

Blessed is the Kingdom: An Orthodox Church School Curriculum



Lesson 4 **3rd-5th grades**

The Prophet Jonah

Objective: Through the story of Jonah, students learn that God loves us all and feels compassion for all that He has made.

Lesson Introduction

5 min

Begin by **asking**:

What is forgiveness?

Take answers, then **say**:

Forgiveness is being kind to those who were not kind to you. It is being generous to those who were not generous to you. It is being respectful when someone was not respectful to you. It is letting go of the anger and hurt you feel toward that person, and instead acting kindly back to them. Today we are going to learn about forgiveness, love, and compassion. But first let's look at what happens when we don't forgive.

Pull out the Ziploc bag. Have a student **add** the warm water and vinegar to it. **Explain** that the Ziploc bag represents us. Have a student **take** the tissue and place the baking soda into the tissue, while **asking**:

*Sometimes people do things to us that hurt our feelings or make us angry. Can you think of some examples of things that might hurt your feelings or make you upset? (**Take** answers, and then **continue**.) The baking soda that I am adding to this tissue represents all of those things that we just talked about. But instead of forgiving them and showing love back, I'm going to hold onto that anger and that hurt.*

Wrap the baking soda in the tissue, and **place** it into the Ziploc bag, sealing the bag quickly. **Watch** as the bag fills with air. Beware as it will pop if left to keep expanding. **Say**:

Because we didn't forgive, the anger and hurt fills us. This can lead us to be sad or depressed, or can lead to us exploding and taking out our anger on others. As we talked about last week, we are called to be one united Body of Christ, this means forgiving each other. Today we are going to hear the story of Jonah and learn more about forgiveness.



Opening Prayer

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth who art everywhere and fillest all things. Treasury of Blessings, and Giver of Life: Come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good one.

Supplies Needed

- Sandwich sized Ziploc bag
- ½ cup Vinegar
- ¼ cup Warm water
- 3 teaspoons Baking soda
- Tissue



Lesson—25 min

Supplies Needed

Orthodox Study Bibles

Costumes:

- Jonah: a robe
- Boat Captain & Crew: robes
- Whale: Blue robe or hat or scarf
- King & Ninevites: rough material like burlap to tie around themselves like sackcloth
- The Plant: tree limb or fake plant to hold

Props:

- Something to represent a boat (this could be a taped spot on the floor, an inflatable raft, a blanket or a few pillows for Jonah and his boat mates to sit on)
- Fan
- Boxes of cargo
- Blanket

5 Minute Bonus

Jonah and the Whale Animated Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOSadLyqshg>

Liturgy Link

The Great Litany

<https://www.oca.org/media/video/20th-aac-thursday-morning-divine-liturgy>

Skip to 18:52-21:30

Begin by **saying**:

Today we are going to act out the story of Jonah. I need some volunteers to help me tell the story.

Hand out costumes for each of the characters. Give everyone a part—there can be multiple boat crew members and Ninevites. One student can be the narrator and read from the Bible. **Explain**:

Jonah was a prophet. This meant that he could speak directly what God told him to speak. He was a messenger for God to talk to His people. God gave him directions on where to go and who to speak to. Let's see where God is directing him to go today.

Read Jonah 1:2-3. Then **ask**:

Where did God ask Jonah to go? (Nineveh) Did Jonah listen? (No, he boarded a ship going to Tarshish.)

Have Jonah board the boat with his crew mates. **Read** Jonah 1:4. Then **turn on** the fan to show the wind. **Read** Jonah 1: 5. Have the crew members throw cargo boxes overboard. Have Jonah pretend to sleep.

Read Jonah 1:6-15. Have the students say the lines of dialogue as needed, and act out the scene. If it says have them cast lots, have them do that. If it says they tried to return to shore, have them try to steer to shore. Finally, have them throw Jonah overboard, then turn off the fan.

Read Jonah 2:1-2. Have the whale pretend to eat Jonah. Cover Jonah in a blanket as if he were in the belly of the whale. Then have Jonah kneel to pray. **Ask**:

Do you think Jonah is ready to listen to God now?

