



God Shows Mercy to Jonah and Nineveh

Jonah 1–4



LESSON GOAL

Students will rejoice that God is gracious and compassionate.

BIBLE TRUTHS

- Jonah disobeyed God's command to go preach to Nineveh.
- God prepared a big fish to swallow Jonah.
- While in the fish, Jonah repented of his sin.
- God showed mercy to both Jonah and Nineveh.

KEY VERSE

"Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me'" (Jonah 1:1–2).

APPLICATION

- Repent of not being compassionate and merciful like God.
- Rejoice that God has mercy on sinners.
- Pray that God will use you to show His mercy to others.

NEXT WEEK

God Uses Daniel to Interpret the King's Dream
Read Daniel 2.

Symbol Key



Craft



Finger Play



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Center



Activity



Q & A



Age Group

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul....You shall teach them to your children” (Deuteronomy 11:18–19).

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here to aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

Historical Context

Although the Lord eventually would send the northern kingdom of Israel into exile, He had mercy on them for nearly 200 years. He could have carried out the prophesied exile much earlier (1 Kings 14:14–16). Instead, He patiently sent prophets such as Elijah and Elisha to call both king and people to repentance. The people’s hardness to the Lord did not change His compassion for them. One of the most striking reports of God’s care for His people came while Elisha was dying. Elisha’s last prophetic act was telling the wicked king Joash that the Lord would deliver Israel from Syria (2 Kings 13:15–19). Second Kings 13:22–25 records how Joash recaptured cities that had been taken by Syria. The author gives the reason for Israel’s deliverance: “The Lord was gracious to them, had compassion on them, and regarded them, because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not yet destroy them or cast them from His presence” (2 Kings 13:23). Even though judgment was coming, the Lord acted mercifully toward His people. Even when the Lord returned to Israel’s control most of the land that once had been ruled by Solomon, neither Joash nor his son Jeroboam II repented of their wickedness. No doubt, Jeroboam II attributed his success to the fact that Israel’s oppressor, Syria, had recently been weakened by Assyria, who also was now in a period of decline. With the surrounding nations weakened, Israel was able to regain power. Although the Lord worked through Syria’s defeat and Assyria’s decline, the real reason for Israel’s return to power was the Lord’s mercy. Second Kings 14:25 says that the king “restored the territory of Israel...according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet who was from Gath Hepher.” Instead of sending the judgment Israel deserved, the Lord sent a prophecy through the prophet Jonah, saying that Israel would prosper.

The prophecy of Jonah was unique during this period. Other prophets, such as Amos and Hosea, Jonah’s contemporaries, were not sent by the Lord to proclaim a return of power, but rather to warn of impending judgment. The prophet Amos warned that Israel would go into exile beyond Syria (Amos 5:27), into land controlled by the nation of Assyria. Hosea similarly prophesied that Assyria would rule over Israel (Hos. 11:5). Although the first half of the eighth century (the time in which Jeroboam II reigned in Israel) was marked by Assyrian weakness (caused by foreign invasion, political unrest, and famine), Assyria returned to power when Tiglath-Pelser III came to the throne in 745 B.C. Within 23 years, the Lord would use Assyria to exile Israel from the Promised Land. Israel’s prominence, as prophesied by Jonah, would be short-lived. As other prophets warned, Assyria would soon dominate Israel.

God Sends Jonah to Warn Nineveh (Jonah 1:1–3)

Israel was not the only nation warned of coming judgment. For the first time in Israel's history, the Lord sent a prophet to a Gentile nation. Jonah must have been surprised when he received the Lord's command to warn Nineveh that judgment was coming because of its wickedness (Jonah 1:1–2). Nineveh was a powerful Assyrian city nearly 500 miles northeast of Israel. Although the city proper was much smaller, the surrounding area was 60 miles in circumference and had a population of nearly 600,000. As part of the Assyrian empire, Nineveh presented a danger to Israel. Jonah must have wondered why the Lord would send him to warn Israel's enemy.

Jonah may not have wanted to go to Nineveh for a number of reasons. Perhaps he had heard Hosea's prophecy that Israel would come under Assyrian domination. Going to warn Israel's enemy of coming judgment must have seemed like treachery to Jonah. He may also have been jealous of God showing kindness to any nation besides Israel. Perhaps he feared that Nineveh would repent and not suffer God's judgment, thus shaming Israel, who would not listen to similar warnings from God's prophets. Regardless of the exact reason, Jonah did not want to warn Nineveh because he knew that if Nineveh repented, God would relent from sending judgment. Jonah knew God's compassion. He later said to the Lord, "I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm" (Jonah 4:2). It is ironic that the prophet who had been sent by God to pronounce blessing to unrepentant Israel (2 Kings 14:25) was unwilling to pronounce God's judgment lest Nineveh repent and experience God's compassion.

Hoping that his disobedience would ensure the destruction of Nineveh, Jonah became the first prophet to ignore God's commission (Jonah 1:3). He went as far as he could in the opposite direction, fleeing to Tarshish, most likely located on the coast of Spain. His desire was to flee from the presence of the Lord. Although it is impossible to be where the omnipresent God is not (Psalm 139:7–12), Jonah was attempting to place not only a spiritual but also a physical barrier between himself and God's will.

God Punishes Jonah for Disobedience (Jonah 1:4–17)

Although Jonah thought that he could thwart God's plan with his disobedience, the Lord had other plans. He disciplined Jonah until he was willing to fulfill the purpose for which he had been called. "The Lord sent out a great wind on the sea...so that the ship was about to be broken up" (Jonah 1:4). While the sailors were terrified and crying out to their gods (1:5), Jonah was asleep in the bottom of the boat. They woke up the oblivious Jonah and pleaded with him to call on his God (1:6). Jonah's sin had jeopardized not only his life, but also the lives of the men on the boat. Even after God directed the casting of lots to reveal that Jonah was the cause of the storm, the men were unwilling to throw him overboard (1:7, 13). They were afraid that the Lord would charge them with innocent blood if they threw Jonah overboard and asked God to forgive them (1:14). The pagan sailors (who later came to fear the Lord and offered a sacrifice to Him when the storm stopped; 1:15–16) showed more compassion to Jonah than Jonah had shown to the 600,000 inhabitants of Nineveh.

Jonah's spiritual state on the boat is disturbing. There is no doubt that he had an orthodox knowledge of God. He was not involved in the paganism of Israel and had no respect for the sailors' gods. He admitted that he feared "the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land" (Jonah 1:9). He also admitted that he had fled from the presence of the Lord and told the sailors that the ship and

their lives were in jeopardy because of his sin (1:12). He willingly told the men to toss him into the sea. Yet sadly missing from the story is any sign of Jonah crying out to the Lord. Jonah preferred to be thrown into the Mediterranean Sea and die rather than submit to God's decree that he go and warn Nineveh of coming doom. Even when facing death by drowning, Jonah was not willing to cry out to God.

