

Blessed is the Kingdom: An Orthodox Church School Curriculum



Lesson 4 Preschool

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.



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.

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 sharing with those who do not share with 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. **Add** the warm water and vinegar to it. **Explain** that the Ziploc bag represents us. **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.

Supplies Needed

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



Lesson—25 min

Supplies Needed

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
- Blanket

Children's Bible of choice

Option used for this lesson:
Bible Stories for Children by
Publications International
<https://a.co/d/h8wcr4L>

5 Minute Bonus

Jonah and the Whale Video

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

Liturgy Link

The Great Litany

<https://www.o.ca.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. Then **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 Jonah directions on where to go and who to speak to. Let's see where God is directing him to go today.

Read page 140 (and the first sentence on page 142) about God's mission for Jonah, and Jonah's reaction. Then **ask**:

Where did God ask Jonah to go? (Nineveh) Did Jonah listen? (No, he ran away.)

Have Jonah board the boat with his crew mates. **Read** the rest of page 143. Then **turn on** the fan to show the wind. Have Jonah pretend to sleep.

Read page 144. Have the students say the lines of dialogue as needed, and act out the scene. If it says have them pray, have them do that. Finally, have them throw Jonah overboard, then turn off the fan.

Have the whale pretend to eat Jonah. Cover Jonah in a blanket as if he were in the belly of the whale. **Read** page 147. 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** page 148. 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 do you think they did to show they were sorry? (pray and ask God for forgiveness)

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** from the Orthodox Study Bible the rest of the story in 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

***Plan to have a few extra adults on hand to help with this craft. If that is not possible, then purchasing foam door hangers and plant/leaf stickers would be more appropriate.**

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: 2-3 rolls of green streamers

One person is Jonah and stands across the room from everyone else. The other students form a line, and the first person has the roll of streamers. On go, the first person goes up to Jonah, and with the teachers help, uses the streamer to wrap Jonah up three times. They go back to the next student in line and hand the streamers to them. This student repeats going up to Jonah, wrapping him three times, and returning. Once everyone has had a turn, they sit down and yell, "Worm". Jonah then breaks free causing the plant (streamers) that have grown around him to wither to the ground.

Feel free to repeat this with each 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!