

LESSON PLAN

JONAH, THE MERCILESS PROPHET

Jonah 1–4

Lesson Memory Verse: Luke 24:47 “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

Lesson Aim: The Lord wants all people to repent and be saved; so He sends us to be His witnesses.

Lesson Plan: Use the KEY – HE – SEE – WE – BE plan (explained in the Introductory Notes).

KEY (for Attention): Do you know someone that you like extra special? Maybe it is your mother or father or grandmother or grandfather. Maybe it is some other relative or friend. Tell me who you like extra special and also tell me why you like that person so much. (Let all of the children participate, if possible.) Do you know what you have been doing? You have just been witnessing about that special person that you like. Witnessing is just telling others what you know and like about a person.

Witnessing for Jesus is just like witnessing about that extra special person that you like. It is telling others what you know and like about Him. Jesus wants you to witness to others about Him. If you love Him, it will not be hard to witness to others about Him. Our memory verse for today says that it is very important that we witness to everyone so that they can be forgiven of their sins and be saved from the penalty of their sins.

HE (for Authority): Our memory verse is found in Luke 24:47 where Jesus said, “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

Explanation of words and phrases in the verse:

“**Repentance**” – to change our mind about sin; we no longer love our sin, but hate it and turn from it

“**Remission**” – removal of sin from our records, because the Lord has forgiven us

“**Preached in His name**” – witnessing to others about Jesus

“**Among all nations**” – all people should hear this message, even though they worship other gods

“**Beginning at Jerusalem**” – begin to witness about Jesus where you live now

This verse says that it is very important that you witness for Jesus to everyone possible. Start where you live and play and as you obey Him, He will lead you to other places. Will you obey His command?

SEE (for Apperception and WE (for Application): PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.

Our story today is about Jonah, a prophet that did not want to be a witness for God to his enemies in Nineveh.

I. Jonah’s Pride (Jonah 1:1-17)

God gave Jonah a command to go to a wicked, sinful city called Nineveh and preach against its sin. These people in Nineveh needed to know that God hated their sin and that He was going to punish them for their sin. They also needed to know that if they repented or turned away from their sin, that they would be saved from His punishment for their sin. But God needed someone to go to Nineveh to tell this message to them and so He chose Jonah. Jonah was to be His witness to Nineveh. Instead of obeying God, Jonah chose to run away from God. He did so by getting on a ship and sailing away from Nineveh. Why did Jonah do this? He was proud and did not want to help his enemies get saved. But do you think Jonah could run away from God? (No) God sent a storm to stop Jonah from running away. Then the sailors threw Jonah off the ship into the water to stop the storm. When he landed in the water, God prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah and bring him back toward Nineveh. Jonah should have obeyed God right away by going to Nineveh, but his pride made him disobey God.

WE: We are commanded to be a witness for God wherever He sends us. Are we obeying God’s command or are we so proud that we feel we can disobey Him if we feel like it? We are proud if we are afraid of what people will think of us when we witness to them. We are proud if we do not want our enemies to be saved. Jonah was proud when he thought it would be better for Nineveh to be destroyed than to repent and be saved from the judgment that they deserved. Do not be proud like Jonah and disobey God; be a humble obedient witness for God.

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II. Jonah's Prayer (Jonah 2:1- 10)

When Jonah was in the fish, he realized that he had done wrong. He should have obeyed God by going straight to Nineveh. So he started to pray from inside the belly of the fish that God would forgive him and save him from the fish. God heard his prayer and answered it by having the great fish spit him out of its mouth upon dry land. Jonah was now ready to go to Nineveh.

WE: If we have not been a good witness for the Lord, we need to ask Him to forgive us and give us another chance to be a good witness for Him.

III. Jonah's Preaching (Jonah 3:1-10)

Again God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach against its sin. Here was a second chance for Jonah to be a witness for God to these people. God could have called someone else to go to Nineveh, but He wanted Jonah to go. Jonah was still a long distance from Nineveh from the place where the fish spit him unto the dry land. But this time, Jonah obeyed God's command and traveled hundreds of miles by walking before he got to Nineveh to preach against its sin. Because Jonah told the people of Nineveh that God was going to judge Nineveh for its great sins, all of the people in the city, including the king, humbled themselves before God and repented of their sins. God saw that they had truly changed their mind about their sin and wanted to obey God. God saw that their repentance was genuine, so He saved them from His punishment. God used the witness of Jonah to save Nineveh from destruction.

WE: If we witness for God, He may use our witness to cause people to repent and be saved from going to Hell. When we tell people that Jesus died to pay the penalty of their sins and rose from the grave to share His life with all believers, you will be a good witness for God. God can use your witness to get people to repent and be saved from the punishment of their sins.

IV. Jonah's Pouting (Jonah 4:1-21)

Now Jonah was angry with God. Why? Jonah wanted God to destroy Nineveh for all of the terror it brought to Israel. He did not like it that God did not destroy the city of Nineveh. But God would not destroy the city when the people turned from their sins. God is merciful and He forgave the sins of Nineveh. When Nineveh was not destroyed, he pouted because God saved them. He did not love these people. God still had to teach Jonah some lessons about His mercy and love for even the most wicked sinners.

WE: Do we have a love for all lost sinners? Maybe we only want God to be merciful to our friends and family and we pray that He will save them. But do we want God to save wicked people that have done bad things to us? Would you be angry with God, if He saved your worst enemy? Maybe you are not as bad a Jonah. But would you witness to your worst enemy? Well, Jonah did, so maybe you are not as good as Jonah. We need to be a witness to everyone no matter who they are. Everyone needs to be saved and God wants us to witness to them, so they will repent of their sins. If they do repent, then He will be able to save them from being destroyed. Will you witness to them? God is counting on you to be His witness.

BE (for Action): How did Jonah disobey God? (By not going to Nineveh to be His witness to those people) How did God bring Jonah back to Nineveh? (He had a great fish swallow him after he was thrown from the ship.) Why did God want Jonah to go to Nineveh? (To preach against its sin so that the people would repent of their sins and be saved) God wants each of us to be a witness for Him so that people around us will know about His judgment of sin and repent of their sins. Then tell them what Jesus did to save you and ask them to do what you did, so they can be saved. Will you try to be a witness for God to at least one person this week and tell them how He saved you from your sins? Next week we will see if you are more obedient than Jonah. I hope that all of you will be obedient witnesses for God. (Close in prayer for all of them to be good witnesses for God.)