

Lessons From a Worm

Jonah 4; *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 272-278

What's wrong?" Mom asked, looking at Caitlin's face as she and her brother Jeremy climbed into the car.

"I got a horrible grade on my spelling test again!" Caitlin sighed. "And you said you were going to punish me if I got another bad grade in spelling."

Jeremy grinned to himself. He remembered when Mom had grounded him for not studying his spelling.

"I'm sorry, Caitlin!" Mom said sympathetically. "I'll help you study your words after supper."

Jeremy began to feel hot and angry. Why wasn't Mom going to punish Caitlin like she'd said she would?

Jonah was feeling much like Jeremy. Let's look in on him:

Jonah's face grew red. He gritted his teeth. God had changed His mind! God was not going to destroy the city of Nineveh after all! Jonah clenched his fists. He was so mad he wanted to punch someone!

"I knew You would act like this!" Jonah fussed at God. "That's why I tried to run away to Tarshish! You are a loving and merciful God. You are patient and kind. I knew You would change Your mind and not destroy these terrible people! Just go ahead and kill me!"

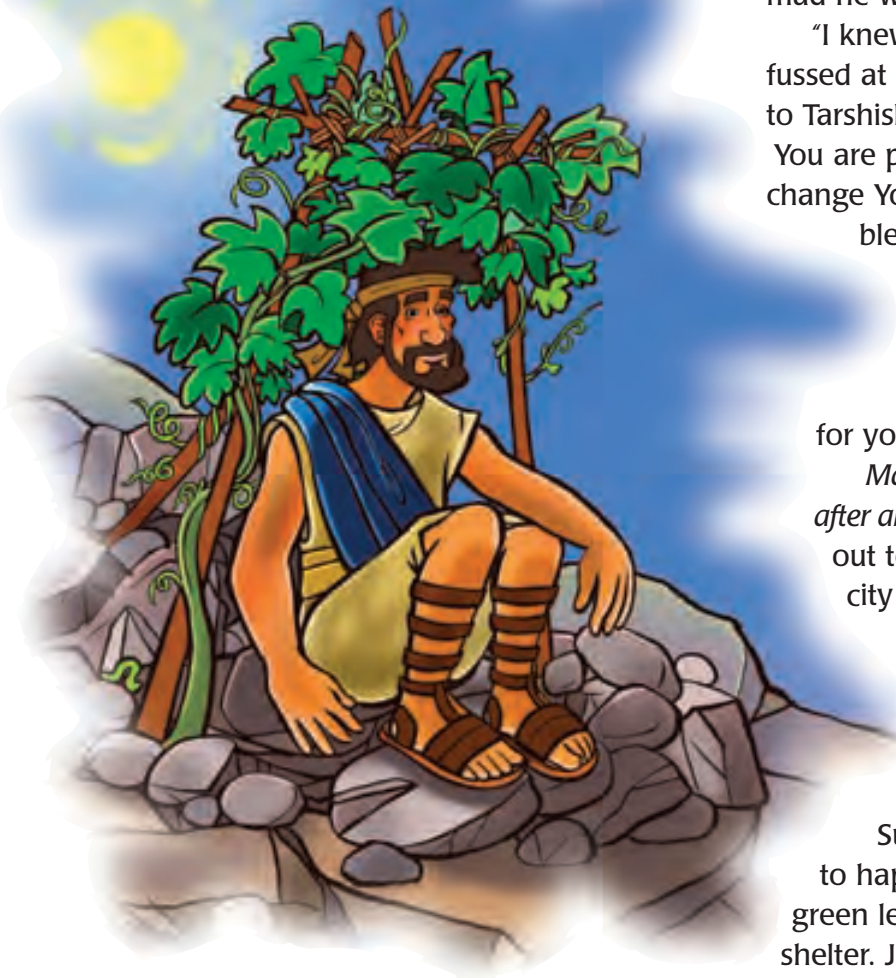
Jonah shouted. "It would be better if I died since nothing I predicted is going to happen!"

The Lord answered Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry like this?"

Maybe something will happen to Nineveh after all, Jonah thought. He decided to walk out to where he could look down on the city and watch.

It was very hot up on the hillside. Jonah made a little shelter with tree branches to protect himself from the sun. Then he sat down and waited.

Suddenly a most unusual thing began to happen. God made a vine with big green leaves begin to grow beside Jonah's shelter. Jonah stared at the plant. He had



The Message

I am happy when others
join God's family.

Memory Verse

“How great is the love
the Father has lavished
on us, that we should be
called children of God!
And that is what we are!”

