

JONAH

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Jonah

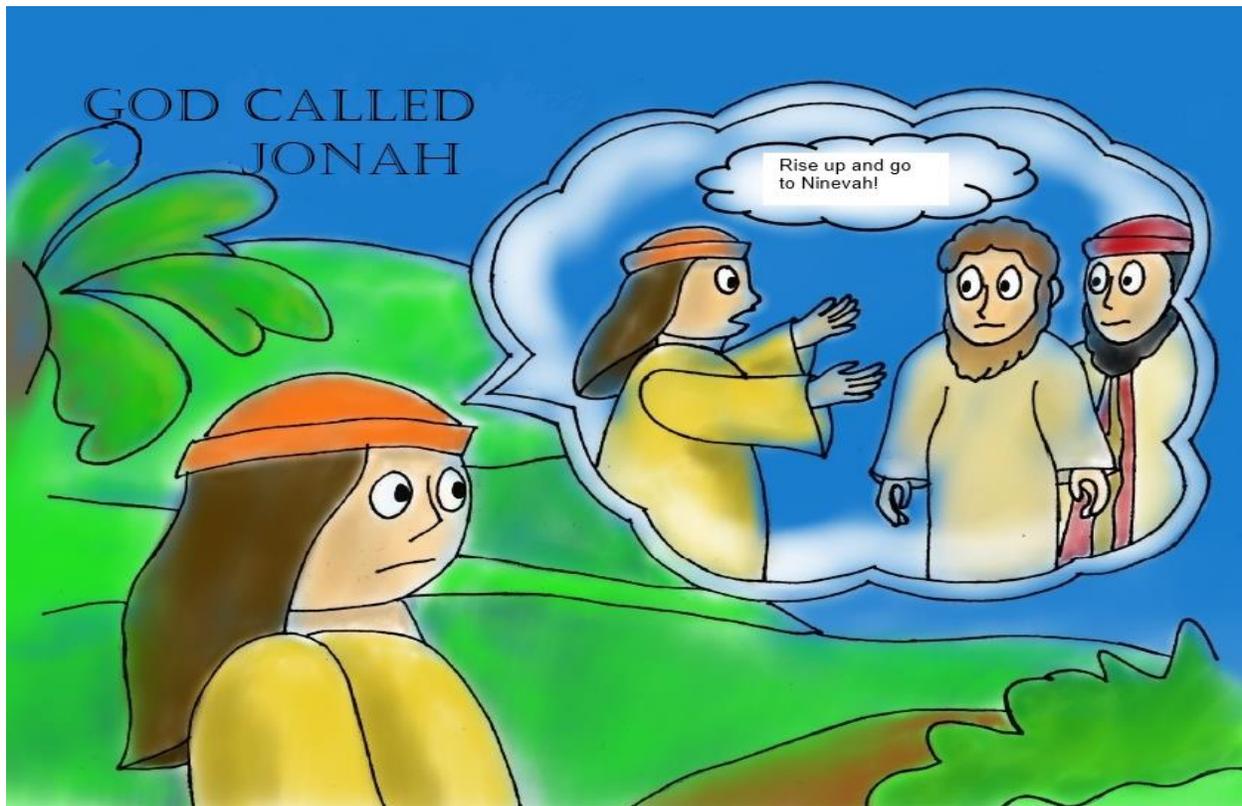
God Called Jonah

2 Kings 14:25; Jonah 1:1-2, 4:11

In the Bible there was a man named Jonah. Jonah was a prophet. That means that God spoke to Jonah and Jonah spoke to God. They talked together, and knew one another very well. God would give Jonah messages to pass on to people. Sometimes your mother might give you a message to pass on to someone. She might say to you 'Tell your brother that dinner is ready.'

In Jonah's time there was a city called Nineveh where the people were very bad. They were evil and violent, and God could not tolerate it anymore. He was going to destroy the city if the people did not change their way of living. But God did not want to destroy them, because He loved each person in that city.