God Has Mercy on Jonah (Jonah 2)

Even while Jonah was hoping that the Lord would not have mercy on Nineveh, God graciously had mercy upon Jonah. To discipline Jonah, the Lord had sent a storm. To save Jonah, He "had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah" (Jonah 1:17). At some point during his three days and nights inside the fish, Jonah prayed to the Lord his God (Jonah 2:1). The Lord's discipline had its intended effect as Jonah turned in complete submission to the Lord. Jonah was left with no hope but to cry out to the Lord (2:2). While in the sea, he admitted that his judgment had come from God (2:3). Only then did he understand what it was like to be cast from God's sight (2:4), the very thing he had been eager for God to do with Nineveh. Jonah responded to God's affliction by desperately turning his attention to God's presence in the temple, the same presence from which he previously had tried to flee. Jonah further described the horrifying judgment he faced (2:5–6). Finally, he praised God for rescuing his life from destruction. By casting Jonah into the sea, the Lord taught Jonah his absolute dependence upon Him (2:7). Perhaps thinking of both the Israelites and the people of Nineveh, Jonah affirmed the hopelessness of those who worship idols (2:8). Unlike idol worshipers, who have no relationship with God, Jonah promised to offer sacrifices with thanksgiving and to fulfill his vows (perhaps referring to a commitment to go to Nineveh; 2:9). Jonah learned that God is glorified when a person facing judgment turns to Him for salvation.

After Jonah cried out to the Lord, "the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land" (Jonah 2:10). God had rescued Jonah from the pit. At least for a while, Jonah became a man who loved God's saving mercy.

God Has Mercy on Nineveh (Jonah 3)

When God sent Jonah to Nineveh the second time, Jonah was willing to obey (Jonah 3:1–3). Jonah went throughout the great city, warning the people that Nineveh would be destroyed in 40 days (3:4). In the most dramatic revival ever, "the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them" (3:5). All Nineveh joined in public mourning over their wicked deeds, for which they were about to suffer God's wrath. Even the king, perhaps Adad-nirari III (810–783) or Assur-dan III (772–755), joined in the mourning (3:6) and proclaimed a fast for both men and their animals in order that the people might "cry mightily to God" (3:8). He not only demanded verbal submission to God, but also called on everyone to repent of their wickedness. In the same submission that Jonah had exhibited in the fish's belly, the king said, "Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?" (3:9). Assyria had no hope of escaping God's wrath except God's being compassionate.

True to His awesome character, the Lord had mercy on Assyria, and Jonah's fears became a reality. When God saw how the Assyrians repented, He "relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it" (Jonah 3:10). The compassionate and merciful Lord is always willing to show grace to those who repent. He knew how the Assyrians would respond to His Word. He ordained both the preaching of the Word and the change that occurred in their hearts. Jonah had become the instrument through which God glorified His mercy and grace.

God Teaches Jonah about His Mercy (Jonah 4)

The Lord's mercy on Nineveh "displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry" (Jonah 4:1). Jonah had not changed at all. He had learned nothing from the pity and compassion that God had shown him when He rescued him from the fish's belly. In his second prayer, Jonah justified his fleeing in the first place, saying that he had known that God would act according to His character (4:2). Jonah wished that his flight had been successful because then God would not have been able to have mercy on Nineveh. Even though God had lavished mercy on him, Jonah did not want God to have that same compassion on others. Jonah so despised the mercy that Nineveh received (and despised being the object through which God had accomplished that mercy) that he begged God to take his life. Jonah had once before been willing to suffer death rather than obey, and now that he had obeyed, Jonah again wished he could suffer death (4:3). While in the fish, Jonah pitied those who worshiped idols, but now out of the fish, Jonah pitied himself and regretted that God was not an idol, something that Jonah could conform to his own merciless character.

The Lord responded to Jonah's prayer by simply asking him whether he had a right to be angry (Jonah 4:4). Knowing how wicked Jonah's anger was, the Lord prepared a way to show him that even he had mercy. Jonah was deeply committed to his bitterness and his resentment of God's character. He had even made a shelter outside Nineveh where he waited and watched the city, perhaps hoping that he had convinced God to change His mind or that Nineveh would revert to their sin and suffer judgment. In Jonah's first lesson, the Lord had sent a storm and a fish. This time He sent a plant, a worm, and a strong wind. Jonah at first was thankful for the plant because of the shelter it gave (4:6). But after the worm destroyed the plant and the hot, scorching wind sapped Jonah's strength, he again wished that he were dead (4:7–8).

The Lord again asked Jonah whether he had a right to be angry (4:9). The first time Jonah had been angry because the Lord had shown mercy to others, and now he was angry because the Lord had not shown mercy to him. Jonah had the same response to the salvation of thousands as to the death of a plant. He valued his own physical comfort more than the spiritual state of a city. Rather than admit his wickedness, Jonah continued in obstinacy. He answered the Lord: "It is right for me to be angry, even to death!" (4:9). Jonah was consistent. He believed that he had a right to be angry over everything God did. Ultimately, Jonah judged the rightness or wrongness of what God did by his own comfort.

The book ends with the Lord's rebuke of Jonah. Jonah felt he was right to pity a plant, a plant for which he had done nothing and that lived only a day. But the Lord questioned how Jonah could be right to pity a plant, but God could be wrong to pity "Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock" (Jonah 4:11).

From Jonah's first leaving for Tarshish to his sitting outside Nineveh, he exhibited unwillingness for God to choose whom He would be gracious and compassionate to. Jonah rejoiced in God's compassion as long as he was the object of it, but he resented God's character when God had compassion on others. The believer must not be like Jonah. God is sovereign over everything: the storm, the fish, the plant, the worm, and the wind. It is for Him to choose whom He will have compassion on. Rather than wish that God is not who He is, the believer must try to be as gracious and compassionate as He is.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

“Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth”
(Psalm 78:1).

This section includes questions to review last week’s lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week’s lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Grace

It has been said that justice is getting what you deserve, mercy is not getting what you deserve, and grace is getting what you do not deserve. Grace is a positive act of benefiting or blessing someone in a way they do not deserve. One of the best examples of grace is found in the parable of the Good Samaritan, who went out of his way to help a man he did not even know (Luke 10:25–37). You may want to tell or read this story to give the students an example of grace. You also could give the students some practical scenarios to illustrate the concept—for example: (1) two children get an equal amount of candy, and one student eats his and then wants more; (2) a child steals his friend’s toy and then breaks it; (3) a friend makes fun of you; etc. In each situation, ask the students how the child deserves to be treated and what an example of grace would be.



Repentance

Repentance is a key biblical concept. The word *repentance* simply means turning around. When used in the Bible, it refers to a person turning from his sin and toward God in faith. It is essentially a change of mind that results in a change of behavior. Repentance may refer to turning from individual sins, or it may refer to the initial turning from sin as a whole, which occurs at salvation (Acts 11:18). A “U-turn” sign is a good visual aid for conveying the concept of repentance.



Election and Sovereignty

Election is a concept that most people struggle to understand at some point. The students do not need to understand the intricate details of the doctrine, but it is important that they do begin to understand and accept the fact that God has the right to do whatever He chooses. This is a crucial step in accepting God’s sovereignty. Why did God warn only Nineveh and send a prophet only to them and not to other cities? That was God’s free and fair choice. You could bring to class a bag of assorted candy and let each student choose one piece. Once every student has a piece, ask a few students why they chose the piece they did, and not some other piece. Explain that God has the same freedom to choose; He can do whatever pleases Him. God not only has the right to do whatever He chooses, but He also has the power to do it. This is God’s sovereignty—His freedom to choose whatever He will and the power to carry it out.



