

GOD IS PATIENT AND FORGIVING

All Activity Sheets

KEY WORDS

POWER UNDERSTANDING FORGIVE PATIENT

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Book of Jonah

LESSON OBJECTIVE

That the children know that God is patient and forgives us.

MEMORY VERSE

“Great is our Lord and mighty in power, his understanding has no limit” (Psalm 147:5, NIV*).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Many people have the wrong idea about God. They believe that he is a rigid and severe being who is eager to punish the disobedient. However, seeing the story of Jonah, we learn that it is the opposite. The nature and love of God are unique. He is patient, understanding and forgiving, and is willing to lift and restore those who have fallen.

Elementary children are learning to recognize their mistakes and repent for their wrongdoing. Emphasize Jonah’s disobedience, its consequences and God’s reaction to it. Through this story, help them understand that if they are wrong, God is willing to forgive them and give them a new opportunity.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Jonah. To describe the book of Jonah, we could use Psalm 103:8, which says, “The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.”

To understand this story, we need to see it from God’s perspective. This story emphasizes the character of God, and his desire for

all to repent and change their way of life. It also shows that the servants of God cannot simply disobey an order from the Lord without receiving God's wake-up call.

On the other hand, it reminds us that God is faithful, patient, merciful and forgiving. Despite Jonah's rebellion and disobedience, God stayed with him, and he finally repented and took the Lord's message to Nineveh.

We also see that Jonah received God's forgiveness with pleasure and relief, but he did not want the people of Nineveh to receive him. This shows us the character of the human being. Many times, we accept people, but not God. He wants the message to reach all of his creation, and he is willing to forgive and restore the life of every person.

The people and king of Nineveh believed in God, and proclaimed a general fast. From people to animals, everyone was to cry out to the just and forgiving God. God heard their plea and forgave them.

God is faithful and merciful, and does not reject the contrite and humble heart.

INTRODUCE THE LESSON

Jonah in the sea

For this activity, distribute molding clay or Play-Doh. Ask your children to make a figure of Jonah and another of a big fish. While doing that, ask them to tell you everything they know about the Bible story. Based on that information, narrate today's story with an emphasis on God's forgiveness and patience.

TEACH THE LESSON

God forgives

One day God told Jonah, "Go to the great city of Nineveh. I have seen that the people there only do bad things and I am tired of their behavior. You must go and tell them to repent of their sins."

But Jonah did not want to obey God. So he escaped to hide in the city of Tarshish, which was the opposite direction of Nineveh. Jonah went to the port of Joppa, where he found a ship bound for Tarshish. After paying for his ticket, he went aboard and was prepared to flee as far as possible from the Lord.

While Jonah was traveling, God sent a strong wind and a terrible storm. The wind was so strong that it looked like the ship was going to be split in half. All the sailors and passengers were very worried, and each one cried out to their gods to protect them.

To lighten the weight of the ship, they threw part of the luggage into the sea.

And where was Jonah while all this was happening? Sleeping!

Finally, the ship's captain found Jonah and asked, "How can you sleep? Get up and pray to your God! Maybe he will see what is happening and protect us so we do not die."

The sailors said, "Let's see if we can find the reason for this terrible storm."

When they learned that Jonah was the reason for the storm, they said to him, "Tell us, who is responsible for this happening to us? Who you are? What do you do? Where do you come from? From which country do you come from?"

"I am a Hebrew and I fear Yahweh, God of heaven, who made the sea and the land," answered Jonah.

When they heard this, they were afraid and asked, "What have you done to make this terrible storm try to destroy us? What should we do to calm the sea?"

"Take me and throw me into the sea," said Jonah. "Only then will it calm down. I know that this terrible evil has come upon you because of me."

The sailors did not want to throw Jonah into the sea, but the situation was getting worse. In the end, they threw Jonah overboard and the sea calmed down. When the sailors and passengers saw that the storm had ceased, they realized the great power of God and praised Him.

Meanwhile, God had prepared a big fish to swallow Jonah.

Jonah spent three days and three nights inside the animal. There he prayed to God, and promised that he would not disobey him again. In addition, he apologized for running away and promised to do God's will, going to Nineveh as God had commanded him.

God heard Jonah's prayer and forgave him for his disobedience. Then he directed the fish to throw Jonah up on dry land. Jonah was very happy to have another opportunity to obey God.

Then God spoke to Jonah a second time and said, "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim the message I have given you."

This time Jonah obeyed! He went to Nineveh and told the people that God was going to destroy the city in 40 days. Upon hearing that message, the inhabitants of Nineveh believed in God, and the king sent this message to all his subjects: "Cry all to God. Stop doing bad and violent things. Maybe God will decide not to destroy us. Maybe he will feel sorry for us and we will not die."

When God saw that the inhabitants of Nineveh were repentant, he had compassion on them and did not destroy them.

When Jonah realized that God had forgiven the people instead of destroying them, he became very angry. "God, I knew that this would happen! That is why I ran away. I knew you were compassionate, patient and forgiving, and that you would not destroy our worst enemies. Now it would be better if you killed me!"

Then God answered him, "Do you have the right to be so angry? You are only thinking of yourself, but in Nineveh there are more than 120 thousand people. Do not you think I should worry about such a big city?"

God wanted Jonah to learn an important lesson. God is patient, forgiving and merciful. He loves all people, no matter who they are or what they have done. When someone repents and leaves sin, God gladly forgives them. How wonderful our God is!

CONNECT THE LESSON

Jonah learns a lesson

Distribute Student Activity Sheet #188-A, and follow the instructions on SAS #188-B. Guide your children to make the booklet suggested in this activity. Help them follow the instructions to complete the project. Note: if your printer doesn't print the surface of the full page, you may need to trim some excess edges.

When they have finished, choose several children to come forward and, using their little books, relate what they learned in the Bible story.

PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE

[Download Additional Memory Verse Activities PDF](#)

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Prepare in advance the figure of a large fish and write the memory verse on it in large letters. Ask the children to sit in a circle and read the verse several times. Then, hand the fish to one of them and tell them to pass it to the person on their right, who passes it to the person on their right, and so forth. When you say, "STOP", the one with the fish must say the verse. Continue the game until everyone has participated.

WRAP-UP

Pray

If the Holy Spirit leads you to do so, give your children the opportunity to confess their sins and ask God for forgiveness. If possible, ask each one if God has already forgiven him for the bad actions he/ she has done. Explain that this is a personal decision, and present them with the message of God's forgiveness. Pray with those who decide to ask for forgiveness, and also intercede for the needs of others.

Encourage

Remember that it is important to keep track of new children, so try to keep in touch with them during the week.

Invite

Before the children leave be sure to say something interesting about the next session. Encourage them to attend and to come with friends.