God loves all men because He created all men. God created us all differently but He loves us all the same. The Bible says that we should love our neighbour. Our neighbour is anyone that is not you. Our neighbours are our brothers, sisters, moms, dads, the people on the bus, and even all the people at your school. In your classroom there are many different children. Some might be quiet, some might be loud, some might be slow, some might be fast, some might be naughty, and some might be nice. We might like some, but we might not like others. But God loves us all the same.



(Storyteller, insert a personal experience here that shows that we should love our neighbour. This is our personal example): When I was nine years old we were learning our times tables. I was very good at math (number work) because my mom was a math teacher. I would usually finish our worksheets before the rest of the class. Mrs. Griffith would tell me to read quietly or help the classmate sitting next to me. In our class we often changed the seats round. I would always help whoever she put beside me, even if they were not my friend.

How can you show that you love your neighbour? (Write or draw what the children suggest on a piece of paper. Here are some suggestions if they get stuck:

- If you bring in a whole bag of candies and you only share them with your best friend but not with everyone else is around when you give them to your friend, is that loving your neighbour?
- If you are playing a game and your little brother wants to join in and you say “no,” is that loving your neighbour?

The city of Nineveh was very big, and there were more than one hundred and twenty thousand people in that city (*Illustrate to the children how many people this is by filling a sheet with stick people or writing the number out*), and God created each one of them individually. But the people there did not know God, so God needed to send someone to Nineveh to tell the people to change their way of living.

God told Jonah to do this job for Him. God told Jonah to speak for Him. God told Jonah to, “Arise, go to Nineveh, the great city, and cry out against it, for their evil has come up before Me.” It was Jonah’s job to tell the people of Nineveh that God was very, very angry with their way of living and that they should stop doing evil things.

Week One Suggestions

Point to emphasize: God loves all kinds of people

Application to the children: We should love all kinds of people.

Suggested verses to memorize:

God so loved the world – John 3:16a

Beloved, let us love one another – 1 John 4:7a

You shall love your neighbor as yourself – Matt. 22:39

For this verse you will have to explain ‘neighbor’. The children will think that it means the person next door. Explain to them that neighbor is anybody that is not you. This includes parents, brothers, sisters, teachers, schoolmates, etc.

Suggested songs:

I love my mom and dad

God gives the sunshine and God gives the rain

Jonah

Jonah Disobeyed God

Jonah 1:2-6

God told His prophet Jonah to do a special job for Him. Jonah's job was to speak for God. God said, "Arise, go to Nineveh, the great city, and cry out against it, for their evil has come up before Me." It was Jonah's job to tell the people of Nineveh that God was very, very angry with their way of living and that they should stop doing evil things.

But Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh. He did not agree with God. He did not want to go to another country. So Jonah ran away from God. Jonah disobeyed God! To disobey is when you do not do what you are told.



Do you always do what you are told to do? (Pick illustrations according to the children's age but do not give a personal example of how you disobeyed; the point here is to illustrate what disobedience is. You might want to write these things out on a board or large paper. Here are some suggestions.)

- If your mother tells you to clean up your toys and you continue playing, have you done what you were told? No!
- If you are at the table eating dinner and your father tells you to eat all your vegetables and you leave them on your plate, have you done what you were told to do? No!
- When your mother tells you to do your homework and then you go and play on the computer, is that doing what you were told? No!

This is disobedience – when you do not do what you are told to do.

Jonah did not do what he was told to do. Jonah disobeyed God. Jonah did not go to Nineveh. Instead, Jonah went the opposite way, to Joppa which was on the sea. In Joppa Jonah found a ship sailing to Tarshish. Tarshish was this way, and Nineveh was that way. (*Show them on a map.*) Tarshish was even further in the opposite direction from Nineveh! But Jonah got on the ship, paid the fare, and headed to Tarshish, sailing far, far away from Nineveh.

When we disobey our parents, our parents are not happy with us. Our parents are happy with us when we obey. To obey is to do what we are told. We even make God happy when we obey our parents.