But I Don’t Feel like It

Ask the students to name some things that they do not like doing. Why do they dislike these things? Have they ever tried to get out of doing them? In today’s lesson we will learn about a prophet who was told to do something he did not want to do. We will also find out why he did not want to do it and how he tried to get out of it.



Let's Go Fishing, Part 1

Materials: fishing pole or stick with string, magnet, paperclips, numbered cards with questions written on them

Directions: This is a preview game of new questions for this week's lesson. Have each student "go fishing" for a question. It is his job to find out the answer to the question that he "caught." Bring in a fishing pole or some that resembles one. Place a magnet at the end of the string. Attach a paperclip to each question card. (The cards should be numbered so that the students can read them in the correct order.) Put all the cards in an area where the students can "catch" them. To add a challenge, the students could be blindfolded. (See "Let's Go Fishing, Part 2" in the "Proclaim" section.)

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

"Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done" (Psalm 78:4).

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students' understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use during the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done directly from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

The Israelites deserved to be sent out of the Promised Land and into exile. They had disobeyed God many, many times. He would eventually punish them, but He had mercy on them for more than 200 years. During those years, He was patient with His people and sent prophets such as Elijah and Elisha to call the king and the people to repentance. Even though the people hardened their hearts toward God, He still was compassionate toward them.

One time, God sent a prophet named Jonah. Jonah made a prophecy that the king of Israel would get back all the land that the other nations had taken away. By God's mercy, Israel did return to power over all its land, but only for a short time. Other prophets had warned that Israel would be judged and ruled by the Assyrians, and they were. Soon after they gained back their land, they were overtaken and sent into exile. God gave another prophecy to Jonah. This prophecy was a warning of coming judgment to the city of Nineveh, an Assyrian city—part of a Gentile nation! God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and warn the people of God's coming judgment so that they might repent, and then God would be merciful to them. Jonah must have been surprised that God wanted him to go warn the enemies of Israel! He probably thought that warning Nineveh would be betraying his country. Jonah did not want to warn Nineveh because he did not want them to repent and enjoy God's mercy. Jonah made a terrible decision to disobey God. He decided that he would not go to Nineveh and warn them. No prophet had ever disobeyed a command from God to give a prophecy!

Jonah ran as far away from Nineveh as he could. He ran to a city in the opposite direction. He was trying to run away from God, to get away from the presence of the Lord. But no one can run away from God. God is not like humans, who can be in only one place at one time. God is everywhere at once. It did not matter

where Jonah ran; he would never get away from God. Jonah thought that he could stop God's plan by disobeying Him, but God had a different plan. He disciplined Jonah for his disobedience until Jonah was willing to obey Him. Jonah was on a ship trying to sail away from God's presence, but God "sent out a great wind on the sea...so that the ship was to be broken up." The sailors on the ship were terrified and cried out to their pagan gods, but that did not work. Jonah was sleeping down inside the ship, so the sailors woke him up and begged him to pray to his God to save them. Jonah's sin was putting not only his life at risk, but also the lives of all the sailors on the ship. God revealed to the sailors that it was because of Jonah that they were in this great storm. Jonah admitted to the sailors that he feared God, and that he had disobeyed and ran away from Him. He asked the sailors to throw him overboard so that he would die and they would be saved from the storm. They were afraid that God would punish them for killing Jonah but finally did it because they knew they would die for sure if they did not.

Jonah had admitted that God was punishing him for his disobedience and recognized the power and authority of God, but sadly, he still did not repent. He decided it would be better to be thrown off the ship and drown than to obey God and go to Nineveh. But it was not God's plan for Jonah to drown. Instead, God had prepared a giant fish to come and swallow him. He did not die by drowning, but lived inside the belly of the giant fish for three days and three nights. It was a miserable time for his body, but a great time for his soul. Sometime during those three days, Jonah repented of his sin. He prayed to God. He had no hope left except to beg for the mercy of God. He turned his attention to God and praised God for rescuing him from the destruction of disobedience, even if he had to be swallowed up by a fish to realize it. Jonah declared that worshiping idols was hopeless because no idol can rescue anyone from his sin. Jonah also learned that God is glorified when a man facing judgment turns to Him for salvation. The Lord showed mercy to Jonah and caused the giant fish to throw up, and Jonah came out of his belly and landed on the shore. Jonah finally obeyed God and went to Nineveh. He went throughout the great city and warned the people that God would destroy their city in 40 days because of their wickedness, and the people repented! All of them, including the king, believed in God and worshiped Him. They were very sad because they realized how wicked they were and knew that they would be punished for it. They all fasted and cried out to God; they realized that they had no hope except for God. What Jonah had feared would happen came true: God chose to have mercy on Nineveh. God said He would not destroy them because they had repented from their wickedness. The compassionate and merciful Lord is always willing to show grace to all who will repent. Jonah was angry that God had shown mercy to the Ninevites. He had not learned anything from the pity and compassion that God had shown to him when he was in sin. He had not really changed at all. He told God that he had been right in not wanting to come to Nineveh because he knew that God would show mercy to the Ninevites. Jonah did not want them to have the benefit of God's mercy because he hated them so much. He wished he had not obeyed God so that the people of Nineveh would not have been saved. Even though God had been so merciful to Jonah, Jonah did not want God to show mercy to others. He hated that God had used him to bring mercy to the Ninevites. He begged God to take his life.

God asked Jonah a simple question in response. He asked Jonah whether he had the right to be angry. Jonah did not respond to God. He left the city and built a shelter overlooking it, probably hoping that God would change His mind and destroy Nineveh anyway. But God had another lesson for Jonah. He caused a large plant to grow up so that Jonah could sit in its shade. Jonah was very happy about the plant because it was hot and the shade was nice. But the next day, God sent a

worm to attack the plant. The plant died, and Jonah did not have its shade anymore. God then sent a hot, scorching wind, and Jonah became very weak. He was very angry that the plant had died. Again, Jonah wished he were dead. The Lord again asked Jonah whether he had a right to be angry. Jonah was angry because the Lord had shown mercy to others, and now he was angry because the Lord had not been merciful to him because the plant had died. Jonah was as angry about a plant as he was about the salvation of hundreds of thousands of people. He believed he had the right to be angry at God if God did something that he did not like.

The book of Jonah ends with God's rebuke of Jonah for his lack of compassion for the people of Nineveh. The true disciple of Jesus Christ must not be like Jonah. God has the right to choose when to be merciful and when to judge. A Christian must not wish God to be different than He is, but must try to be like God: gracious and compassionate.



Lesson Questions

What prophet did God tell to go preach to Nineveh?

Jonah.

Where did Jonah go to flee from God's presence?

Jonah got on a ship headed to Tarshish.

What did Jonah tell the sailors to do when a storm threatened to destroy the ship?

Jonah told the sailors to throw him overboard because he knew that his disobedience was the reason God sent the storm.

What did God prepare to swallow Jonah?

A big fish.

What did Jonah do while in the belly of the fish?

Jonah cried out to the Lord and repented of his sins.

What happened after Jonah prayed to God?

The fish spit Jonah out onto dry land.

What happened when Jonah preached to the people of Nineveh?

