

ENRICHMENT LESSON

JONAH, THE BACKWARD PROPHET

LESSON NOTES

FOCUS: THE PROPHET JONAH (JONAH 1-4)

- **SACRED STORY**
- **ENRICHMENT PRESENTATION (OBJECT BOX)**

THE MATERIAL

- **LOCATION: SACRED STORY SHELVES**
- **PIECES: BOAT, NINEVEH MODEL OR BLOCK, JONAH, BROWN FELT (LAND), GREEN "PLANT," WOODEN SEA-STRIPS, CLEAR PLASTIC OBJECT BOX**
- **UNDERLAY: BLUE FELT**

BACKGROUND

It was probably after the Exile, when Judah was still under the rule of the Persians, that someone wrote a funny, entertaining, thought-provoking story about the prophets. The story shows that the spirit of God's People was still alive, still creative and still pondering the presence of the mystery of God.

This ironic tale shows Jonah, "the backward prophet," doing 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?

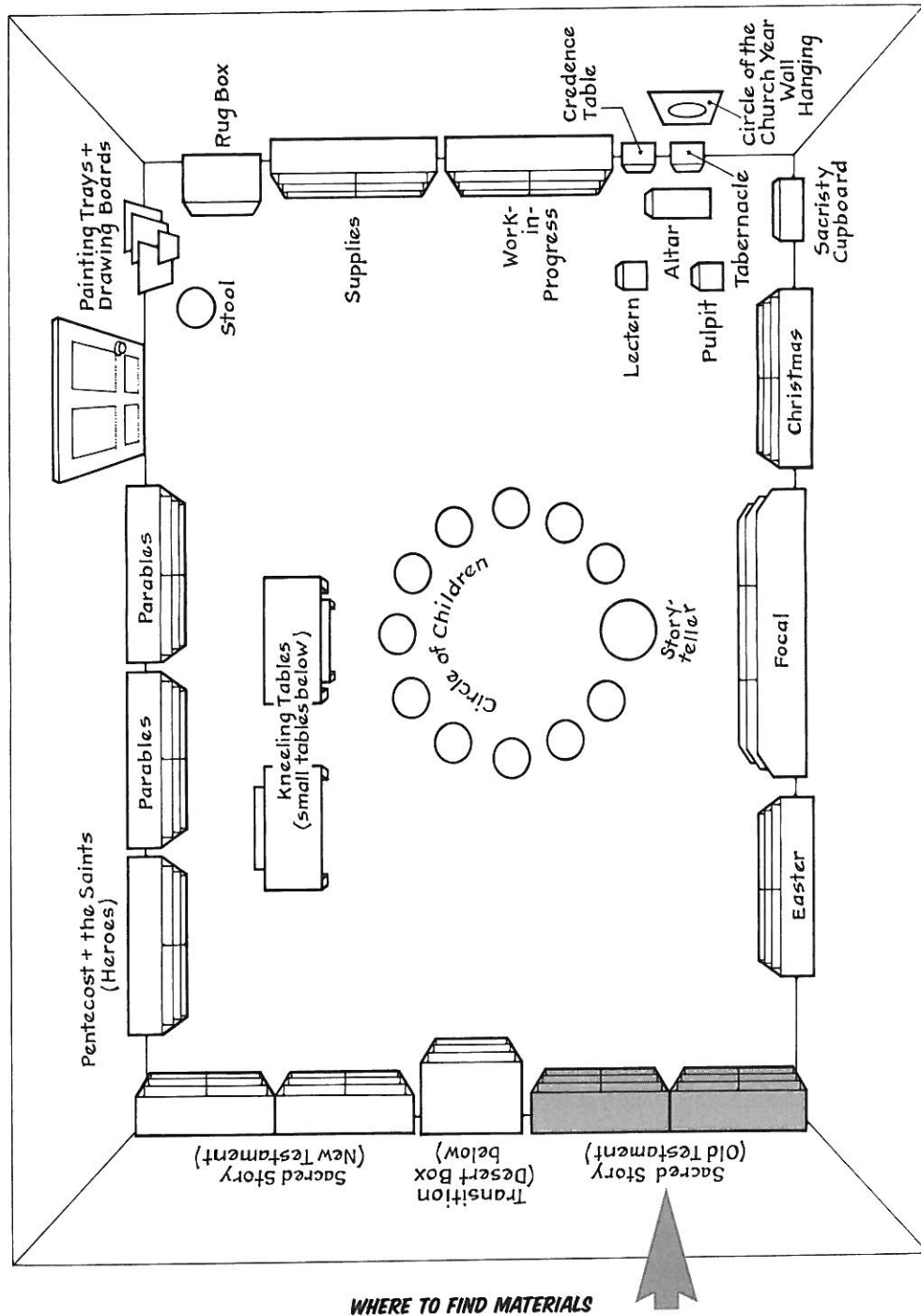
NOTES ON THE MATERIAL

As you face the sacred story shelves, look at the shelf underneath the stories of the Exile and Return and the Prophets to find the object box about Jonah. If you have other object boxes about the lives of individual prophets, the box about Jonah will be found in that group.

