

# Jonah, the Backward Prophet

## Jonah

**It was probably after the Exile**, when Judah was still under the rule of the Persians, that someone wrote an entertaining, thought-provoking story about the prophet Jonah, showing how Jonah, "the backward prophet," does everything wrong, yet everything comes out right, except, perhaps, his own relationship with God. The story leaves us with many questions, and we are left to finish the story for ourselves. What happened to Jonah next?

### How to Use this Parent Page

With your child, begin by looking together at the illustrations below and listening as your child recalls—and in a sense *relives*—the experience of today's Godly Play presentation. Invite your child to respond to the drawings. You might say, for example:

- I wonder what you can tell me about these pictures?
- I wonder what these pictures have to do with today's story?

Just listen. This is *not* a time to quiz children on what they may or may not recall about the lesson, but to be quietly present as they share their own experience. This will be different for each child—one may retell much of the presentation, another recall a single moment that had meaning, and yet another talk about his or

her own creative response. Again, your role is not to correct or supplement what your child tells you, but simply to *listen* in a supportive way. You are supporting the formation of young—sometimes very young—theologians.

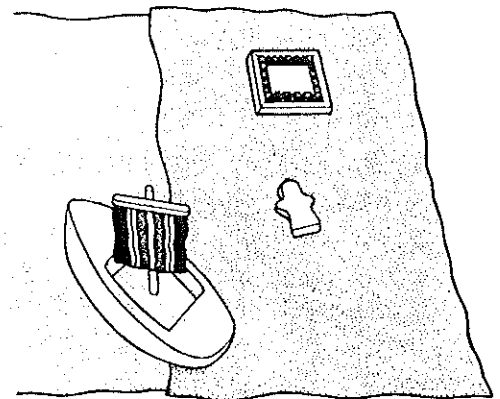
Then, if you wish, you can read with (or to) your child the condensed version of today's presentation offered below. Whether you read the lesson or simply listen as your child shares what was received in today's lesson, ask the Wondering questions printed in the left column. Remember, there are many right answers! Be open to what the presentation can mean to you and your child. God will teach you new meanings every day. Conclude by sitting quietly for a moment and then saying "Amen."

## The Presentation

God told Jonah, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and tell them they are bad and they need to change and become good."

Jonah turned and went the other way. He found a ship going as far from Nineveh as you could go.

A great storm broke out. The sailors were afraid, so they decided



# Wondering

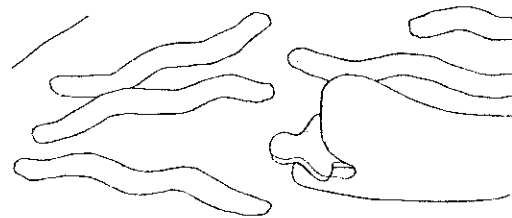
- **I wonder** what part of the story you like best?
- **I wonder** what part of the story is the most important part?
- **I wonder** where you are in the story? What part of the story is about you?

to cast lots to see whom God was angry at. They wanted to throw that person overboard to get rid of him.

Now a prophet is someone who can speak for the One True God, but Jonah still did not speak. The sailors asked him who he was. He told them he worshiped God, the One who made the sea and dry land. The sailors were even more afraid. They knew that he was trying to flee from God.

The sea grew more troubled, so Jonah said, "Throw me in, and the storm will stop." So they threw him in. All was quiet. The sea was calm.

As Jonah sank down in the water, a great fish swam up and swallowed him. Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. Jonah began to pray and the fish began to feel very strange. It grew sicker and sicker. Finally it swam to the shore and vomited out Jonah onto the dry land.



Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time. "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and tell the people there that they are bad and that they need to change and become good." This time Jonah went to Nineveh. He cried out to the people of Nineveh that they were bad and that God commanded them to be good. God said that they would all be destroyed if they did not.

The people of Nineveh listened to God's call. They turned and became good, so God did not destroy that great city. This disappointed Jonah. That was the opposite of how most prophets would feel. Jonah was a strange prophet. What did he do next?

## Godly Play Wondering

**In every Parent Page,** we offer information about Godly Play to help you understand both its methodology and purpose. The "wondering" included in most Godly Play lessons is a unique and powerful part of the Godly Play experience. That's why we include "The Wondering" in *Godly Play at Home*.

You can use the wondering approach any time you read or tell Bible stories at home...or when you hear them yourself!

Here are key wondering questions, which you can adapt as appropriate for your family:

- I wonder what part of the story you like best?
- I wonder what part of the story is the most important part?
- I wonder where you are in the story? What part of the story is about you?
- I wonder if there is any part of the story we can leave out and still have all the story we need?
- I wonder what happened next?