The people of Nineveh repented of their sin and turned to the Lord.

Was Jonah glad that the people of Nineveh turned to God?

No. Jonah was angry because he did not want God to show mercy to the people of Nineveh.

What did God use to teach Jonah a lesson about His mercy?

God used a plant and a worm to teach Jonah about His mercy.



Presentation Ideas

A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards

Use appropriate A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannelgraph

Use appropriate flannelgraph pieces with the lesson.



Going Fishing

Materials: table, fishing pole, fishing line or string, clothespin, ear (1:1–2), ship (1:3), waves (1:4–6), dice, life preserver (or LifeSavers candy; 1:10–16), large fish (1:17), praying hands (2:1–10), cityscape (3:1–6), empty paper plate (3:7–10), plant leaf (4:1–6), gummy worm (4:7–10), the word MERCY (4:11) (Note: Most of these items can be made, drawn, brought from home, or purchased inexpensively at a toy store or party-supply store.)

Directions: Have an assistant hide behind a table. Throughout the lesson, call on various students to come “fish” behind the table. The assistant should use the clothespin to hook the items onto the line in the order given above. You can use each item as a visual aid for teaching the passage it corresponds to (listed above). So, the first student will “catch” an ear, and you can explain that the Word of God came to Jonah in Jonah 1:1–2 (and so on).



Jonah

Dress up as Jonah and tell your story with an open Bible on your lap. Be dramatic!



“God Is Sovereign”

Materials: copies of the “God Is Sovereign” craft page, crayons

Directions: The book of Jonah teaches us that God is sovereign all things. In today’s lesson we saw God’s sovereignty over a storm (Jonah 1:4), a fish (Jonah 1:17), a plant (Jonah 4:6), and a worm (Jonah 4:7). Give each student a copy of the craft page. They can draw examples of each of these four things in the boxes.

Praise and Worship

Create in Me a Clean Heart

I Will Sing of the Mercies

Make Me a Servant

Rejoice in the Lord Always

Trust and Obey

Who Did Swallow Jonah?



Jonah Runs from God

When God said to Jonah, “I want you to go
(Point finger out in front of body and then out to the side.)

And preach to the Ninevites,” Jonah said, “No!”
(Cross arms; shake head vehemently.)

Refusing to listen to what the Lord said,
(Cover ears with hands.)

He boarded a ship bound for Tarshish instead.

(Walk in place; shade eyes with one hand, and point to something far away.)

But God sent a storm, and it scared the ship's crew.

(Wave hands back and forth like wind; make "scared" face.)

They woke Jonah up and cried, "What do we do?"

(Pretend to shake someone awake; hold hands out at sides, palms up.)

He said, "Throw me overboard, into the waves."

(Pretend to throw someone overboard.)

But God sent a fish so his life would be saved

(Wiggle fingers like fins.)

Inside that great fish, Jonah finally prayed.

(Fold hands; bow head.)

The fish spit him out, and at last he obeyed.

(Nod head.)

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

"That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments" (Psalm 78:7).

Choose ideas from this section to review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



"God's Mercy to Jonah"

Materials: copies of the "God's Mercy to Jonah" craft pages, crayons, glue

Directions: Give each student a copy of the first craft page and a copy of Jonah from the second craft page. Direct them to color the big fish and Jonah. Then they can fold the fish page in half, placing Jonah inside, and glue the sides of the paper together (being careful not to put glue inside the fish outline). When they hold the picture up to the light, they will be able to see Jonah inside the fish.



Jonah and the Big Fish

Materials: copies of "Jonah and the Big Fish" craft page, crayons, glue, scissors

Directions: Give the students a copy of the craft page and have them color and then cut out the pictures. Glue the front and inside of the fish together by placing glue along the top edge of the fish's insides. Glue Jonah to the inside of the fish. The students can lift up the front of the fish to reveal Jonah praying.



Jonah Is Spit onto Dry Land

Materials: party horns (the type that unroll when you blow in them), copies of the "Jonah Is Spit onto Dry Land" craft page on cardstock, glue or tape, crayons

Directions: Give each student a copy of the craft page, and have him color Jonah

and the fish. Then give each student a party horn, and instruct him to stretch it out and glue or tape his picture of Jonah to the end. (This may require the help of a teacher or another student.) The horn will roll back up with Jonah inside. Glue or tape the horn's tube to the back of the fish, so that when the students blow their horns, the fish will spit Jonah out of its mouth. A verse also could be glued or taped to the fish.



A Lesson in Compassion

Materials: coloring page of Jonah under the tree, leaves cut from brown construction paper, crayons, glue

Directions: Have the students glue brown leaves all over the tree to illustrate how God taught Jonah a lesson in compassion.



Know and Do

We know that God shows us mercy. Sometimes He does not punish us when we deserve it. Sometimes parents show their children mercy, too. Your dad and mom to tell you what is right, and there are times when you might get into trouble for disobeying. But other times, your parents might show you mercy by giving you another chance to do the right thing. Do you want to show mercy to your family members? When your brother makes you mad, pray that God will take away your mad feelings and send His mercy. Have the students sit in a circle and roll a ball to one another. Stop after three rolls. The student holding the ball must answer two questions: Who gives us mercy? How can you give mercy to your brother (or sister, parents, friends, etc.)?



God Is Abundant in Lovingkindness

Materials: copies of the "God Is Abundant in Lovingkindness" craft page on light-green paper, copies of the water ripples on blue paper, copies of the fish on white paper, crayons, tape

Directions: Give each student a green base sheet, a blue half-sheet, and several fish. Instruct them to cut out the "water" along the solid lines and then staple or tape it to the bottom half of the base sheet, creating a pocket to insert the fish. The students should then cut out their fish. Read the Jonah 4:2 to the students, and ask them what it means that God is abundant in lovingkindness. With help or on their own, the students should think of ways that God is abundant in lovingkindness. The suggested ways can then be written on their fish and placed in the pocket to take home.

