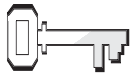


Lessons From a Worm



References

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



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).

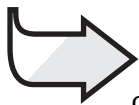


Objectives

The children will:
Know that God welcomes everyone into His family.

Feel compassion, love, and acceptance toward new members of God’s family.

Respond by accepting and valuing others who belong to God’s family.



The Message

I am happy when others join God’s family.

Monthly Theme

God teaches us how to treat others.

The Bible Lesson at a Glance

Jonah is a successful messenger twice—once to the sailors on the ship and then to the city of Nineveh. More than 120,000 people are saved as a result of the message from God that he delivers to the city of Nineveh. Unfortunately, Jonah does not enjoy that success; he “was displeased and angry” (Jonah 4:1, NIV). God uses a vine and a worm to teach Jonah about mercy, compassion, and celebration when others join God’s family.

This is a lesson about community.

The wicked people of Nineveh were potential members of the family of God. God valued these people so much that He sent Jonah with a caring message of warning. When they turned from their wickedness, God happily reversed His verdict of destruction and welcomed them into His family, in contrast with Jonah’s utter disdain for the converted Ninevites. God’s family is open to anyone who will come to Him. Let the door remain open. Let there be celebration when someone comes in that door!

Teacher Enrichment

“When Jonah learned of God’s purpose to spare the city that, notwithstanding its wickedness, had been led to repent in sackcloth and ashes, he should have been the first to rejoice because of God’s amazing grace; but instead he allowed his mind to dwell upon the possibility of his being regarded as a false prophet. Jealous of his reputation, he lost sight of the infinitely greater value of the souls in that wretched city” (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 271).

Room Decorations

See Lesson 10.

Program Overview

Lesson Section	Minutes	Activities	Materials Needed
Welcome	ongoing	Greet students at door; hear pleased/troubled	none
1 Readiness Options	up to 10	A. <i>Leaf Rubbings</i> B. <i>Glad You're Here!</i>	tracing paper, brown or green paper, fresh leaves, scissors, colored pencils or crayons none
Any Time Prayer and Praise*	up to 10	Fellowship Songbook Mission Offering Prayer	<i>Sing for Joy</i> <i>Children's Mission</i> offering device used last week, Bible none
2 Bible Lesson	up to 20	Experiencing the Story Memory Verse Bible Study	stacked boxes to represent Nineveh (used in Lesson 12), table of snacks and juice within the "city of Nineveh" (optional), paper vine display and leaves from Readiness A or make some, picture of worm, adult male helper, bright light, electric fan, Bible-times costumes, paper clips, Bible four cardboard or paper sheets on which are written memory verse sections Bibles
3 Applying the Lesson	up to 15	<i>Friendship Circle</i>	none
4 Sharing the Lesson	up to 15	<i>Glad Cards</i>	paper for making cards, pencils, pens, markers, etc., stickers or pictures, other items for decorating cards

*Prayer and Praise may be used at any time during the program.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Welcome

Welcome students at the door. Ask how their week has been—what they are pleased/troubled about. Encourage them to share any experiences from last week's lesson study. Have them begin the readiness activity of your choice.

1

Readiness Activities

Select the activity most appropriate for your situation.

You Need:

- tracing paper
- brown or green paper
- fresh tree or plant leaves
- scissors
- colored pencils or crayons

A. Leaf Rubbings

Use green or brown twisted paper to create a vine. (This may be used during "Experiencing the Story.") Have the children place fresh leaves on a table and put tracing paper or colored paper over the leaves. Have them rub the colored pencils or crayons over the paper to get leaf rubbings. Have the children cut out the leaf rubbings. Save them for "Experiencing the Story." Alternative: Have children draw and cut out leaf shapes on green paper.

Debriefing

Collect the leaves or have them set aside for now. Say: **What is your favorite kind of plant?** (Accept answers.) **There is a plant in our lesson story for today. We have just prepared some leaves that will be part of a paper plant that will help with telling the story. The plant will teach us about today's message, which is:**



I AM HAPPY WHEN OTHERS JOIN GOD'S FAMILY.

