

# The story of Jonah

## The book of Jonah

God told the prophet Jonah, “Go to Nineveh and tell the people that they are doing wrong.” But instead, Jonah boarded a boat sailing to Tarshish, went below, and fell asleep.

Then a big storm came up. The captain said to Jonah, “Get up! Pray. Maybe your god will save us!”

The storm did not stop. The sailors were terrified. Jonah said, “Throw me into the sea. This storm is because of me.” The sailors did not want to, but finally, they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea. The storm stopped.

God sent a large fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah was in its belly for three days and nights. There he prayed to God. “Thank you, God, for hearing me! I will keep my promise to you.” Then God told the fish to spit Jonah onto land.

God told Jonah again, “Go to Nineveh.” This time Jonah went. He walked across Nineveh, crying out God’s message, “Forty more days, and Nineveh will be destroyed!”

When the king of Nineveh heard the news, he put on sackcloth. He sat in ashes and proclaimed, “No one shall eat or drink anything. Everyone must wear sackcloth and cry out to God. We must turn away from evil and violence. May God forgive us.”

God saw this and did not destroy the city. This made Jonah angry. He said, “God, I knew this would happen. That’s why I did not want to come here. I know that you are gracious, loving, and forgiving! I cannot bear it.”

Jonah went out of the city. He sat there, waiting to see what would happen next. God made a bush grow up to give Jonah shade. Jonah was happy about the bush. But the next day, a worm attacked the bush and it died. The sun beat down. Jonah said, “I cannot bear this!”

God asked, “Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?” Jonah said, “Yes, angry enough to die.”

God said, “You care about the bush. Do you really think that I should not care about Nineveh? That city has many, many people who do not understand right and wrong, and also many animals.”

**Wonder:** Why did Jonah not want God to forgive the people of Nineveh?

## Connect

Jonah went in the opposite direction that God told him to. When have you done exactly the opposite of what you were supposed to do?



## Explore

Nineveh was a royal city in the Assyrian empire. God showed Jonah that God’s love is so broad that it even encompasses Jonah’s worst enemy. Who are the people that you can think of who are inside God’s big circle of love?



# Jesus calls disciples

Mark 1:16–45

One day while Jesus was walking along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Simon's brother Andrew fishing. Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." Right away, Simon and Andrew stopped fishing and followed Jesus.

Farther on, Jesus saw James and his brother John. They were in their boat fixing fishing nets. Jesus called them, and they left their boat, and followed him.

Jesus went to the synagogue in Capernaum and taught. People were amazed. They could tell that Jesus spoke with God's love and power. When a man who was ill began to shout at him, Jesus healed the man.

Then Jesus went to Simon's house, where Simon's mother-in-law was very sick. Jesus took her hand and lifted her up, and she was better right away. That evening the whole city crowded around the door. Jesus healed many people that night.

In the morning, while it was still very dark, Jesus got up and went to a deserted place to pray. Simon and the other friends came looking for him. When they found Jesus, they told him, "Everyone is searching for you."

Jesus answered, "Let's go to other towns so that I can share my message there too. This is what I came to do." So Jesus continued to travel with his friends, teaching and healing people.

One man with leprosy came to him and said, "I know that you can heal me if you choose." Jesus stretched out his hand and touched the man, saying, "I do choose. Be healed!" And immediately the leprosy left the man. Then Jesus sent him away, saying, "Say nothing to anyone; just go to the temple and show the priests that you are cured."

But the man was too happy and excited to keep quiet. He told everyone he met about what Jesus had done for him. Soon Jesus couldn't go into towns anymore, because when he did, many people crowded around him. So Jesus stayed out in the country, and people came from all over to hear his teaching and to be healed.

**Wonder:** I wonder what made those fishermen leave their jobs and follow Jesus.

## Connect

Imagine that Jesus healed you. Who would be the first person you would tell?



## Explore

It was hard work dragging in fish and repairing nets, but many people didn't think these workers were very special. The Sea of Galilee boat (left) also known as the Jesus boat was an ancient fishing boat from this time period.