Coloring Pages

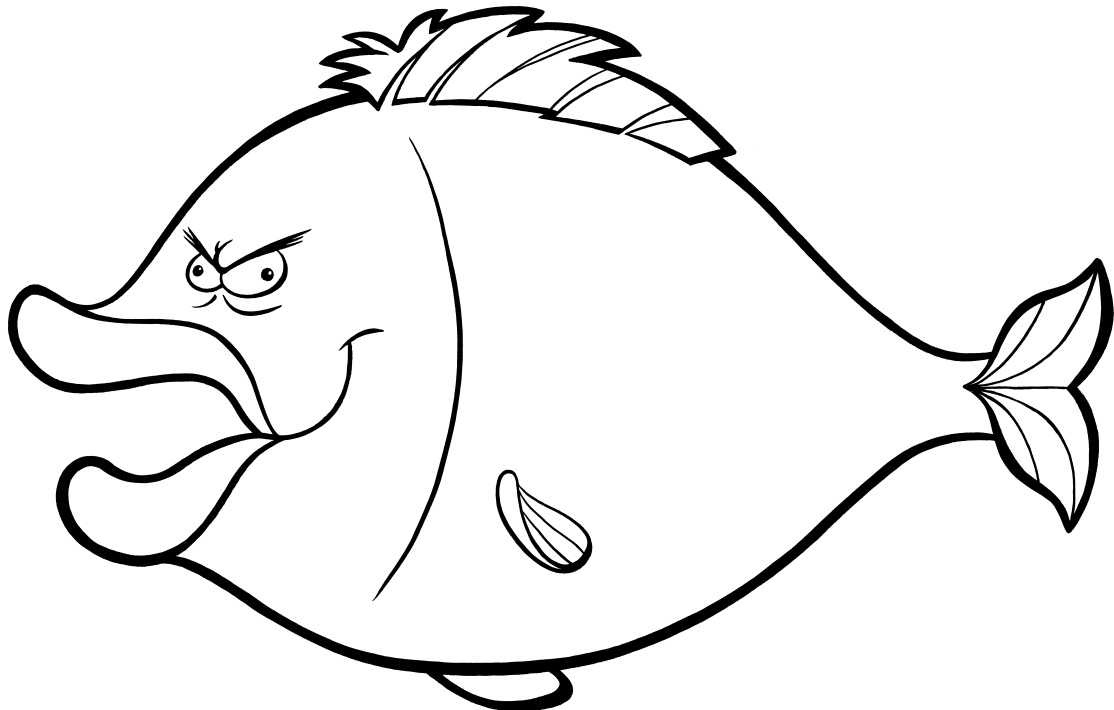
Give each student a copy of the coloring pages at the back of the lesson. Students can color the pages in class or at home.



MEMORY VERSE

"I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness" (Jonah 4:2b).

God's Mercy to Jonah

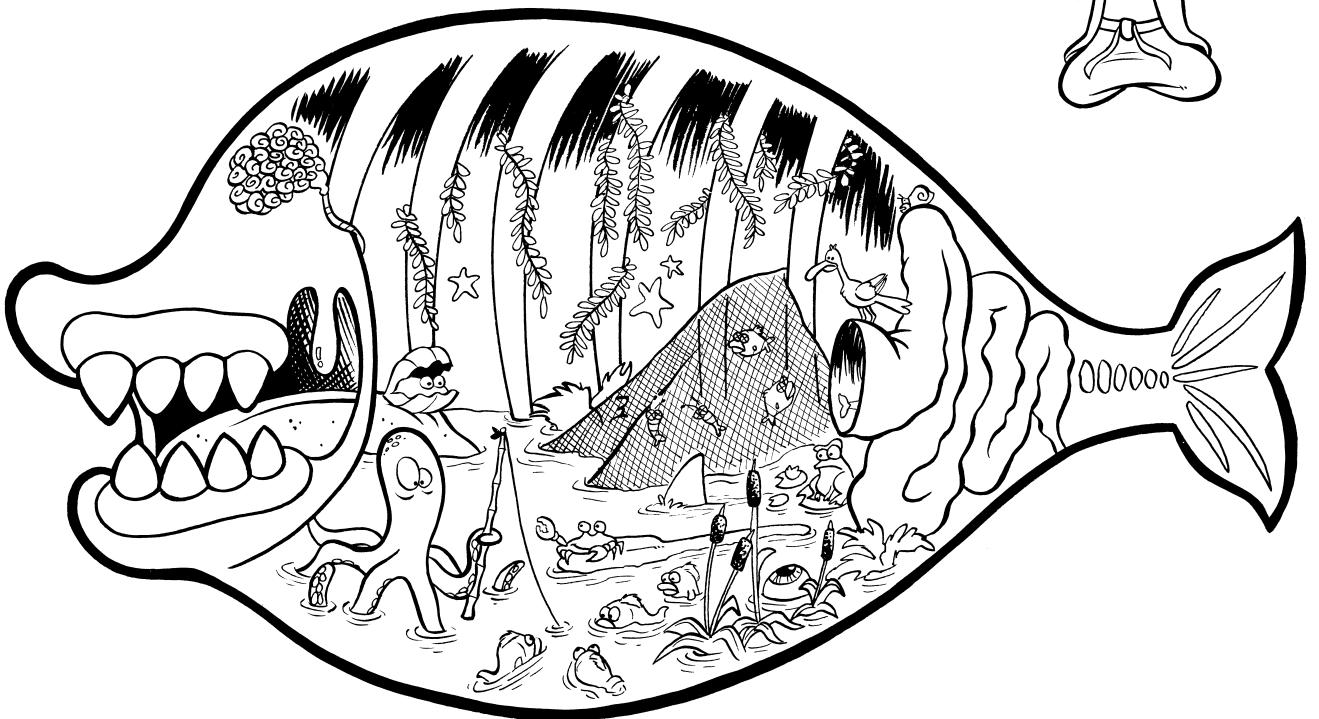
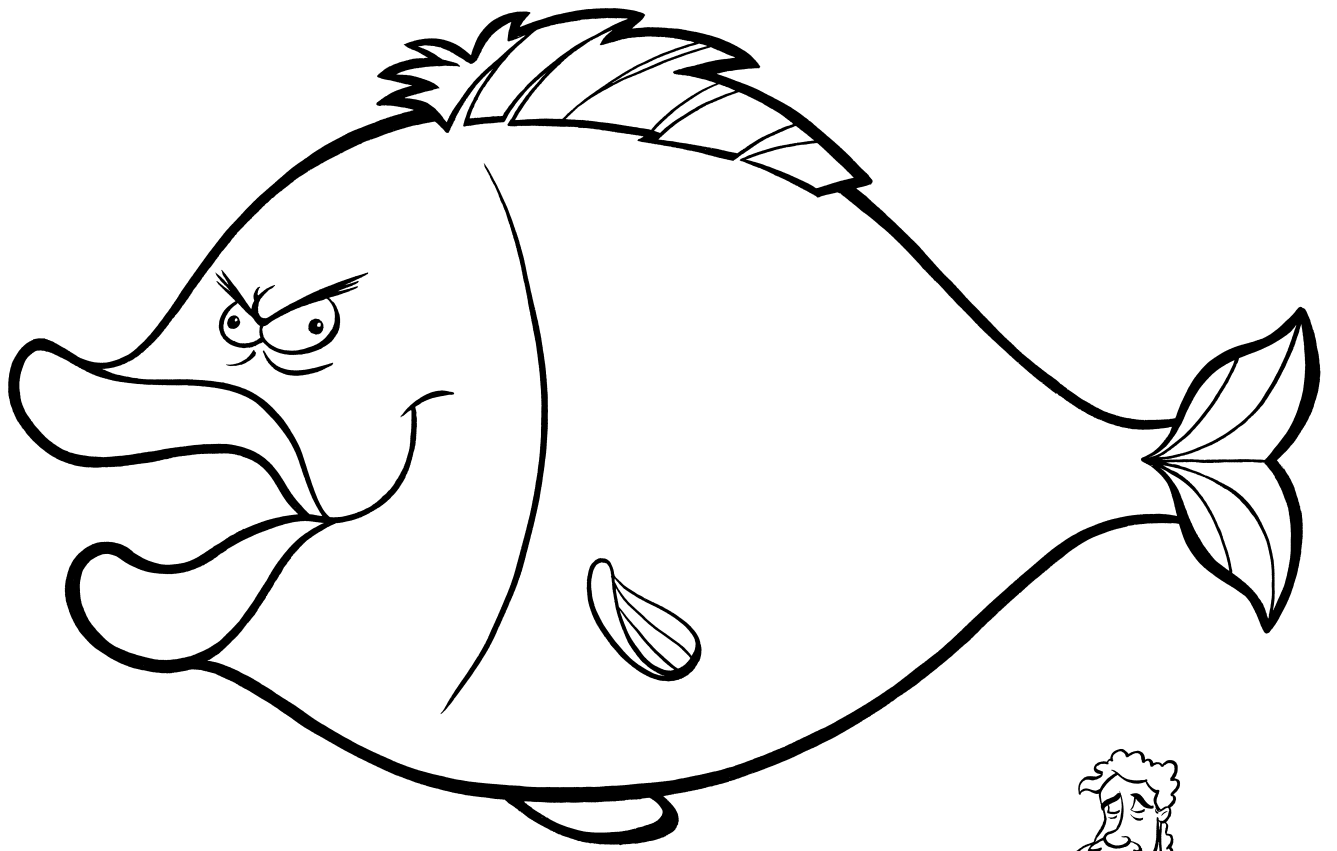


