

Lesson

7

Jonah Learns to Obey

BIBLE BASIS

Jonah finally obeys God
(Jonah 1; 2:1, 10; 3)

BIBLE TRUTH

Obedying shows we love
God.

MEMORY VERSE

"Love the Lord your God
with all your heart."
Matthew 22:37

LESSON AIM

That your students will
learn that obeying God's
Word is the best way to
live.

1

LIFE NEED (5 MINUTES)

- Talk about obeying

Materials: "People and Places" Teaching Aid 3

2

BIBLE LEARNING (10–15 MINUTES)

- Tell the story of Jonah learning to obey
- Review with questions and an activity



Materials: Bible, "Jonah Learns to Obey" Teaching Aid 9, paper fastener, *Storytime* paper for Lesson 7, crayons or pencils

3

BIBLE APPLICATION (10 MINUTES)

- Review the memory verse with a rhyme
- Make stand-up figures of Jonah and the fish



Materials: *Early Elementary Make-It/Take-It* for Lesson 7 and add-on figure of Jonah, crayons, paper fastener

4

LIFE RESPONSE (10 MINUTES)

- Read a story of how a child obeys
- Children name ways they can obey God



Materials: *Storytime* paper for Lesson 7, *Early Elementary Make-It/Take-It* page 3 and add-on figure of heart

Understanding Your Students

Some of your students may not fully understand the difference between right and wrong since they have not reached the stage in their mental development where they can fully understand concepts of morality.

They do comprehend that the consequence for disobeying adult rules may be punishment. Most of all, they understand and respond to positive reinforcement of appropriate behavior. Children of this age want to please, and they will actually change their behavior more quickly when the good actions are praised.



This symbol means extra preparation or supplies are needed.

Understanding the Bible

It is believed that the events that took place in the Book of Jonah happened sometime between 780 and 750 B.C. During this time, Nineveh was Israel's most bitter enemy. It was also widely known that the people of Nineveh worshiped many gods and were cruel to victims of warfare.

Because of the wickedness in this city, God told Jonah to travel to Nineveh to warn the people of the destruction that would occur if they did not repent. However, Jonah did not want to follow God's instructions, for he felt this city should be destroyed. Foolishly, Jonah tried to escape God's wishes by taking a ship headed to Tarshish, the opposite direction from Nineveh.

The Lord caused a great storm where the ship sailed. The sailors of the ship began to pray to their individual gods. They cast lots to determine which of them was responsible for the wrath that fell upon the ship. When the lot fell upon Jonah, he told them of the one true God and confessed that he had disobeyed God. He instructed them to throw him into the sea.

Jonah spent three days in the belly of a great fish, which "the Lord provided" (Jonah 1:17). While there, he repented, and God rescued him. Again, God told Jonah to go to Nineveh, and this time Jonah obeyed.

The people of Nineveh repented, fasted, and put

on sackcloth. Sackcloth was considered a symbol of humility and dependence on God. Even the king wore sackcloth and sat in ashes. In fact, the king's proclamation included the directive that the animals fast and wear sackcloth (Jonah 3:7-9).

The dove has always been a picture of peace (Gen. 8:11). Jonah's name means dove.

Because of Jonah's obedience, a whole city was saved.

Jonah is probably the most famous story in all of the Minor Prophets (or last 12 books of the Old Testament). Though we often speak of it as Jonah and the whale, the original text of the Bible never actually calls the great fish a "whale" (the KJV in Matt. 12:40 is a mistranslation).

Ninevah [NINN-uh-vuh] was the chief city of Assyria. The Assyrians were a world powerhouse from about 750 to 700 B.C.

Scholars are not absolutely sure where Tarshish (Jonah 1:3) was. It may have been as far away as Spain. The for-sure thing about it was that it was not eastward toward Assyria.

Note that the Book of Jonah revolves around: a great wind storm (1:4); a great fish (1:17); a great city (3:3; 4:11); turning from great evil (3:10); and God's great mercy (4:2).