(1 John 3:1, NIV).

never seen anything like it! He had never seen anything grow so fast! Up and up it went. The stem grew longer and thicker. Big leaves appeared and uncurled one after another.

The vine climbed all over Jonah's little shelter. It made a wonderfully shady place to sit. Jonah smiled to himself. It was nice not to be baking in the sun! He was very pleased with the plant.

Jonah spent the whole night in his little shelter. Early the next morning, God prepared a worm that ate right through the stem of Jonah's plant! Of course, the plant died, and it shriveled up. It could no longer protect Jonah from the sun's rays. The day got hotter and hotter, and God sent a scorching wind to blow on Jonah. The wind blew and blew, and the sun beat down. Jonah was miserable and angry. “It would be better to die than endure this!” he exclaimed.

Then God spoke to Jonah. “Is it right for you to be angry because the plant died?”

“Yes!” Jonah shouted.

“You feel sorry about the vine, but you did nothing to make it grow. And a plant doesn't live very long anyway,” God said. “Nineveh has 120,000 people living there, plus all the animals. I made them all, and I love them. Don't I have more reason to feel sorry for them than you do to feel sorry for the vine that died?”

Jonah was confused. He didn't understand why God spared the people of Nineveh. (See *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 272, 273.) But he knew about God's love and mercy. Years later, Jesus spoke of the good work Jonah had done. (See Matthew 12:40, 41.)

This story shows us how loving and patient our God is. He wants us to follow His example—to be loving, kind, and patient to the people around us. He wants us to be happy when others join His family.



S A B B A T H

READ If possible, sit in the shade of a tree and read your lesson story with your family. Look for vines growing nearby. Will they make shade?

DO Read 1 John 3:1. Teach the memory verse to your family. Thank God that you are His child.

SING Sing together "We Are the Church, Everyone" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 143).

S U N D A Y

READ During family worship, read Jonah 4:1, 2 with your family. What does Jonah say about God?

DO Make a vine with yarn/paper/newspaper. Cut out leaf shapes and write each word of the memory verse on the leaves. (Place the text on a single leaf.) Attach the leaves to the vine with clothespins or paper clips in the order of the verse. Remove the leaves and save them.

M O N D A Y

READ Read Jonah 4:3-5 with your family. Talk about arguing with God. With people.

DO Start a diorama in a shoebox. Today, make cutouts of Jonah under his shelter looking down at Nineveh. Attach to the scene in the shoebox.

DO Practice your memory verse with the vine and leaves you made yesterday.

SING Sing "Smile, Smile, Smile" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 107). Thank God for plants and trees that give us shade.

T U E S D A Y

READ Read Jonah 4:6, 7 with your family. What good thing happened? Did it last? Why?

DO Add a plant (real or artificial) next to Jonah's shelter in your diorama. Put a fake worm beside it.

DO Find an unwanted plant, such as a weed. Cut it at the bottom today. Leave it where you cut it and check it tomorrow.

SHARE With your family, say your memory verse, using the vine and leaves.

W E D N E S D A Y

READ During worship, read Jonah 4:8, 9. Describe Jonah's feelings. What did God ask him?

SHARE What do you do when you are angry? Read and discuss Ephesians 4:26 with your family. What does it mean? Ask Jesus to remind you to think happy thoughts.

DO Check the plant that you cut at the bottom yesterday. How does it look?

DO Say your memory verse together. Then sing "I Have the Joy" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 109).

In Jonah 4:2, Jonah quotes God's own words about Himself back to God!



THURSDAY

READ Read Jonah 4:10, 11 with your family. How do you think Jonah answered God's questions? Do you care about people who don't know God? How can you show them God's love? Ask God to help you.

DO With your family, write or draw pictures to show or tell what you will do when others join God's family. Put the papers in a bag. Take turns picking up one, and telling about it.

DO Say your memory verse together.

FRIDAY

DO For worship, make a shelter. Invite your family to pretend to be Jonah and sit under the shelter as you tell the story. Put a big weed or unwanted plant near the shelter. Cut the bottom of it at the appropriate time. (Be sure it is OK to do this.)

READ Read Ephesians 4:31, 32. What do you think it means?

DO Watch for a visitor in church tomorrow. How will you show happiness that he/she came?

SING Sing together "Jesus Bids Us Shine" (Sing for Joy, No. 133). Then thank Jesus for people who come to your church.

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PUZZLE

Directions: Finish the pictures of Jonah waiting for God.