God showed mercy to Jonah by saving his life and giving him time to repent while he was in the fish (Jonah 1:17).

God's Mercy to Jonah



Jonah and the Big Fish

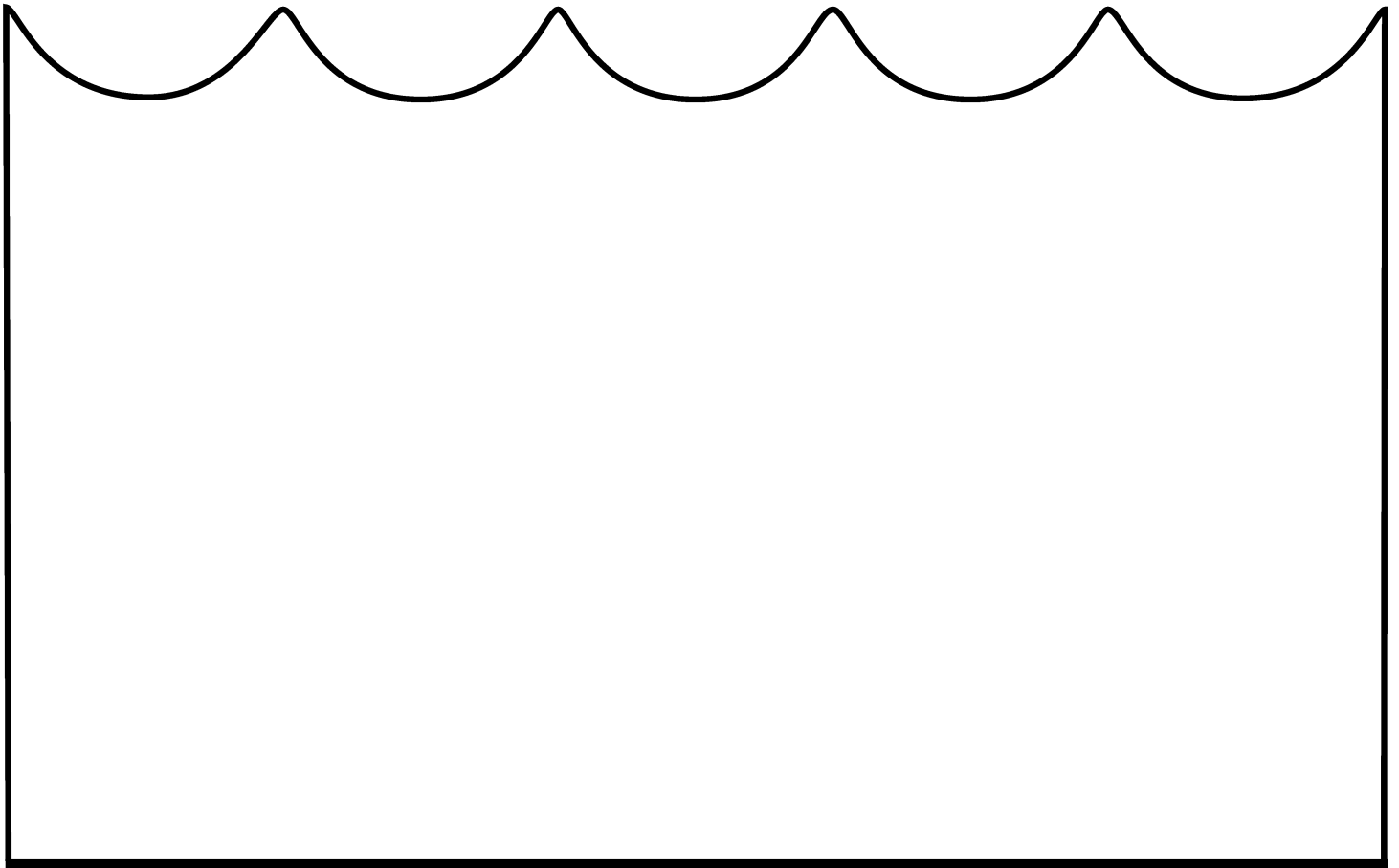
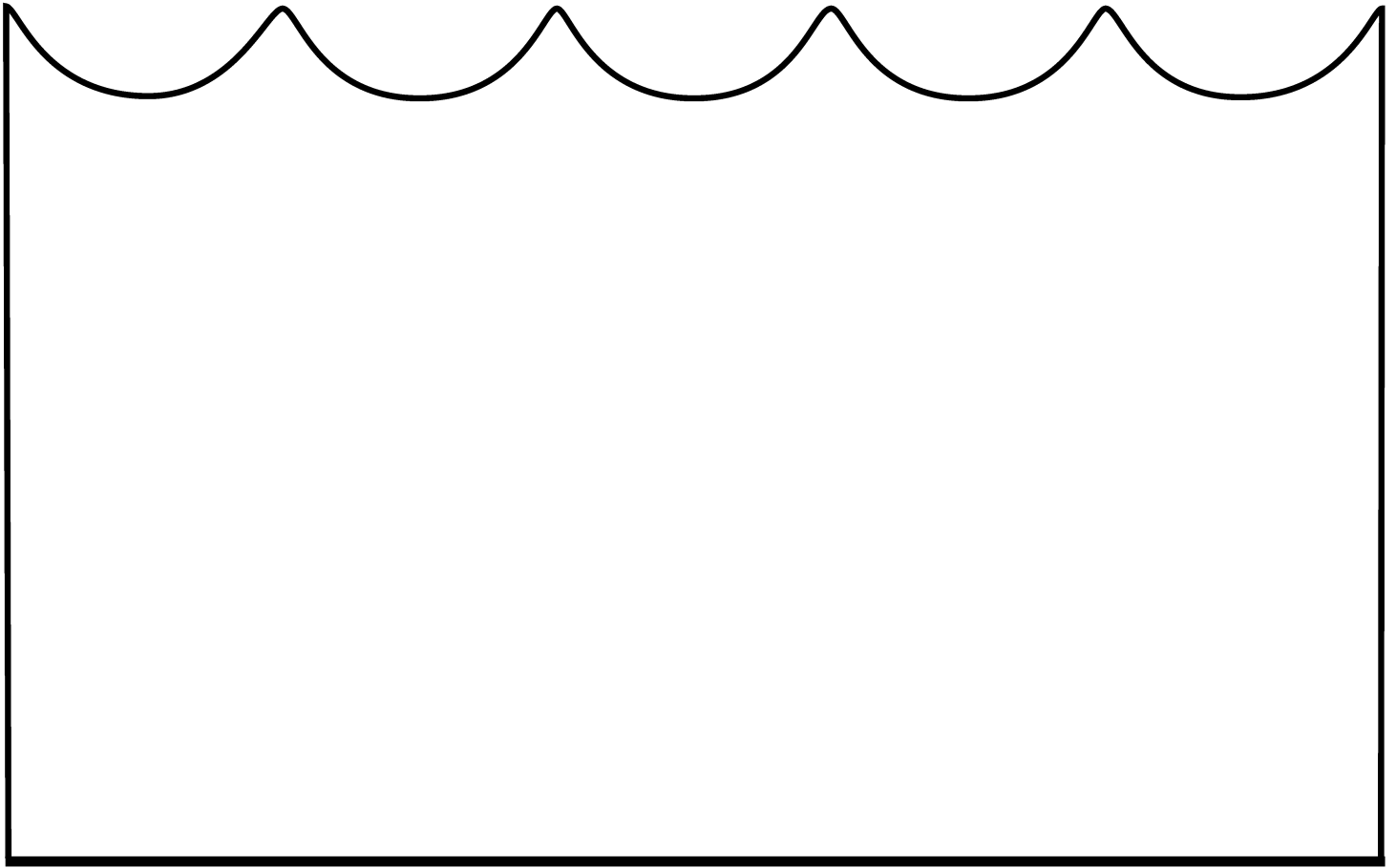