Classroom Tips

All of these tips are based on positive ways to teach obedience to God.

- When your students share crayons, treat others kindly, forgive others, or obey God's Word in any way, praise them by talking about how they pleased God.
- Make a list of God's rules that relate to students. Select rules from the commandments and write them in language your students understand. These might include: Do not steal. Do not tell lies. Love God with all your heart.
- Each student is different. Watch to see what kind of reinforcement each student responds to, and use this information for rewards. If a child must be corrected, explain what he or she did wrong and give an appropriate way to act.

Worship Activities

- Play DisKit music.
- Collect offerings.

**When we
worship God
and give our
offering money,
we are obeying Him.**

- Pray for help to be obedient.
**Dear God, thank You for Your
Word, the Bible, that shows us
the best way to live. Help us
to obey You. In Jesus' name.
Amen.**



Before Class

Welcome each student with a personal greeting. **I'm so glad you came today. God wants everyone to come together to worship Him on His special day. Today we will learn about obeying. When we obey, we show God we love Him.**

Your students can mark their attendance on the attendance chart with a small sticker, a happy face, or by coloring a square. Have children give their offerings, then lead them to the first activity of the day.

Getting Started

The following activities will prepare the children for the story of Jonah learning to obey God.

■ **Stormy Seas:** Children will hear what God did to help Jonah learn to obey. Let children begin to think about a boat on a stormy sea. Place chairs in the shape of the boat. Or let the children play under a table like they are down inside a boat during a big storm at sea. Let them rock back and forth and make the sounds of a storm. **In our Bible story today, a man named Jonah is on a boat on a stormy sea.**

■ **Word Designs:** Children will become more familiar with the words "Love" and "Obey" in this lesson. Print "Love" and "Obey" on the board. Provide markers or crayons and paper for children to copy the words and make colorful designs from them. **When we obey, it is one way we show we love God.**



1

Life Need 5 minutes

Objective: That your students will talk about obeying.

7

This activity will prepare students to learn that obeying shows they love God. Bring out the "People and Places" Teaching Aid.

Let's look at these pictures and talk about people these children would obey.

(Point to the picture of the family.) **This picture shows parents. Do you think their children obey them?** (Allow children to respond.)

(Point to the girls playing soccer.) **Who do you think the girls playing soccer obey?** (Their coach.)

(Point to the girl swinging.) **Who do you think the girl on the swing is obeying?** (Mom or dad, grandparent, teacher.)

(Point to the girls praying.) **Who do you think the girls praying are obeying?** (Children may say they are obeying God.)

Let's talk about how we obey.

Who do you obey? (Children may tell about people in their families, teachers, coaches, neighbors, church friends, etc.)

How do you obey? (Children will probably talk about listening, following directions, doing what they are told, obeying rules, sharing their toys, being kind to others, and so on.)

Why do you obey? (Give children plenty of time to think. They might talk about pleasing others, pleasing God, staying out of trouble, or getting the rewards of obeying, and so on. It's okay if the children aren't sure.)

You know a lot about obeying. Listen to a Bible story about a man who learned to obey.



"People and Places"
Teaching Aid 3

2

Bible Learning 10–15 minutes

Objective: That your students will hear how Jonah learned that obeying shows we love God.

Punch out the figures from “Jonah Learns to Obey” Teaching Aid 9. Prepare them as indicated on the back. Open your Bible to Jonah 1.

BIBLE STORY

(Stand up Jonah, Figure 1. Place sign, Figure 2, to the right of Jonah.) **Jonah heard God tell him, “Go to the city of Nineveh”** [NIN-eh-vuh]. **“Tell the people to love and obey Me.”**

Jonah didn’t want to go to Nineveh. He really didn’t like the people because they were enemies of the people in Israel. So Jonah chose to disobey God. He got on a boat going to a city farther away from Nineveh. (Place Jonah on the boat, Figure 3, and move both figures away in the opposite direction the sign points.) **Jonah went the opposite way to the city of Tarshish! But God knew what Jonah was doing.**

Jonah had gone below the deck to the lower part of the boat to take a nap. God caused a big storm on the sea. The wind blew. (Make wind sounds.) **Big waves crashed into the boat. (Rock the boat with Jonah.) The sailors on the boat were afraid the big waves and wind would make the boat fall apart. The captain of the boat woke up Jonah and said, “How can you sleep? Get up and pray that we won’t die in this storm.”**

The captain and the sailors asked Jonah who he was and why they were caught in the storm. When the sailors learned who Jonah was and that he was trying to run away from God, they said, “How could you do a thing like that?” They must have known everyone should obey God.