Say that with me.

B. Glad You're Here!

Have the children turn to someone and call them by name, shake hands, and give the greeting: "I'm glad that you are here!" Tell them to do this to at least five people. Encourage them to greet someone they don't know.

Debriefing

Say: **Why did I ask you to greet others?** (You want us to be friendly.) **How did you feel when you were greeting others? How did you feel when your classmates welcomed you?** (good) **If a visitor comes to Sabbath School, what will you do?** (Be happy; welcome him/her.) **Our lesson today is about others who join God's family. Today's message says:**



I AM HAPPY WHEN OTHERS JOIN GOD'S FAMILY.

Say that with me.

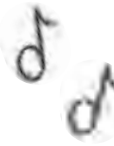
Prayer and Praise

Any
Time



Fellowship

Report the students' joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). Review the memory verse and allow time for sharing experiences from last week's lesson study. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special warm greeting to all visitors.



Suggested Songs

- "The Family of God" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 139)
- "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 140)
- "We Are the Church" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 141)
- "What Joy It Is to Worship Here" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 142)
- "We Are the Church, Everyone" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 143)



Mission

Share a story from *Children's Mission*. Ask: **Did anyone join God's family in the story?** (yes; no) **How does that make you feel?**



Offering

Make a smile around the mouth on the offering device to represent being happy when others join God's family. Have the children put their offering in the smiling mouth of the device. Say: **Our offerings will be used to invite others to join God's family. Let's give offerings to God happily.** Read 2 Corinthians 9:7.

You Need:

- offering device from last week
- Bible



Prayer

Invite each child to pray out loud, thanking God for specific people who came to church today. For example: "Thank You, Jesus, that my Grandma came to church today"; "Thank You that my cousin came," etc. Close with a general prayer that God will help us to be happy when others worship with God's family.

Bible Lesson

Experiencing the Story

You Need:

- stacked boxes or “city of Nineveh” from Lesson 12
- snacks and juice (optional)
- paper vine and leaves from Readiness A or provide some
- picture of worm
- adult male (Jonah)
- bright light
- electric fan
- Bible-times costumes
- paper clips
- Bible

Setting the Scene

Place up front the “city of Nineveh” stacked boxes from Lesson 12. Put a small table holding juice and snacks (if appropriate) within the “city of Nineveh.”

Place the paper vine where all can see. Distribute paper clips and leaves. Tell the children they will use them during the story. Have “Jonah” sit near the vine. As the story progresses and the vine begins to “wither,” have a hidden helper remove leaves from the vine and drop them to the floor. Turn on a bright light and a fan to simulate the hot sun and wind that hit Jonah.

Read or tell the story.

The people of Nineveh were so happy when they realized that God had seen how sorry they were for their sins. After repenting of their sins, they praised God for His love and forgiveness.

(Children move toward the city where they in unison will proclaim the message: [“God is good. He loves us and forgives us. Praise God!”] Invite the children to eat and drink at the table of snacks and juice within the city—if appropriate in your situation—signifying the end of their fast and their rebellion.)

Jonah’s face grew red. He gritted his teeth. *(Jonah stands next to the children who are celebrating God’s mercy. He looks angry and grits his teeth.)* God had changed His mind! God was not going to destroy the city of Nineveh after all! Jonah clenched his fists. *(Jonah clenches his fists.)* He was so angry he wanted to punch someone! *(Jonah makes punching motions.)*

“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?” He asked.