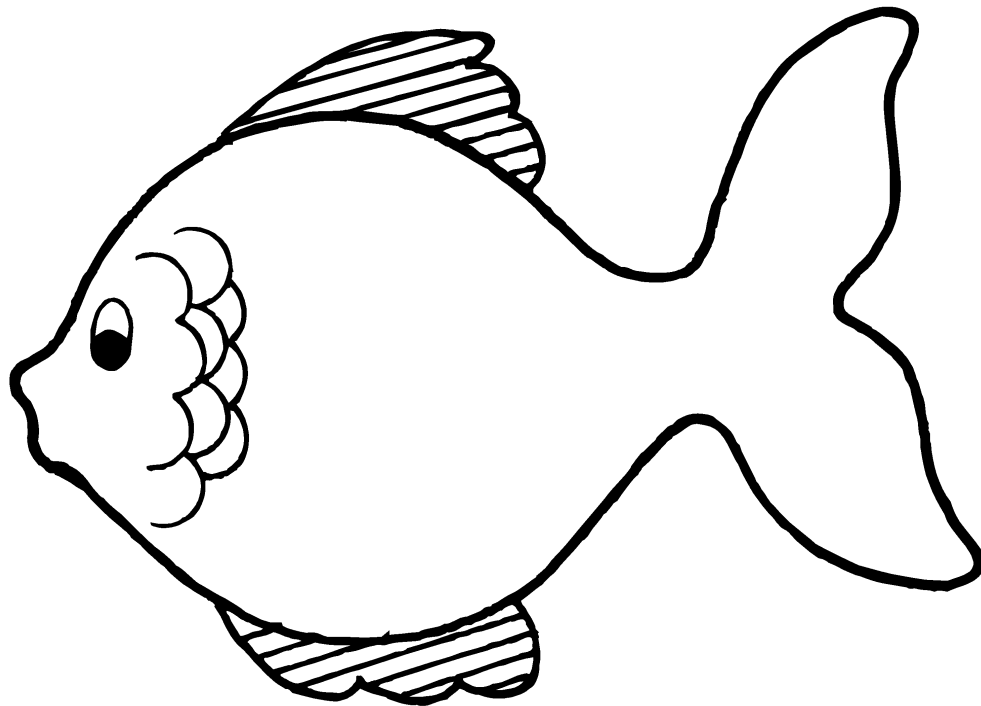
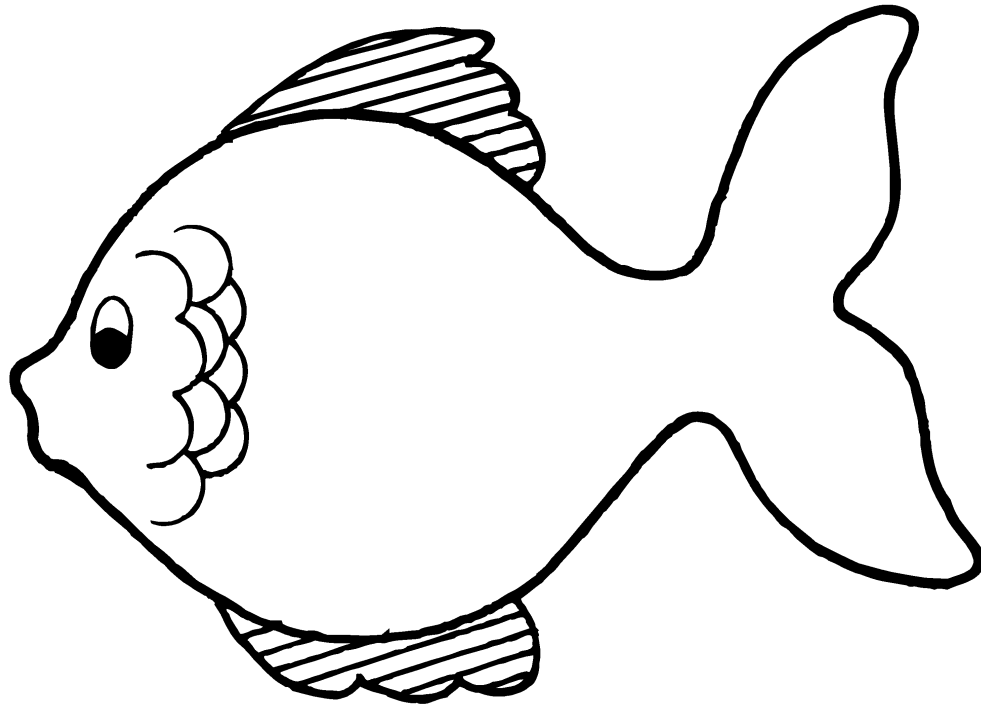
Jonah Is Spit onto Dry Land

