

lesson

8

# Obey God Even When It's Hard

## BIBLE BASIS

Jonah learns to obey God in preaching to the Ninevites (Jonah 1—3).

## BIBLE TRUTH

God helps His people obey Him.

## MEMORY VERSE:

I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart.  
Psalm 40:8

## LESSON AIM

That your students will determine to obey God even when they feel like doing the opposite.

1

### LIFE NEED (5–10 MINUTES)

**Do an activity and discuss how it's hard to obey God sometimes.**

- Materials: *My Bible Book* p. 32, pencils, whiteboard and marker

2

### BIBLE LEARNING (15–10 MINUTES)

**Bible Words:** Prepare for the Bible story by discussing *Nineveh*, *preach*, *Jonah*, and *ship*.

- Materials: *My Bible Book* p. 31, Bible Overview Chart Teaching Aid, Bibles

**Bible Story:** Hear what happened when Jonah disobeyed God.

- Materials: Bibles

**Bible Review:** Use a special story viewer to retell the story of Jonah.

- Materials: *Elementary Kid Crafts* for Lesson 8—prepare sample story viewer before class; glue stick or tape

**Memory Work:** Learn what knowing God's Word has to do with obeying God.

- Materials: Bibles

3

### BIBLE APPLICATION (5–10 MINUTES)

**Match pictures to show how children can obey God.**

- Materials: *My Bible Book* p. 34

4

### LIFE RESPONSE (5–10 MINUTES)

**Write or draw pictures of ways to obey God in difficult situations.**

- Materials: *My Bible Book* p. 33, plain paper, crayons, *Friends* for Lesson 8



This symbol means extra preparation or supplies are needed.



# Understanding the Bible

**Overview of This Quarter:** This quarter began with a unit on God's rules. Our present unit focuses on God's redemption of His people. We started with lessons about Jesus' death and the prodigal son. This week we turn our attention to Jonah. We will also hear about God's plans for His people before we begin the unit on building relationships God's way.

**This Week's Bible Story:** God gave Jonah a job to do, but Jonah tried to get out of it. Jonah learned the hard way that it is better to obey God than to try to run away.

Nineveh was a large and important city filled with sinful people. God told Jonah to go and tell the Ninevites that because of their wickedness, God would destroy them and their city in 40 days.

Jonah knew that God was "a gracious and compassionate God, . . . who relents from sending calamity" (Jonah 4:2). Jonah did not want God to spare these enemies.

So, Jonah headed west, in the opposite direction of

Nineveh. At the city of Joppa he got on a ship headed for Tarshish.

On the way to Tarshish a great storm arose. The sailors began praying to their gods, but it didn't help. So, they cast lots to find out who had upset the gods. When the lot fell to Jonah, he admitted his guilt. To save the ship, Jonah told the sailors to throw him overboard. The sea grew wilder, so the sailors threw Jonah overboard. Then the sea calmed.

God rescued him. God sent a great fish to swallow him. Jonah repented of his disobedience and called out to God.

God forgave Jonah and gave him another chance to obey. God had the fish deposit Jonah on the shore, and again He told Jonah to go to Nineveh. This time Jonah obeyed.

Although God's means may not be so obvious and dramatic in our lives, He is always willing to forgive our disobedience and to give us another chance too.

## Understanding Your Students

The typical child seems to be a "Jonah-in-training." Elementary age children are reluctant to obey and sometimes do the exact opposite of what is asked of them. By being patient and consistent, you can help your students see the value of obeying, even when they want to do something else. As your students learn to obey classroom rules, they will develop the kind of self-discipline that will help equip them for a life of obedience to God.

## Classroom Tips

Consider the following ideas as you make and enforce classroom rules.

- Children feel more secure if you explain what behavior is expected of them and what to expect when they misbehave.
- Try to have a few basic rules and to enforce them consistently. If there are too many rules, students will have trouble remembering them.
- To help students learn the class rules, you could print them on a large piece of poster board and hang it in the classroom.
- Reward students who are keeping the rules, instead of just punishing students who misbehave. A word of praise or a pretty sticker can encourage most children to be obedient.
- If a child breaks a class rule, try to respond quickly and calmly. Firm, polite treatment from you will help the child understand that it is the behavior you find unacceptable, not the child himself.

# Pre-session Activities

Use one or more of the following activities with students who arrive early.

- Have students mark their attendance.

**Materials:** Summer Attendance Chart:



"Attendance Chart" Teaching Aid

- Play a game to review the last seven lessons. If the leader says something true, the group does the action suggested. For example: If God says "You shall not steal," hop three times on one foot. Some actions should be fun (skipping, turning around, etc.) Others may be less fun (sitting

still, standing in a corner, etc.) Talk about how some directions are easier to obey than others.

- If students started the jar and sponge experiment last week, have them check their jars. Let them talk together about what happened. Encourage them to come up with the answer to the question: How do the salt crystals covering your sponge remind you of how Jesus' forgiveness covers your sin?