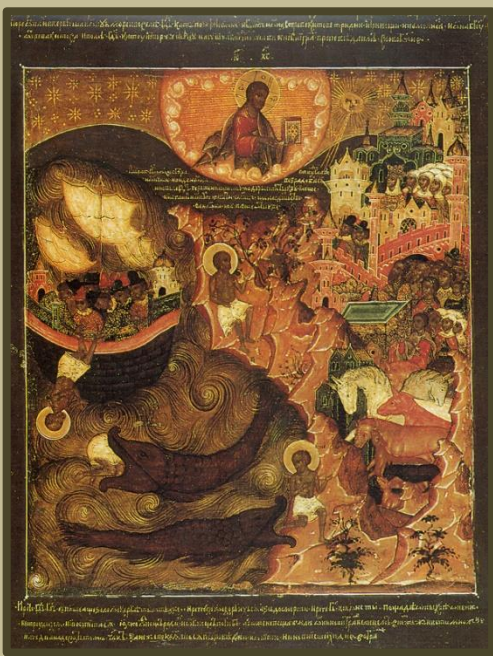


Lesson Continued

Supplemental Ideas

- Take a nature walk to talk about how God made everything. Use this time to collect leaves for your pressed leaf bookmark craft.
- Share the icon of Jonah and his life. Point out the parts of the story that you read today, such as the boat, the whale, Nineveh, and the plant.

<https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2018/09/22/102696-prophet-jonah>



Teacher Resource

OCA Essential Orthodox Christian Beliefs: A Manual for Adult Instruction

<https://www.oca.org/cdn/PDFs/2023-0609-EOCB.pdf>

Chapter 2 The Kingdom of God and the World

Take answers, then **say**:

After Jonah prayed, the whale cast Jonah onto dry land, then God spoke to him again.

Have Jonah exit the whale. **Read** Jonah 3:2-10. Have the students act it out—Jonah traveling, announcing that Nineveh will be destroyed, and the Ninevites reacting and putting on sackcloth. Then **ask** the following:

Did the Ninevites listen to Jonah? (yes)

What did they do to show they were sorry? (1. put on sackcloth—a rough uncomfortable cloth made of goat or camel hair—this was worn as a sign of mourning. 2, put ashes on their head also a sign of repentance. 3. fasted, they did not eat at all.)

How did God respond to their repentance? (He changed his heart, and did not destroy the city.)

How do you think Jonah will feel about this?

Take answers, and then **read** Jonah 4:1-3. Then **ask**:

How did Jonah react? (by being upset that God forgave them. Jonah wanted the city to be destroyed. He did not forgive them.)

Read Jonah 4:5-9. Have students act out the scene with the plant growing over Jonah, and him being grateful and then upset. **Ask**:

Why is Jonah upset over the plant dying? (Because the sun is beating down on him and he loved the shade that the plant provided. It was protecting him from the sun.)

Read Jonah 4:10-11. Then **ask**:

Did Jonah do anything to help grow the plant? (no) Was Jonah sad when the plant died? (yes) Who made the plant? (God) Who made Nineveh? (God)

Then **say**:

God made Nineveh and all the people in the city, and while they did bad things, God was willing to forgive them. This is because He loves them. God loves us all as He created us all. Remember when we talked about Adam and Eve, and how God was sad when they were separated from Him. God feels compassion for all that He has made, even when we fail to do His will. He forgave Jonah for running away, and He forgave the Ninevites for falling away from Him. His love knows no bounds.

Lesson Activities

Pressed Leaf Bookmarks—10 min

Supplies needed: laminator and laminator sheets (if using laminator sheets, pre-draw bookmark designs on it) or contact paper (if using contact paper, pre-cut bookmark sized pieces), collected leaves, ribbon or yarn, hole punch

Begin by **saying**:

Jonah was saddened by a plant withering away. We are going to preserve plants in bookmarks to remind us of God's love for all things He created.

Have students place the leaves onto one side of their bookmark. If using laminator sheets, students will just place the leaves onto the sheets, fold the top sheet over and run through the laminator. If using contact paper, peel the backing off then have students stick the leaves onto the sticky paper, then place the other contact paper sheet on top. Finally add a tassel with ribbon or yarn.



Withering plant relay—10 min

Supplies needed: roll of green streamers (one or two per team)

Students form teams of 3-5 people. One student is Jonah and stands across the room from their teammates. The other teammates form a line, and the first student has the roll of streamers. On go, the first student runs up to their Jonah and using the streamer wraps Jonah up three times. So they circle around him three times. They run back to their teammates and hand the streamers to the next student in line. This student repeats running up, wrapping Jonah three times, and returning. Each teammate does this two times. Then they sit down and yell, "Worm". Jonah then breaks free causing the plant (streamers) that have grown around him to wither to the ground. The first team to complete this wins.

Feel free to repeat this with another student being Jonah.



Closing Thoughts— 5 min

Ask students what are some ways you can show others love? Take answers, and then ask: what are some ways we can show love to God? Take answers, and then guide them to say prayer. Then come to stand in front of your classroom icon corner, and pray.

Closing Prayer

It is truly meet to bless you, O Theotokos, ever-blessed and most pure, and the Mother of our God. More honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim, without defilement you gave birth to God the Word. True Theotokos we magnify you!