What does it mean to obey? (Use the same illustration that you introduced above, but this time show them how they would obey)

- If your mother tells you to clean up your toys and you do it right away, have you done what you were told? Yes!
- If you are at the table eating dinner and your father tells you to eat all your vegetables and you do it right away, have you done what you were told to do? Yes!
- When your mother tells you to do your homework and you do it right away, is that doing what you were told? Yes!

(Storyteller, insert your own personal story of obeying your parents. Here is ours): When I was young, my big brothers and I used to play outside in my neighbourhood with all the other children. We would play until it was dark outside, and then my father would step out of the front door, put his fingers in his mouth, and make a really loud whistle sound. When we heard our father's whistle, we knew we had to stop playing now and go back inside. When we obeyed our father and came back right away, it made him happy.

Jonah should have obeyed God, but he made the wrong choice and disobeyed. While Jonah was on the ship trying to run away from God, God did something very interesting to get Jonah's attention. He did not whistle or shout out to Jonah. Rather, God hurled a great wind to blow on the sea. The storm was so big that the men on the ship thought that the ship might break. They were very afraid so each one called out to his god. But of course since they called out to gods who were not the real God, they got no answer. The storm still raged and it seemed the

ship would be torn apart and they would all die. They threw things off the ship to make it lighter. It was a violent storm. The sailors on the ship were afraid that they would perish in the storm.

But where was Jonah? The captain of the ship found Jonah fast asleep at the very bottom of the ship. The captain said, 'How can you be fast asleep?' Next week we will find out what happened to Jonah.

Week Two Suggestions

Point to emphasize: The meaning of obedience and disobedience

Application to the children: We should obey our parents.

Suggested verses to memorize:

Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right – Eph 6:1

(If the children are very young you can help them learn the first half of the verse)

Suggested songs:

Obey your mommy and your daddy right away

Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right

Children, obey your parents

Jonah

A Terrible Storm

Jonah 1:8-16

In our story from the Bible, Jonah was God's prophet. God gave Jonah a job to do, which was to speak to the people of Nineveh. But Jonah disobeyed. Last week we saw that Jonah ran away from God and God hurled a storm at Jonah's ship to get his attention. Does anybody remember what Jonah was doing at the bottom of the ship? (sleeping!) That's right. While the men of the ship were busy trying to save the ship from sinking, Jonah was fast asleep. The captain of the ship found Jonah fast asleep and said, 'How can you be fast asleep?'



So Jonah got up and all the men on the ship questioned him. They asked, 'What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?'

Jonah said to them, 'I am a Hebrew, and I fear Jehovah, the God of the heavens, who made the sea and the dry land.' He also told them that he was running away from God. The men on the ship were very shocked and said, 'What is this that you have done? ... What shall we do with you that the sea may be quiet for us?' Jonah said, 'Lift me up and cast me into the sea, and the

sea will be quiet for you. For I know that it is on my account that this great tempest has come upon you.”

Jonah knew that it was his fault that the storm had come and everybody on board was in danger because of him. Jonah told the men of the ship it was all his fault. Jonah confessed.

Do you know what it means to confess? Let’s say you were talking during your lesson one day at school. When your teacher turns around and asks, ‘Who is talking?’ you should confess and say, ‘Sorry, it was me.’ To confess is to tell the truth. (Give an example of what it means to confess, according to the children in your meeting).

(Storyteller, insert a story about admitting something was your fault so that others would not get into trouble. Here is our example): When I was a teenager I was helping my dad at his pizza shop. I had been helping my father all day. There was a hot pizza waiting for someone to collect it. They were really, really late. I thought they would not come to collect their pizza, and I was getting really, really hungry. My stomach was growling. I opened the box. The pizza looked so delicious and smelled so good. I took a piece when no one was looking. Five minutes later my dad looked in the box and was shocked to see a piece missing. He said to everyone working there, ‘Who ate this piece of pizza?’ He was staring at everyone. I knew it was me. My heart was pounding. I did not want to say it was me but I knew that if I did not say it was me everyone else would get in trouble so I opened my mouth and confessed.