Inside the box are a boat, a model of Nineveh (or a wooden block representing Nineveh), Jonah, a fish, a green plant (made of felt or other material), blue wooden sea-strips to represent the waves, a blue felt sea (the underlay) and a brown felt land.

SPECIAL NOTES

Classroom management: You can find more information on object boxes and how to use them on pages 22 and 72 of *The Complete Guide to Godly Play, Volume 1: How to Lead Godly Play Lessons*.

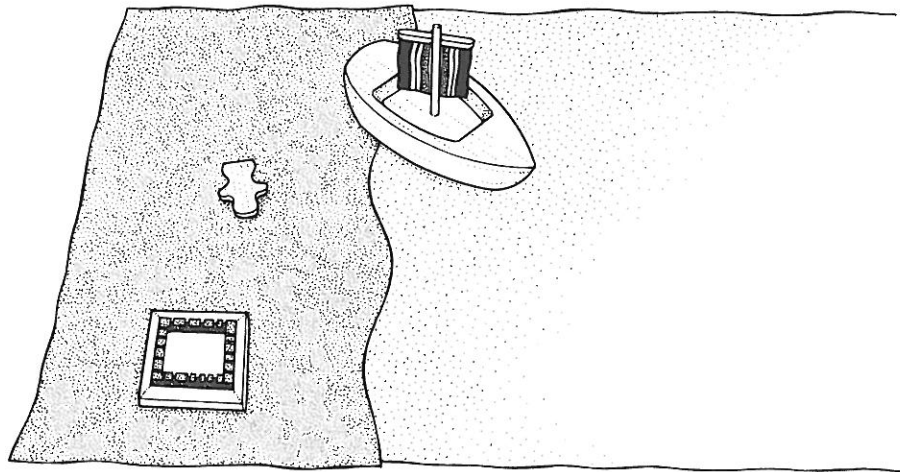


MOVEMENTS

WORDS

Go get the object box with the material in it. Bring it to the circle. Lay out the blue underlay in front of you. Put the brown shoreline over it at your left. Put the model of Nineveh on the brown felt, to your near left, so it will be "northeast" of the sea from the children's point of view. (When they look at a map as they grow older, they will not have to relearn the geography.) Put the Jonah figure midway from the top and bottom on the land. Place the boat half in the water, near Jonah.

Watch where I go to get this lesson.



NINEVEH, JONAH AND THE BOAT (STORYTELLER'S PERSPECTIVE)

Wait a moment until all are ready.
Begin with some drama.

Point to the model of Nineveh to the east (your left) as you speak.

Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah. "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and tell them they are bad and they need to change and become good."

Now prophets are people who come so close to God, and God comes so close to them, that they know what God is telling them to do. Then they go do it.

MOVEMENTS

Put Jonah in the boat and push off. Begin to sail toward the west end of the Mediterranean Sea (to your right).

Place the blue wooden strips around the boat and put the prow of the boat on one of them to show how the boat is being tossed.

WORDS

Jonah turned and went the other way. He found a ship going to Tarshish in Spain. It was as far from Nineveh as you could go.

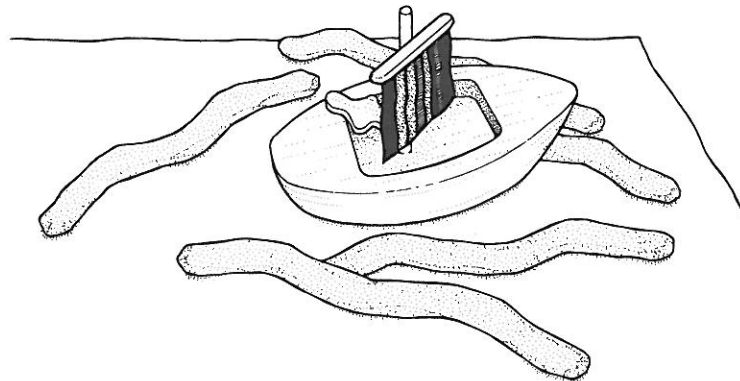
Suddenly a great storm broke out.

The sailors were afraid, so each one prayed to his own god. They threw everything they were carrying into the ocean to make the ship light, so they could float.

Now a prophet is someone who helps people discover what is best to do.

They went to look for Jonah. Do you know where he was? He was asleep in the bottom of the boat. The captain found him and commanded him to call on his God to save them.

All Jonah did was climb up onto the deck of the boat.



JONAH AND THE STORM (STORYTELLER'S PERSPECTIVE)

Now people were more afraid. They decided 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 the dry land. Then the sailors were afraid. They knew that he was trying to flee from God.