**Materials:** jars from last week's Pre-session Activity

- For Worship Time: Play one of the songs from the Diskit CD.

**Materials:** CD player, Diskit CD



## 1

# Life Need 5–10 minutes

**Objective:** That your students will discuss how it is sometimes hard to obey God.



**My Bible Book, page 32** do to obey God even though they don't really feel like it.

Have students match pictures to show what Joey, Tina, and Tim do when it's hard to obey God. Let volunteers tell what is happening in each scene. (Joey obeys his mother and tries to eat his food; Tina is kind and plays with her little sister; Tim helps his neighbor, even though he'd rather keep playing.)

- The children may have not felt like obeying. What was the outcome when they chose to obey?** (Joey's mother is happy. Tina and her sister play lovingly. Tim's neighbor is pleased and so is God.)

This activity will prepare your students for the Bible story about Jonah's disobedience and how he learned to obey.

Distribute *My Bible Book* and have students turn to page 32. Read the title, "**We may not want to obey God, but...**"

**Let's see what some kids**

**Let's think of all the people we should obey.**

**Let's make a list.** (List names as students give them to you: God, parents, teachers, sitter, doctor, etc.)

- What are some ways you can obey the people on this list?** Have students name some ways. (*Keeping the Ten Commandments, cleaning their room, obeying the rules at school, listening to the sitter, resting and taking medicine when sick.*)

- Name some things that can happen when you disobey the people on this list.** Have students name some things. (*Disappointment, unhappiness, sadness, punishment.*)

**Today we will learn about Jonah. He made an unwise decision to disobey God. Let's find out what happened.**



# 2

## Bible Learning 15–20 minutes

**Objective:** That your students will learn from Jonah's example that it is unwise to disobey God.



My Bible Book, page 31

### Let's look at some words from the Bible story.

Have your students turn to page 31 in *My Bible Book*. Point to the word *Nineveh* and have the class pronounce it with you. Read about the city; then let students name some towns that are far away from where they live.

Point to the picture of Jonah.

**This is the man you will meet in the story. To find out what God wanted him to do, let's read the first word in the middle section.**

Read about *preach*, then about *Jonah*.

■ **Who have you heard preach?** (*Your pastor, people on TV, special visitors to your church.*)

■ **What did they preach about?** (*How much God loves us, that God will forgive us because Jesus died for us, that we should obey what God says.*)

■ **How is our pastor's job like Jonah's job?** (*He preaches too.*)

Finally, read about the *ship*. Let students tell about any ships they have seen or been on.

**In today's Bible story Jonah went sailing on a ship. But he was going the wrong way!**

Have a volunteer find Jonah on the Bible Overview Chart. Talk about how last week's lesson was in the New Testament. Today's Bible story is in the Old Testament.



Bible Overview Chart Teaching Aid

Have students turn to Jonah 1 in their Bibles and bookmark it to use later in the lesson. Since Jonah is a small Old Testament book, be prepared to

help students find the Book of Jonah in a Bible. Show them the table of contents in the front of their Bibles to help them find where the book begins.

### BIBLE STORY

"Jonah, Jonah, I have something special for you to do." It was God who was speaking to the preacher, Jonah.

God said, "I want you to go to the great city of Nineveh and preach to the people there. Nineveh is so wicked that I am going to destroy it unless the people are sorry and stop doing wrong things."

Jonah said to himself, "I don't want to go to Nineveh. I don't want to tell all those people that God is going to destroy them. I'll run away where God can't find me."

So Jonah hurried down to the seacoast. There he saw a big ship ready to sail for a country that was far from Nineveh. In fact, the ship was going the other way.

Jonah paid his money and got on the ship. He found a place to lie down and fell sound asleep.

Jonah thought he was running away from God, but God knew where he was. So God sent a storm over the water. It was such a strong storm that the ship was in danger of breaking apart!

"Our ship is going to break up," cried the sailors. "We'll all drown. Who can help us?"

The captain went down inside the ship. He shook Jonah and said, "Wake up and pray!"

Jonah woke up and rubbed his eyes. Then he went up on deck with the others.

"Who are you?" the men asked.

Let's find out Jonah's reply and what happened next by reading in our Bibles. *Have the children read Jonah 1:9-12 aloud together.*

The men didn't want to throw Jonah overboard, but the storm would not let up. So at last they threw him into the water, and the storm stopped.

God sent a special fish to swallow Jonah. For three days and nights Jonah was inside the fish. While he was there, he prayed, "Dear God, please forgive me. I'll obey You and go to Nineveh and preach."

Then God had the big fish take Jonah to the dry shore. The fish spit Jonah onto the land without hurting him.

Jonah started out again, but this time he obeyed God and walked toward the city of Nineveh. As soon as Jonah reached the city, he began to preach.

"In 40 days your city will be destroyed," he said. "God will do this because of all the wrong things you have done."