Jonah also confessed. Jonah knew that God wanted him to go to Nineveh and he had disobeyed. He admitted that it was all his fault and all these men were in danger of their lives because of him. So the men on the ship threw Jonah into the sea and the sea became very calm. They were saved from the storm and they came to fear Jehovah.

Week Three Suggestions

Point to emphasise and application to the children: Admit when something is your fault.

Suggested verses to memorize:

I will speak the truth – 2 Cor 12:6

For my mouth will utter truth – Prov 8:7

Suggested songs:

I have my very own conscience

Listen, listen, it’s your conscience

Speak up, own up

Jonah

Saved by a Great Fish

Jonah 1:17-2:10

God had told Jonah to go to Nineveh and cry out against them for their evil deeds. But Jonah disobeyed God and went off in the opposite direction! So God hurled a storm at the ship Jonah was sailing on. This storm not only affected Jonah but also all the other men on the ship. Last week we saw that Jonah confessed to the men on the ship. He told them it was his fault that God had sent the storm.

Jonah was thrown into the sea, but God knew he was there. God still wanted Jonah to do His job. So God made a way for Jonah to get to Nineveh. The Bible tells us that God prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah up.

Inside the belly of the great fish, it was very dark. It was like a dark pit. (Have everyone close their eyes). That's probably how dark it was. It was wet and seaweed was wrapped around Jonah's head! Jonah was very distressed. He was miserable and it was a suffering to be in the belly of the fish. He was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights. Jonah cried out to God for help. Jonah had been running away from God but finally He prayed to God (2:2, 7). To pray just means to talk to God. Sometimes when we are miserable we can talk to God. Even though we cannot see God, when we pray, God listens to what we say. We can tell God whatever we feel inside. We can just say, 'God, please help me.'

(Ask the children what they can talk to God about and make a list on a board or large piece of paper. Go over each item and give them an idea of what they can pray. Do not introduce calling on the Lord as a "technique" or adult ways of praying. Be simple. Here are some suggestions if the children need help with ideas: Storms - thunder / lightning, the dark, going on an airplane, etc.)



SAVED BY A GREAT FISH



(Storyteller, insert a personal experience of when you were young and prayed because you were scared. Here is our example): *When I was young, one day I had just finished basketball practice and I was waiting for my mother to pick me up. My mother had asked my brother to pick me up, but he forgot. It started to get dark. I got scared. I even went up to the office to see if I could call somebody, but it was locked. So I sat there and started to cry. I was so miserable so I prayed to God that someone would come and get me. I felt much better after I prayed, and soon after, my mother came).*

Inside the belly of the great fish, Jonah also thanked God for saving his life (2:9). When we thank God for something we are also praying to God. We can just say, 'Thank You, God, for helping me.'

(Ask the children for a list of things that they thank God for. Some suggestions if the children need help with ideas: Food, family, friends, neighbours, the sunshine, that you could play outside, rain for flowers to grow, helping on a test etc.)

After Jonah had prayed to God and thanked God, the fish carried him safely back to the sea shore. God spoke to the fish and the fish spat Jonah out onto the dry land.

Week Four Suggestions

Point to emphasise and application: Teaching them to talk to God by prayer and thanksgiving.

Suggested verses to memorize:

I called out because of my distress to Jehovah, and He answered me; Jonah 2:2

Pray to Him, and He will hear you – Job 22:27

I will give thanks to You, O Jehovah, with all my heart, I will tell out all Your wonders – Psalm 9:1

My heart exults; and with my song do I give thanks to Him – Psalm 28:7

(If the children are very young you can help them learn the underlined part of the verse)

Suggested songs:

Good morning, Lord Jesus

Rain from heaven

When it's dark I talk to God

Thank You for the food Lord

Jonah

Jonah Obeyed God

Jonah 3:1-5

God gave Jonah a job to do. God loved the people of Nineveh but He could not tolerate their evil deeds. The job Jonah was given was to go and cry out to the city of Nineveh for God. But Jonah tried to run away by getting onto a boat headed in the opposite direction. God sent a storm and eventually the people threw Jonah off the boat so that the storm would stop. God prepared a great fish to bring Jonah back to where He wanted him to go. Last week we saw that Jonah finally prayed to God and thanked God inside the belly of the great fish. The fish took Jonah back to the shore and God spoke to the fish and it vomited Jonah out onto the dry land.