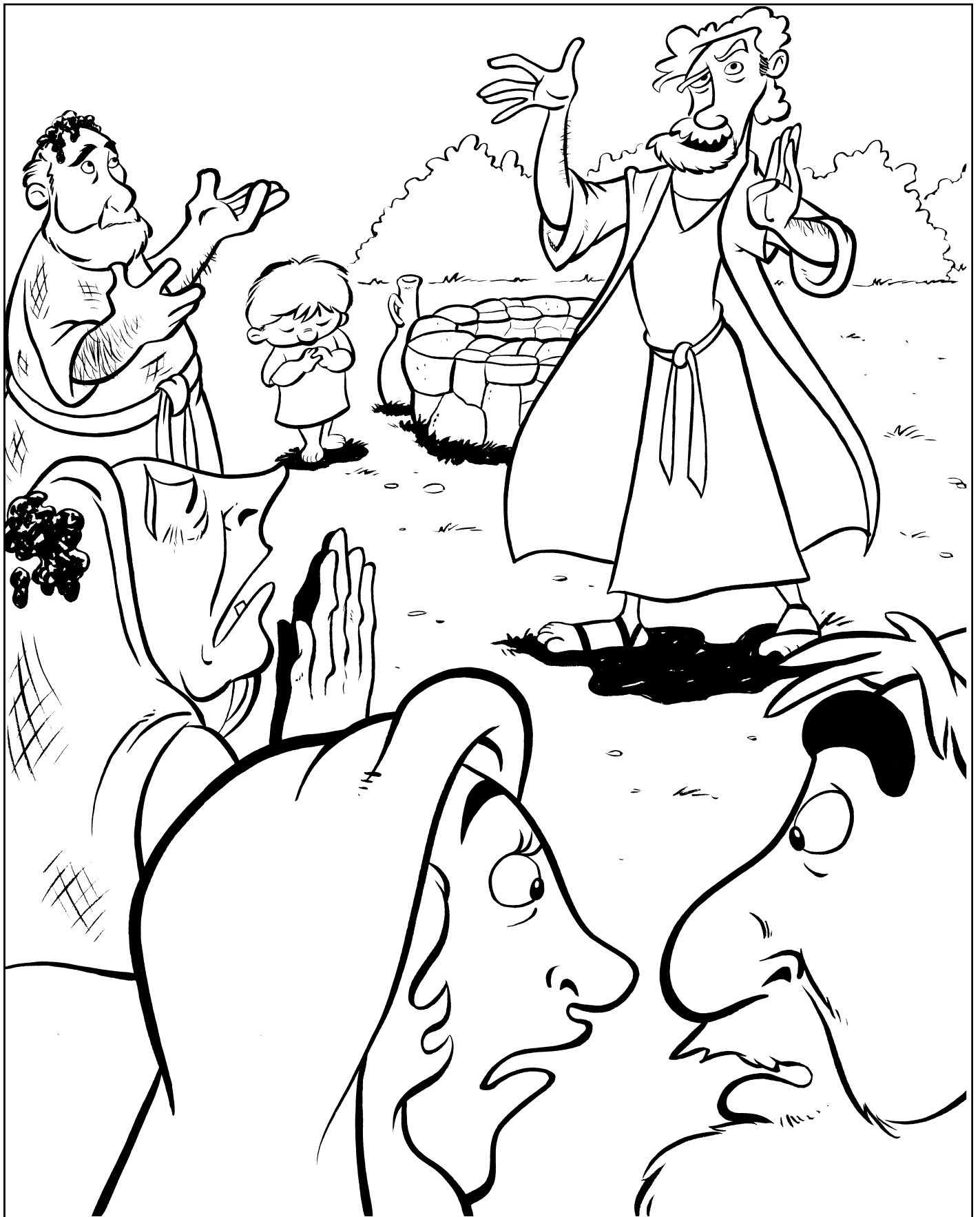


God Is Abundant in Lovingkindness

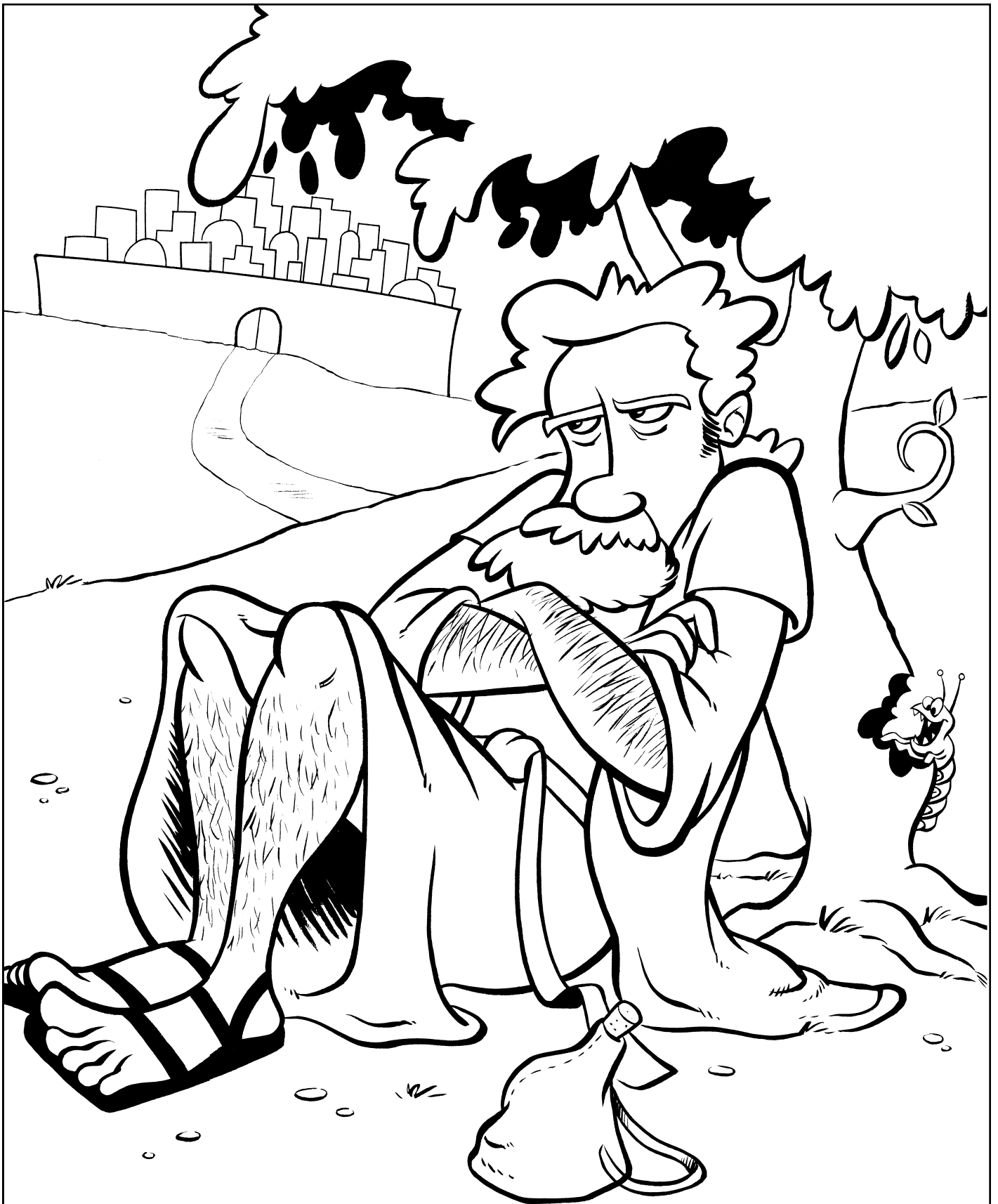
“I know that you are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm” (Jonah 4:2).







“So the people of Nineveh believed God....Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it” (Jonah 3:5, 10).



Jonah was angry that Nineveh repented and that God had mercy on them. He said, "I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness." Then the Lord said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" (Jonah 4:2, 4).

