know how to use them if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

After speaking, stand and carry the basket back to the shelf. Return to the circle and sit down.

Watch carefully where I return this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

Be sure all children have an opportunity to choose their activity before you dismiss them to their work.

I wonder what you will make your work today? Let's go around the circle and decide.

JONAH ... TEACHER HELPS

It is so very easy to get lost in the fantastic account of Jonah being swallowed by a fish that we lose the rest of this story. But it is much more than a story of a man being swallowed by a fish and living to tell about it. Rather it is about prejudiced, narrow-minded Jews who were intent on keeping their lines pure and using that as their reasons for excluding, even sending away the foreign wives of Jewish men when they returned from the exile in Babylon.

The book of Jonah attests to a God who loves all people and who is willing to forgive people who repent and turn back to God. The angry Jonah tells God that he was afraid this would happen. God would become merciful and loving and not punish this people like they should be punished.

The entire book of Jonah is this story. It is a small book that contains one of the biggest lessons in a God of grace to be found anywhere. Not only does God love all people, but even all of nature is under God's rule. The storm obeys God, as does the sea and the fish. The plant and the worm are both empowered by God as well. This is no ordinary God, but rather the God who is sovereign and gracious.

The first wondering question gets to the heart of the story. We are not really given a reason at the beginning of the story about why Jonah does not want to go to Nineveh. His apparent selfishness with his faith has to be the reason. Jonah wants the Jewish faith preserved for only those who have obeyed God's law; others who have not obeyed God's law must be destroyed.

The second wondering question allows our imagination to run free as we consider how the fish, the plant and the worm all "knew" what God wanted them to do? This is a particularly important understanding for the young child who will give human properties to plants and animals. Their responses should be worth remembering.

The final wondering question is back to Jonah. He started the story as an angry man and he is, once again, angry. In this question we consider if Jonah will ever have the understanding and compassion that Yahweh has. We aren't told how Jonah ends up. And we never hear about any further adventures in the Bible. Encourage the children to think about this question and share with you what they believed happens to Jonah.

The Good Shepherd room is a wonderful place to model the mercy and grace of God. Children who make mistakes in either behavior or attitude are never ostracized. Instead they will have someone work with them to bring them to an understanding of how to live as one of God's people.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Why was Jonah upset that God wanted to save the people of Nineveh?

Think of a time when you had something you didn't want to share. Why did you want to keep it for yourself?

Why do you think Jonah decided to go to Nineveh?

- A. He wanted to do what God said.
- B. He was afraid of being swallowed by a fish again.
- C. He really liked preaching to people.

Support your answer with a reason of your own.

Forgiving is a hard thing to do sometimes. We want to hold onto our anger because it makes us feel better than someone else. Think of a time when you didn't want to forgive someone even though they had apologized. How did you feel?