Jonah said, “I know this storm is my fault.” He told the sailors, “Pick me up and throw me

into the sea. Then the storm will stop.” The men didn’t want to throw Jonah overboard. They were sure he would die in the sea. But they had no choice. As soon as Jonah was thrown overboard the storm stopped! (Remove the boat, lay Jonah down.) And the sailors worshiped God.

Jonah didn’t die in the sea. God sent a big fish to save Jonah. (Add fish, Figure 4.) The fish opened his mouth and swallowed Jonah whole! (Place Jonah inside the mouth and close the mouth.)

From safe inside the big fish, Jonah prayed to God. He thanked God for saving him. Jonah promised God that he would obey.

After three days and nights, God made the fish cough up Jonah on the beach. (Bring Jonah out of the fish’s mouth and stand him up. Move the fish away.)

Again God said, “Go to Nineveh and tell the people to love and obey Me.”

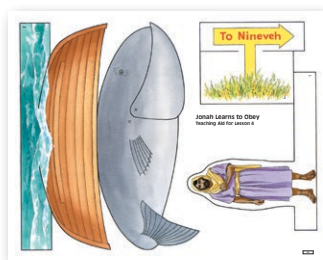
This time Jonah obeyed. He went straight to Nineveh. Jonah told the people everything God wanted them to hear. The people listened to Jonah and were sorry for not obeying God. They asked God to forgive them.

God saved Jonah. He loved Jonah even when he disobeyed. Jonah learned to obey God. We can learn to obey too. Obeying shows we love God.

BIBLE STORY REVIEW

- **What did Jonah learn?** (He learned to obey God.)
- **Why do you think obeying shows we love God?** (God wants us to do what is right, obeying pleases God, and so on.)

Distribute *Storytime* for Lesson 7 and have children turn to page 4.



“Jonah Learns to Obey” Teaching Aid 9



Storytime, Lesson 7, page 4

3 Bible Application 10 minutes

Objective: That your students will learn that they can show love to God by obeying Him.

MEMORY VERSE

Help students find the memory verse on page 4 of *Storytime*. Read the verse together.

Jonah loved the Lord and learned to obey Him. Our rhyme tells us we should love the Lord and obey Him. Let's say it together. Listen for this verse as we say our rhyme.

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart."

(Hug self.)

Hear His Word and hurry to obey.

(Touch ear; run in place.)

Ask the Lord to show you what is right.

(Fold hands.)

When He shows you, do not run away.

(Form open Bible with hands; run in place.)

Jonah's first choice was to disobey and run away. He learned that obeying God shows we love Him. Let's say our verse again: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart" Matthew 22:37.

Collect the *Storytime* papers and put them away until the end of class.

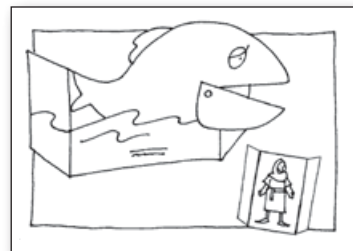
HANDCRAFT

In advance, remove Lesson 7 from each student's Make-It/Take-It and help them punch out the fish and the fish's jaw. Remove the add-on figure of Jonah from the middle of the book and help students fold on the fold lines so Jonah will stand. Describe what each piece is, and have your students color the fish.

Match the Xs on the fish and the jaw, and insert a paper fastener through both pieces to create a movable jaw. Help your students fold the "water" back on the broken lines so the fish will stand. Then show them how to open and close the fish's mouth and how to hide

Jonah behind the fish to review the story.