The people of Nineveh began praying. They were sorry for the wrong things they had done. They promised to stop doing them. God saw how sorry the people were, so He did not destroy Nineveh. Jonah learned to obey God, even though he didn't want to at first.

## BIBLE REVIEW

**Today we have a craft project that will help you tell this exciting story to your family and friends.**

Distribute Lesson 8, "Story Viewer" from *Elementary Kid Crafts*. Have students punch out the picture strip and the viewer. To assemble the viewer, punch out the die-cut holes and fold back on the broken lines. Glue or tape the tab to the back of Picture 2. Slide Strip 1 behind Picture 1.

As students slide Strip 1 through the viewer, ask,

■ **Why did Jonah wind up inside a fish?** *(He didn't want to obey God's command to go to Nineveh and preach, he got on a ship going the other way.)*

■ **What did God do to help Jonah obey?** *(God sent a storm, the sailors found out the storm was Jonah's fault and they threw him overboard, God sent a big fish.)*

Turn the viewer over and slide Strip 2 through it.

■ **What good things happened because Jonah chose to obey?** *(God forgave Jonah and had the fish spit him up on the land; Jonah went to Nineveh to preach; the people repented of their sins, and God forgave them.)*

Read the poem on the viewer.

■ **What did Jonah learn about obeying God?** *(He could obey even when he didn't feel like doing so.)*

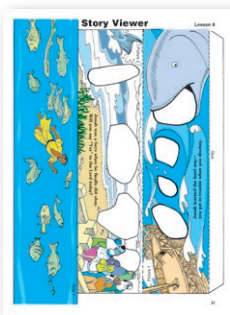
Divide the class into groups of two. After the groups spread out around the room, have the students take turns using their viewers to retell the Bible story to each other.

## MEMORY WORK

Have your students turn to Psalm 40:8 in their Bibles. Let a volunteer read the memory verse. Explain that "your law" refers to God's Word, the Bible.

**We can know what God wants us to do because the Bible tells us. To have God's law in our heart means that we know what the Bible teaches.**

Have students sit in a circle and do "the wave." Divide the circle into three sections; assign each section a third of the verse. Each group in turn stands, says its section, and then sits. The idea is to form a circular wave of motion as the children stand and sit while repeating the verse.



*Elementary Kid Crafts,*  
Lesson 8



# 3

## Bible Application 5-10 minutes

**Objective:** That your students will learn ways to know what God wants and desire to obey Him, even when it's hard.



My Bible Book, page 34

■ **Could you obey me if I didn't tell you what I wanted you to do?** (No.)

■ **Could we obey God if we didn't know what He wanted us to do?** (No.)

**This week's memory verse teaches us how we can know what God wants us to do.**

**People who love God want**

**to keep learning what the Bible teaches so they can obey God better. When we obey God, we are showing that His law is in our heart.**

Divide the class into four groups. Assign one of the pictures on page 34 in *My Bible Book* to each group. Have each group decide if the child in the picture is obeying God. If the child is obeying God, students should draw a heart by that child. Encourage students

to tell what Bible teaching the child is or is not obeying. (Possible answers: A. Love your neighbor; B. Be kind; C. Ask God for help, pray; D. Tell others about Jesus.)

Give each group time to make up a story about their picture, telling what the characters might do to obey God, even though it's hard.

Gather the class back together. Have each group tell what is happening in their picture, if the child is obeying God, and the story about what will happen next.

■ **How can knowing God's Word help you obey God?**



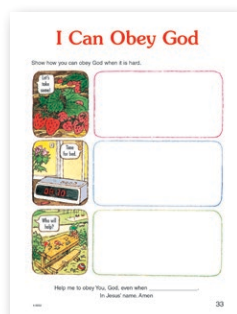


# 4

## Life Response 5-10 minutes

**Objective:** That your students will determine to obey God, even when it is hard to do so.

**We all have times when it's hard to obey God, just like Joey, Tina, and Tim. But God will help us if we ask Him.**



*My Bible Book, page 33*

Have students look at page 33 in *My Bible Book*. One picture at a time, discuss the three situations where it might be hard to obey God. Let students suggest ways they could obey God in these situations.

As time allows, students could write sentences or draw pictures of themselves obeying God in each situation. (First picture: Students might draw themselves asking a neighbor if they could have a strawberry. Second picture: They might draw themselves taking a book to read before bed. Third picture: They could draw themselves helping to clean up the picnic mess.)

Let each student complete the prayer at the bottom of page 33 in *My Bible Book*. You may distribute paper for students who wish to write out a longer prayer; others may prefer to draw a picture of a time when it is especially hard for them to obey God.

### CLOSING ACTIVITY

Close by singing "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus" and then having a short prayer time. Students may show or read the prayers they completed on page 33 of *My Bible Book*. You might also choose to use the memory verse as a prayer.

As your students leave, see that they have *My Bible Book*, pages 31-34 and the *Elementary Kid Crafts* "Story Viewer," as well as any pictures they have drawn or prayers they have written.