God spoke to Jonah a second time and told Jonah, "Arise, go to Nineveh, the great city, and proclaim the proclamation that I will speak to you." God gave Jonah a second chance to do

what he was supposed to do. Do you think Jonah said 'no' this time? This time, Jonah obeyed God.

Does anybody remember what it means to obey? To obey is to do what you are told to do. When you are walking to school in the morning, and you need to cross a road, your mother usually tells you to stop. Your mother tells you to stop because she knows that if you keep walking, you might get hit by a car! If you are hit by the car there might not be a second chance, so we should obey immediately. We should obey our parents because they know what is best for us.

(Storyteller, insert a personal experience of obeying. Here is our example): When I was young, I had a blue bicycle. I loved to ride it when the weather was nice and sunny. But my parents always told me that I was only allowed to stay on our side of the road, and I couldn't cross the road on my bike. Also I had to ride on the sidewalk and not on the road where all the cars go. I had to listen to my parents and obey them; otherwise I could have gotten hurt!

I have a list of questions for you. Nod your head if you obeyed your parents this week when you were getting ready for school. Were you obedient when you were told to: brush your teeth? Eat your breakfast? Put your shoes on? Get your homework? We need to obey our parents because if you don't brush your teeth, kids at school will say you have bad breath! If you don't eat your breakfast, you will be hungry all morning! If you don't put your shoes on, your feet will be cold. And if you don't bring your homework, you might get in trouble with your teacher. *(Use examples suitable for the children in your meeting. Don't forget to include the reason why they should obey their parents.)*

Jonah got up and went to Nineveh and did what God told him to do. Nineveh was a very big city. It took three days to cross the city. Jonah went through the great city for a day and cried out, 'Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overturned!' (3:4), just as God had told him to do. He told this person, he told that person, he spoke and spoke to everyone as he walked throughout the city. His feet might have been hurting but the whole day he spoke God's word to the people of Nineveh. The word reached everyone, from the greatest to the smallest, and all the people throughout the whole city of Nineveh believed God.

Week Five Suggestions

Point to emphasize and application to the children: Obey your parents because they know what is best for you.

Suggested verses to memorize:

Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing in the Lord – Col 3:20

Suggested songs:

