

## JONAH – RUNNING AWAY (KS 1 or 2)

Using props retell the story sequencing all the emotions Jonah must have felt.

*The story of Jonah focuses on forgiveness and how God gave Jonah a second chance even though Jonah had deliberately disobeyed him. It also covers a wide range of emotions: from fear to relief, uncertainty to anger.*

*You'll need the following placed in a box with a lid:*

- Blue cloth
- Figure to represent Jonah
- Two representations for Nineveh and Joppa (e.g., bits of wood, lego bricks, label made of card, houses)
  - Boat (e.g., corn-on-cob dishes)
  - Big fish (a piece of cloth is adequate)

The book of Jonah is found in the Old Testament. Research the end of the story using Bible text. Jonah later went to Nineveh and in response to his message, the inhabitants changed their lifestyles. Jonah's human response to that was pure anger!

*Join the children in a circle on the floor and place the box in front of you. Open the lid and take out the blue cloth. This is your stage. In silence, spread the cloth out in front of you keeping your eyes on the cloth if possible. Now place the 'cities' of Spain and Nineveh on opposite edges of it – to your right and your left. Then put 'Joppa' directly in front of you with boats to represent the seaport. Take Jonah out of the box and move him as you tell the story.*

One day, the Lord told Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh and say, "The Lord has seen your terrible sins. You are doomed!"

Jonah was not sure if he liked the sound of that, but he

## Concept – Being given a second chance/forgiveness

went down to Joppa anyway. Joppa was a sea port where there were lots of boats. There he found a boat that was going to Spain, which is nowhere near Nineveh – exactly what Jonah wanted. So he bought a ticket and got on the boat that was going to Spain.

He thought he was safe. He thought he had escaped from what he had been asked to do. But he wasn't, for the Lord blew a bad storm over the deep waters. It was so bad the ship began to break. The sailors threw some of the cargo overboard to make the ship lighter and all this time, while the storm was raging, Jonah was down below deck, sleeping. Did he dream while he was sleeping? We don't know, but before long the ship's captain found him and shook him and said, "How can you sleep at a time like this? Get up and pray to your God!" That was the last thing Jonah wanted to do!

The storm drove hard across the pitching waves tossing the boat and plunging it in to the swell below. On and on it roared through the dark night. *(If appropriate, ask the children to make hissing, roaring, patting knees noises to recreate the storm.)*

Jonah knew the storm was sent by God. In the end he said to the sailors, "Throw me in to the sea for I am the cause of this terrible storm."

*(Continued)*

Explore modern day examples of people who have changed their lifestyles, finding out why they changed and other people's reactions to their new characters.

Hot-seat Jonah/big fish/sailors.

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continued

Write a dialogue between Jonah and God while Jonah was inside the big fish (remind the children about being respectful about what God might say before embarking on this activity).

The sailors did not want to throw him overboard, and at first they ignored him. But the storm carried on relentlessly, all day and all night, until the sailors picked him up and dropped him over the side of the heaving ship. As Jonah hit the water, there was calm and the waves stopped their roar. Jonah was bobbing about in the sea with the boat disappearing from view.

*Take out the piece of cloth to represent the big fish, rest it on top of your hand and move it across the 'sea' to cover Jonah. Then withdraw your hand leaving the big fish in the sea.*

Now God was with Jonah, even though he had done the opposite of what he was meant to do. For God sent along a great big fish to swallow Jonah and Jonah ended up inside the fish's tummy. But he didn't die. For three long days and three long nights Jonah simply stayed in the fish's tummy. It must have been very smelly and very wet and very scary.

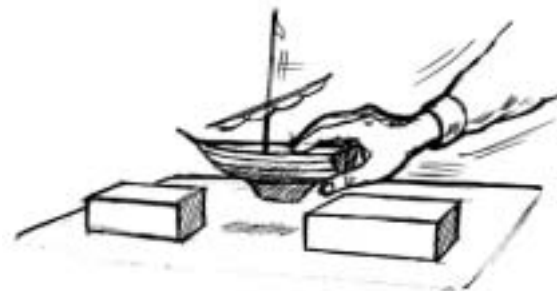
During that time, Jonah had plenty of time to think. And as he thought he knew that by running away he had done something he should not have done. And there, deep inside the fish he said 'sorry' to God. He really meant it. He really did wish he had done the right thing and gone to Nineveh, like he had been asked to. And God heard him, and forgave him, and before long the fish was sick – and

out came Jonah, wet and tired but still alive. He had been given a second chance. He had been forgiven.

*Pause for silent reflection then ask questions that begin with 'I wonder'. Encourage children to give reasons for their answers.*

*For example:*

- *I wonder what God thought about Jonah*
- *I wonder what the sailors/captain of the ship/Jonah himself thought at various points in the story*
- *I wonder why Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh*
- *I wonder if you have ever not wanted to go somewhere*
- *I wonder what it was like inside the fish*
- *I wonder what Jonah thought while he was there*
- *I wonder why God looked after Jonah*
- *I wonder what Jonah did first after he came out of the big fish*
- *I wonder if you've ever run away from anything*



Consider how important the concepts of 'obedience' and 'forgiveness' are in today's society. What makes people do what someone else tells them? Is it always the best thing to do? Is there anything that can never be forgiven? Do religious ideas about forgiveness differ from pupils'