Each student will need their Make-It/Take-It project. As students look at their Make-It/Take-It projects, discuss the story. Have your students sit on the floor and pretend to be riding on a boat as they sing this song to the tune of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat."



Make-It/Take-It, Lesson 7

**Jonah tried to run
Far away from God.
But God knew which boat he took.
He couldn't hide from God.**

**Rock, rock went the boat.
Back and forth it swayed.
Jonah knew God sent the storm
'Cause Jonah didn't obey.**

**Jonah finally obeyed God. He learned that
obeying God was the best way to live. We show
our love to God by obeying Him.**



4 Life Response 10 minutes

Objective: That your students will learn that they are happiest when they obey God.

Read aloud to your students “Time for a Snack” from pages 2 and 3 of *Storytime* for Lesson 7. Depending on your class, your students may want to read with you. They can read the words represented by the art spots on the rebus or you may choose a first-grader to read the story. Or read the story summary below.

PRESENT-DAY STORY

Story Summary:

Jason was hungry. His dad left apples for a snack. But Jason did not want apples. He wanted cookies. So Jason stood on a tall stool to reach the cookies. As he grabbed the cookies, he knocked over a cup of milk and splashed milk all over the floor.

“Oops,” said Jason.

Just then Jovan came in and saw the mess. “Jason, what are you doing?” he asked.

Jason said, “I climbed up to get cookies and I spilled milk all over.”

“You know Dad left apples for a snack,” said Jovan. “Put the cookies back, and I will help you clean up.”

As they cleaned up the mess, Jason thanked Jovan. “Thanks for helping me clean up my mess. I should have obeyed Dad.”

“Dad wants us to obey him. When we obey Dad, we show our love for him,” Jovan answered.



Storytime, Lesson 7, pages 2-3

polite, do our best, pray, share our toys, give offerings, tell others about Jesus, etc.)

Before class, punch out the “Plan to Obey” booklets from Make-It/Take-It pages 3 and 4 and the add-on heart figure from the middle of the book.

Show the children where to fold the paper to make their books. Help them glue or tape the add-on figure to the first page of the booklet. Show the pages of a booklet as you read aloud the words on each page. Have the children find the “My Plan to Obey” page. Hand out pencils.

On this page, under the words “My Plan to Obey,” draw or write about what you will do this week to obey. You might show people or situations. Let the children have time to think, draw, and write to show their plans. They might make a picture of them coming when called, giving someone a toy, praying, feeding a pet, and so on.

What do you plan to do this week to obey?

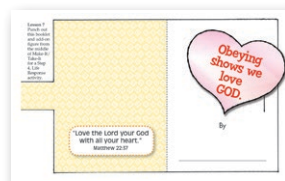
(Encourage the children to tell what they put on the books. Encourage the children to use their plans to show love for God by obeying.)

You have good plans to obey. Obeying shows we love God. Let's ask God to help us obey.

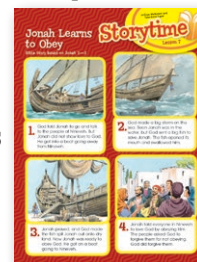
Lead your students in prayer. **Dear God, sometimes it's hard for us to obey just like Jonah who tried to hide from You. Please help us to obey You to show we love You. It is the best way to live. In Jesus' name. Amen.**

Be sure students have their Make-It/Take-It and *Storytime* papers.

Give each child a personal goodbye. **Tell your parents how Jonah learned to obey God. Obeying shows we love God.**



Make It/Take It, "Plan to Obey" booklet, page 3



Storytime, Lesson 7, page 1

CLOSING ACTIVITIES

Obeying shows we love God. Jonah learned to show love for God by obeying Him. We can show love for God by obeying.

■ **Who can you obey?** (Let the children talk. They could name family members, teachers, God, etc.)

■ **What can you do to obey?** (Possible responses: listen to parents, read the Bible, help others, be kind and