Obey your mommy and your daddy right away

Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right

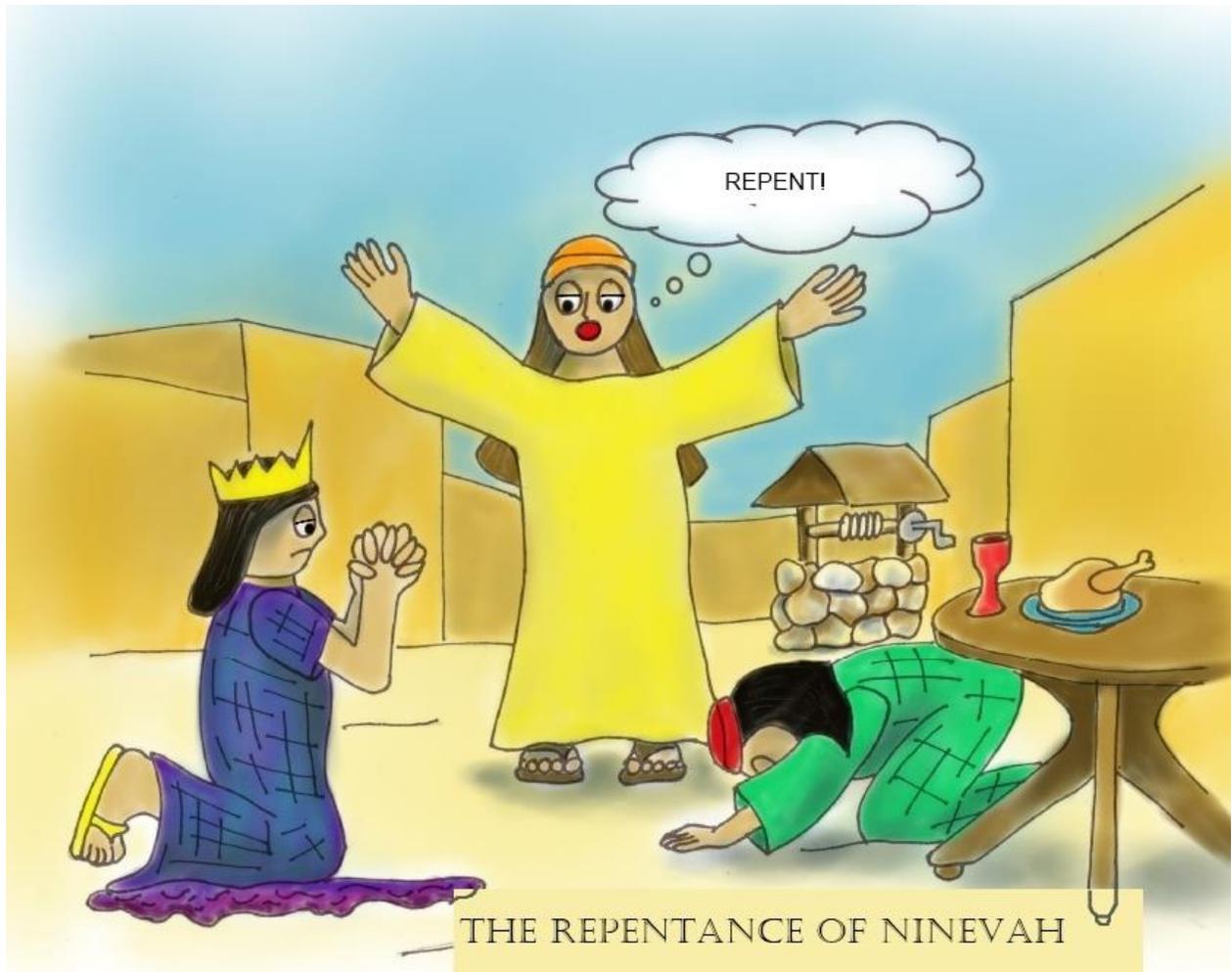
Children * obey your parents

Jonah

The Repentance of Nineveh

Jonah 3:5-10

The second time God told Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh and cry out against it, Jonah willingly obeyed. Jonah did what he was told to do. His words reached everyone in the great city, all one hundred and twenty thousand people. When Jonah spoke for God, the people of Nineveh turned to the true and living God. They were very sorry for all the evil and violent things that they had done.



Have you ever said you're sorry? Sometimes we do things that upset others. When we realize this, we should tell them that we are sorry.

(Storyteller, insert a personal example of saying "sorry." Here is our example):
When I was young, my mom bought a brand new white carpet. She was so excited when it was put in and everything was done. It was so fluffy and soft and felt so good on my toes. One day, I had just finished playing outside by a stream. I walked into the house and forgot to take my boots off at the door. I took a step and looked down and saw the mud on the side of my boots. Oh no! I pulled my

foot back and there it was, a big, brown, footprint of my boot on my mom's new white carpet! I felt so bad. I was so sorry that I had forgotten to take off my boots.

The people of Nineveh were so sorry for what they had done that they stopped eating and drinking. They even took off their clothes and dressed themselves in sackcloth, which is made of very rough and uncomfortable material (use a piece of sackcloth as a visual aid). Jonah's words were so powerful that even the king heard this news. When the king of Nineveh heard that his city would be destroyed, he got off his throne and took off his royal robes and he too covered himself in sackcloth and sat in ashes. The king was so sorry that he even declared that all the people and the animals could not eat anything nor drink water. He told them not to do evil any more, so that God might turn from His burning anger and forgive them. So the people of Nineveh stopped their evil behaviour and all their fighting.