MOVEMENTS

WORDS

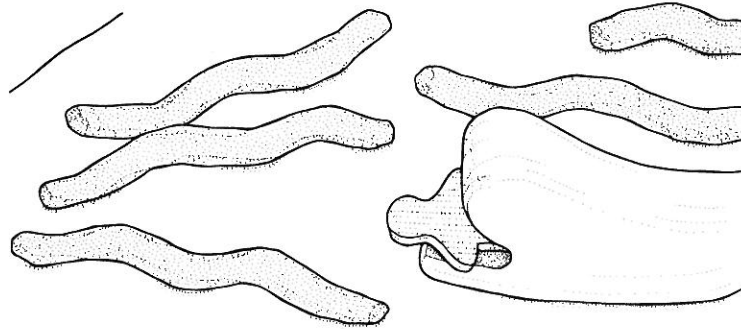
The sea grew even more troubled, so Jonah said, "Throw me in, and the storm will stop."

Throw Jonah into the water and move the boat away from him slowly. ■ So they threw him in. All was suddenly quiet. The sea was calm.

Now a prophet is someone who brings people close to God by what he or she says and does. Jonah said nothing; but when the sea grew calm the sailors all fell down and worshiped the true God.

Now a prophet is someone who is close to God, and a false prophet is very far from God. When Jonah was thrown into the water, he was neither close to nor far from God. He was sinking.

Move the fish across the blue felt and scoop up Jonah into the fish's mouth. ■ As he sank, a great fish swam up and swallowed him.



JONAH AND THE FISH (STORYTELLER'S PERSPECTIVE)

Move the fish around slowly in circles. ■ Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights.

Jonah began to pray and the fish began to feel very strange. It grew sicker and sicker.

Move the fish toward the land and flip Jonah out onto the land. ■ Finally it swam to the shore and vomited out Jonah onto the dry land.

Move Jonah toward the model of Nineveh. ■ 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.

MOVEMENTS

Move Jonah a little bit away from the city. Have the green plant ready to place over Jonah as he sits and sulks.

WORDS

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.

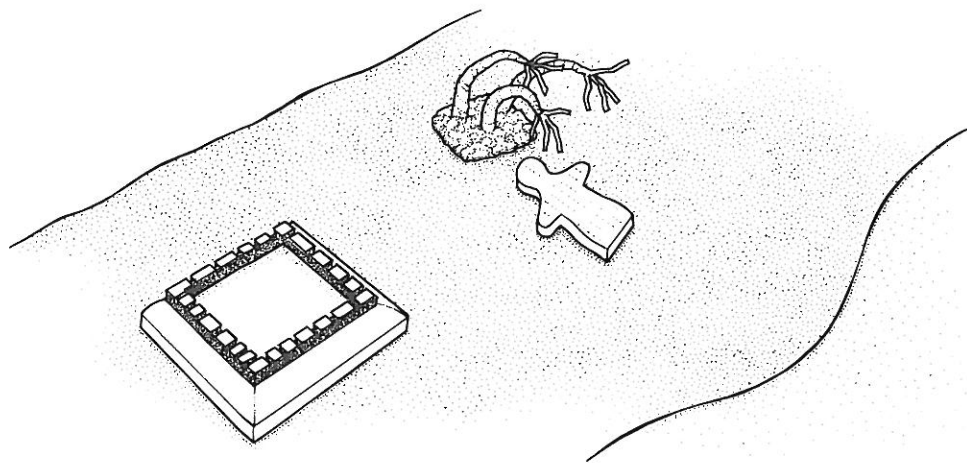
Now a prophet is someone who is overjoyed when people who are bad become good.

The people of Nineveh listened to God's call and they turned and became good. All went about wearing sackcloth and ashes to show how sorry they were. Even the king and queen were sorry and became good. The creatures in the field were sorry too, and they also became good.

God did not destroy that great city.

This made Jonah angry. He wanted God to destroy the city. These people were not even the People of God! He went outside the city and sat on a hill and sulked. He wanted to get his way. God said, "Why are you angry?"

God caused a plant to grow and give Jonah shade as he sat on the hill in the sun. Then one night God sent a worm to attack the plant. It withered away and died. When the sun rose, a sultry east wind came, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint. He grew angry about the death of the plant.



JONAH AND THE PLANT (STORYTELLER'S PERSPECTIVE)

MOVEMENTS

Sit up and lean back. Reflect silently for a moment. Then, begin the wondering.

If the children pick up this question, go with it, using the extra wondering questions provided. They may not want to work with it yet. If they do not, conclude the first set of wondering questions and come back to these additional questions another time.

Put everything back in the box without hurrying. Replace the box on the shelves and guide the children's choices about getting out what they need for their responses or the other materials they might like to work with.

WORDS

“Why are you angry about the plant?” God asked. Jonah said, “I am angry—angry enough to die.” He thought he still might get his way.

God said, “You pity the plant, but you did nothing for it. You did not cause it to grow. You did not care for it. Should I not pity Nineveh, that great city where there are more than 120,000 people, and all their cattle?”

◆ 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 how you would finish the story?

What did Jonah say? What did he do next?

I wonder