



## LESSON 2 FOR LEADERS

### INVITATION

*We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...*

### LESSON AT A GLANCE

**WONDER TRUTH:** God Has Good News for the Whole World

**SCRIPTURE:** [Jonah 1–4](#); [Matthew 12](#)

**WORD OF WONDER:** [From Titus 3:5](#)

Have you ever driven through a torrential downpour? With your windshield wipers going at full blast, you slowly navigate the blinding rain. Maybe you’ve had to pull over until the storm passed. It can be difficult to navigate when you can’t see what lies ahead.

But guess what? The storm eventually passed. There were clear skies and possibly a rainbow awaiting you on the other side. It’s amazing how what was once dark becomes light-filled.

The beauty of dark skies is knowing that the sun will shine again. After three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, Jonah saw the sun and returned to the one place he had run from, the place where people most needed to hear God’s good news. (Read his story in [Jonah 1–4](#).) Similarly, the sun shone brightly when Jesus emerged from the tomb after three long days and three dark nights. (Read [Matthew 12:38–41](#).)

Jesus’ resurrection was good news to the whole world. He didn’t stay in that dark tomb. He brought light and a renewed sense of hope.

- When has God met you in a dark place?
- How has your life changed because of the good news of Jesus?
- What has been the result of your obedience to God?

Take heart, friend. You will come out on the other side. The sun will shine again.

—**Kathie Phillips**

Senior Director of Next Gen Ministry

Contributor to Wonder Ink

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS**

**WHO?**

Jonah was a reluctant messenger of God, but his reluctance was different than other prophets who feared rejection. Jonah feared acceptance! He ran because he wanted God to judge Nineveh harshly. He knew God to be forgiving and gracious beyond measure ([Jonah 4:2](#)).

**WHAT?**

God asked Jonah to prophesy to the people of Nineveh and to warn of God's coming judgment. Although the Ninevites were ruthless and cruel, God was concerned for the people and their animals ([Jonah 4:11](#)). When the people repented, God forgave them.

**WHERE?**

Nineveh was a very important city in the ancient Assyrian empire. The Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC, sending 10 tribes into a permanent exile. God told Jonah to go to Nineveh, but Jonah fled in the opposite direction, toward Tarshish.

**WHEN?**

[Second Kings 14:25](#) mentions Jonah as a prophet during the reign of Jeroboam II, in the eighth century BC. The book could date later, for memories of Jonah would be preserved by a school of prophets (called "company of the prophets" in [2 Kings 2:3 \(NIV\)](#)).

**CONNECTING TO GOD'S BIG STORY**

Jonah was reluctant to communicate God's mercy to his enemies. Jesus is a different kind of messenger. He was willing to give His own life for people who remained sinners ([Romans 5:8](#))! Jesus shows God's overflowing and abundant mercy.

9:00 Service



## Curiosity

### LESSON 2 **EARLY CHILDHOOD**

*Spark curiosity, encourage exploration, and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.*

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## Play Stations

Welcome to church! While we're getting ready to start, you can pretend that you are fishing. Do you have any ideas what we'll be learning about today?

### **Play Station: Go Fishing**

**Play:** Invite kids to pretend to fish using the rod with a magnet. Kids can "catch" as many fish as possible,



9:00 Service

## Belief

### LESSON 2 EARLY CHILDHOOD

*Guide kids into knowing God more deeply, exploring His big story, and marveling at His wonder.*

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#### Prayer of Invitation

Before entering into God's big story, lead kids in a prayer of invitation. Use the prayer here or your own words:  
**God, thank You for the good news that Jesus saves us. Help us hear Your voice as we listen to Your big story and see how sharing Your good news can change people's lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

#### God's Big Story

Pull out the Bible.

Ask: What is this called? *The Bible*

Ask: Why is the Bible important? *Because it is God's word. Everything in it is true. It really happened.*

#### TELL THE BIBLE STORY

Read from the Big Picture Bible p 108

Jonah, Prophet to Ninevah

## Word of Wonder

### WORD OF WONDER

**He saved us. It wasn't because of the good things we had done. It was because of his mercy. He saved us by washing away our sins.**

— Titus 3:5 NiRV

Encourage the kids to do the motions and say the verse with you.

Gather kids to discuss these questions:

- **Why did Jesus come to earth?**
- **Our verse says that Jesus gives us new life. What do you think a new life means?**



## Faith

### LESSON 2 EARLY CHILDHOOD

*Help kids see the wonder of God's story and how it connects to their own story.*

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#### Active Game: Swallowed by a Fish

**SUPPLIES:** bucket, beanbags, masking tape (optional)

Place a bucket on the floor a few feet in front of the group. Have the kids line up behind you before explaining the game.

**In today's story, Jonah boarded a ship, trying to run away from what God wanted him to do. God had other plans. When Jonah was tossed into the sea, what did God send to swallow him? Allow the kids to answer. Yes, a fish! Let's play a game. I will give you this beanbag that is going to be "Jonah" (hold up beanbag) and you'll try to throw it into the "fish" (point to the bucket). Each time you throw, we'll make it more challenging.**

Give each kid an opportunity to toss the beanbag into the bucket. To make it more challenging, place tape on the floor at various places in front of the bucket and have kids toss the beanbag from spots you designate. Kids who are really struggling to get the beanbag in the bucket can take a step closer.



9:00 Service

## Identity

### LESSON 2 **EARLY CHILDHOOD**

*Create space for God to remind kids they are known, loved, led, and their lives can tell of God's wonder.*

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#### Prayer and Blessing

After the kids finish their activity, pray with them, thanking God for loving us enough to share good news that Jesus came to save us and give us hope!

**God, thank You for the great plans You had for Jonah and the plans You have for us! Thank You for sending Jesus to be our Savior. We praise You for the good news of Jesus. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

#### Closing Activity: Fish Bait

**In God's big story, Jonah was thrown into the sea, and a fish came along and swallowed him. We're going to play a game where I am the big fish, and you are Jonah. You will try to "swim" away from me (which really means you'll run, since we're on dry land!). If you get caught, you can sit down until the next round and pretend to be like Jonah when he was in the belly of the fish.**

Have the kids stand on one side of the room, preferably a large playing area. Tell them to "swim" across to the other side without getting caught (and eaten!) by the big fish. Any kids who get caught will sit down until that round is finished. Then invite them to stand up and play when the next round starts.