When we are really sorry, we should not just say we are sorry, but we also show we are sorry. The people of Nineveh were so sorry that they stopped eating and drinking and even wore different clothes from what they were used to. The king showed he was sorry when he stopped sitting on his nice comfortable throne and sat in dirty ashes!

(Storyteller, use the same scenario as you did before, this time telling the children how you showed you were sorry. Here is our example): Remember how I told you that I walked on my mom's new white carpet with my muddy boots? Well, I was so sorry for the mess that I had made. I thought to myself, 'How can I clean this up?' I took off my boots and my socks outside and ran to the laundry room and got a cloth and I tried to clean it up as best as I could. I scrubbed and scrubbed but no matter how hard I tried it was still a big brown stain on my mom's white carpet. When she came I told her that I was so sorry for dirtying her white carpet. She went to get a special cleaner and helped me clean it up.

Can anyone think of how they can show someone that they are sorry? *(Here are some examples: give them a hug, write a card, give them a present... etc.)* Just as the people of Nineveh showed that they were sorry, we too can do things to show that we are sorry when we have upset others.

Week Six Suggestions

Point to emphasize: Being sorry

Application to the children: Saying "I'm sorry and showing you are sorry through your actions.

Suggested verses to memorize:

Turn away from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it – Psa 34:14

Suggested songs:

Have you ever said, 'I'm sorry'?

I cleaned my shoes

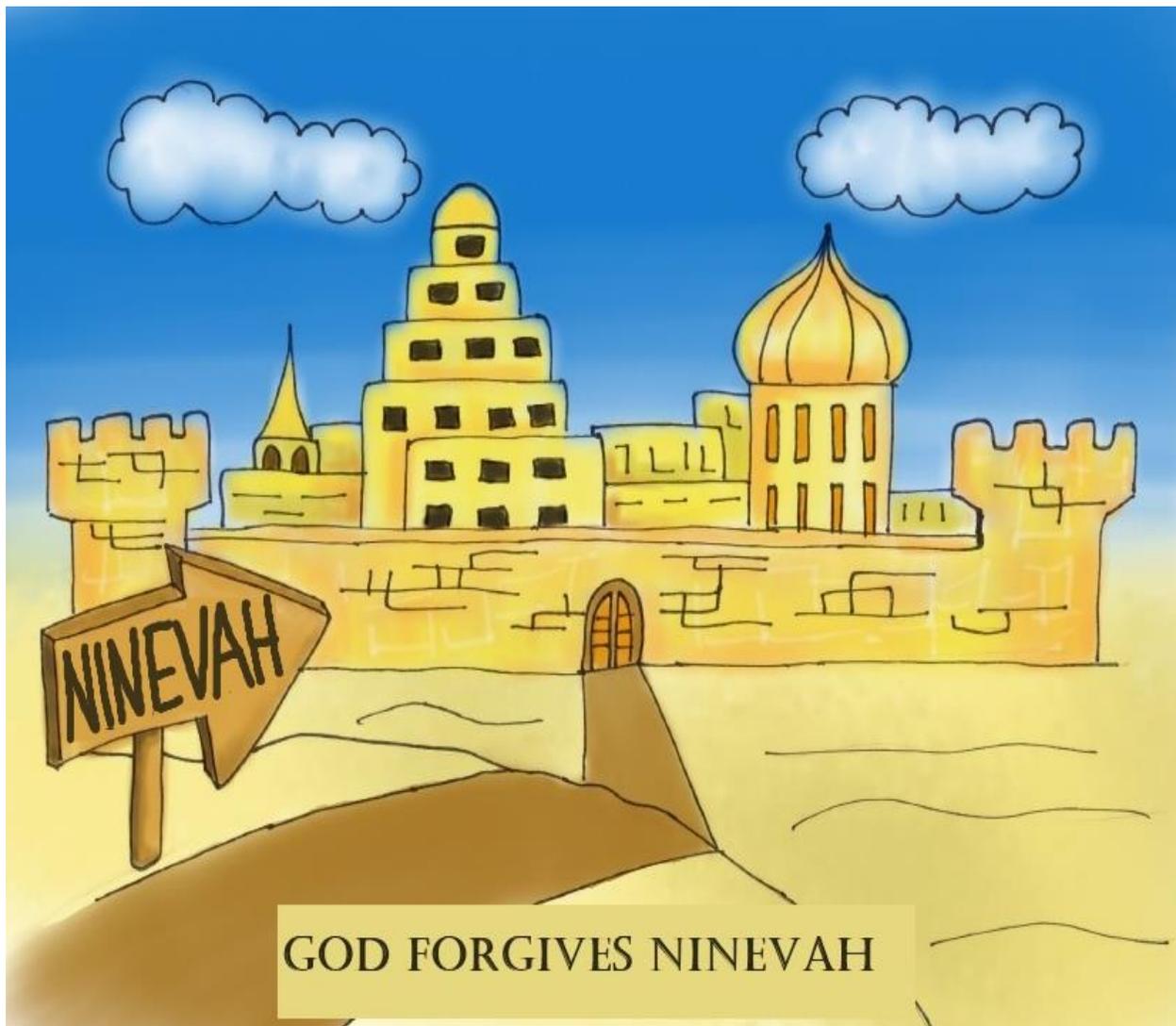
Jonah

God Forgave Nineveh

Jonah 3:10

Last week we heard that Jonah went to tell the people of Nineveh that God was going to destroy their city for all their evil behaviour. The people all believed God and were very sorry for all the bad things they had done, and they showed they were sorry by wearing sackcloth and not eating and drinking. Even the king got off his throne and sat in ashes!

When God saw that the people of Nineveh were truly sorry and had turned from their evil, He did not destroy their city. God forgave them. When people say that they are sorry to us, we should forgive them like God forgave the people of Nineveh. To forgive is to forget what wrong things they have done to you and to have a happy heart towards them.



Sometimes our friends, or our brothers and sisters, our parents, upset us, and they might say 'sorry' to us. Then it's up to us to forgive them and have a new start. But we often don't want to forgive them. Every time we see that person we remember, 'he did that to me! She said that to me!' and we feel bad about them inside. When you don't forgive someone you might ignore them or say, 'I'm not your friend any more... I'm not talking to you any more'... and you don't want to play with them or sit next to them. But the more you don't forgive, the more you feel bad inside and you feel lonely. But when we say to them, 'I forgive you!' and forget about the wrong things they've done, we feel really happy inside.

(Storyteller, insert your own personal example of when you forgave somebody. Here is our example): One day during the summer holidays, my brother came and poured freezing cold water with ice all over my head. I was so upset. I got up and ran away crying. My brother came after me to say he was sorry, but I did not want to forgive him because I was so angry! For the rest of the day I was still mad at him but that night I went up to him and said I forgave him. When I forgave him, I felt so much better inside.

So, when others hurt us or upset us and say 'I'm sorry' to us, we should then forgive them and say, 'I forgive you'. (Can we all practice saying that together?)

Sing slowly to the children one of the short songs on forgiving:

Can you find it in your heart	Or
To forgive? to forgive?	
Can you find it in your heart to forgive?	Forgive; forgive, from your heart
When the one who upset you	Forgive, forgive, and have a new start
Says, 'I'm sorry', what do you do?	They've said they're sorry,
Can you find it in your heart to forgive?	And now it's time to forgive them.

Do you remember the reason that God wanted Jonah to go to Nineveh? God *loved* the people of Nineveh but He could no longer tolerate their evil. When Jonah told the people of Nineveh this, they were sorry for all the evil things they had done. God knew that they were really sorry because they had shown it. So God forgave all the people in Nineveh, and the city was not destroyed. Isn't it great that we have such a wonderful, forgiving God!

Week Seven Suggestions

Point to emphasize: Forgiving

Application to the children: Forgive others when they have upset you.

Suggested verses to memorize:

Forgive... from your hearts – Matthew 18:35

Suggested songs:

Forgive, forgive

Can you find it in your heart to forgive? To forgive?