Maybe something will happen to Nineveh after all, Jonah thought. He decided to hike out to where he could look down on the city and watch. *(Jonah walks a short distance from the “city of Nineveh” and faces it.)*

It was very hot on that hillside. Jonah made a little shelter with tree branches to protect himself from the sun. Then he sat down and waited. *(Jonah sits down on the floor among some chairs.)*

Suddenly a most unusual thing began to happen. God made a vine with lots of big green leaves begin to grow beside Jonah’s shelter. *(Place vine display on chairs near Jonah.)* Jonah stared at the plant. He had 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. *(Children come up and attach their leaves to the vine.)*

The vine climbed all over Jonah’s little shelter. It made it a wonderfully shady place to sit. Jonah smiled to himself. It was nice not to be baking in the sun! Jonah was very pleased with the plant. *(Jonah smiles.)* He 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! *(Show picture of a worm.)* Of course, the plant died, and it shriveled up. *(Hidden helper gradually removes the leaves from the vine and drops them to the floor.)* It

could no longer protect Jonah from the sun's rays. Then as the sun rose in the sky and the day got hotter and hotter, God sent a scorching wind to blow on Jonah. (*Turn on the fan and aim it at Jonah.*) The wind blew and blew, and the sun beat down. (*Shine a bright light on Jonah.*) Jonah was miserable and angry. "It would be better to die than endure this!" he exclaimed. (*Jonah frowns.*)

Then God spoke to Jonah. "Is it right for you to be angry like this because the plant died?"

"Yes!" Jonah shouted.

"You feel sorry about the vine, but you did nothing to make it grow there. 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 had delivered God's message. Years later, Jesus spoke of the good work Jonah had done in Nineveh. (See Matthew 12:40, 41.)

Our God is a loving and long-suffering God. He wants us to be loving, kind, and patient to the people around us too. He wants us to be happy when others join His family.

Debriefing

Ask: **How would you have felt if some wicked people listened to your preaching and came to God?** (Don't know; would be happy; might not want them in my church, etc.) **Why should we treat everyone we meet as if they are valuable?** (God made them, loves them, and Jesus died to save them.) Read aloud 1 John 3:1. Ask: **Who are the children of God?** (people who love Him, other Christians) **How big is God's family? Is it big enough for everyone who wants to**

join? How can someone become a child of God? What did you learn from our story about welcoming "outsiders" into God's family? (We should be happy when people choose to follow God.)

That is what our message is about.

Let's say it together:



I AM HAPPY WHEN OTHERS JOIN GOD'S FAMILY.

Memory Verse

Divide the memory verse into four parts. Write each part on a different piece of poster board or paper as follows:

1. How great is the love the Father has lavished on us,
2. that we should be called children of God!
3. And that is what we are!
4. 1 John 3:1.

Form four groups. Give each group one of the cards. Allow time to learn their phrase. Change cards three more times so each group learns all four phrases. Collect the cards. Have all four groups form one big circle and say the whole verse together. Repeat until all know the verse.

You Need:

- poster board or paper

Bible Study

Say: **God wants us to welcome others who join His family. Let's read in our Bibles about welcoming others.**

Write the following texts for all to see. Ask for volunteers to read each text and tell (or call on someone else to tell) who welcomed whom.

Genesis 18:1-5	Abraham welcomes three strangers.
Exodus 12:37, 38	Others were allowed to join the Israelites when they left Egypt.
Joshua 6:25	Rahab and her family are saved from Jericho and live with the Israelites.

You Need:

- Bibles

Jonah 4:10, 11 God lovingly accepts the repentant people of Nineveh.

Luke 7:36-39, 48 Jesus welcomes a sinful woman.

John 4:9, 10 Jesus accepts the Samaritan woman at the well.

Acts 9:26-28 Barnabas welcomes Paul into the group of believers.

one treats you the way people were treated in the Bible stories we just read? (loved, included, welcomed, appreciated, etc.) **What did you learn from these Bible texts?** (Everyone is welcome in God's family.) Review the memory verse. Say: **Who are the children of God? How can you make "outsiders" feel like "insiders" in our church? Can you say today's message with all your heart? Let's say it together:**

Debriefing

Ask: **How do you feel when some-**



I AM HAPPY WHEN OTHERS JOIN GOD'S FAMILY.

3

Applying the Lesson

Friendship Circle

In the Sabbath School room have one child (child #1) go to another child (child #2) whom he/she doesn't know well and stand together. Child #1 says to child #2: "I'm so glad you're a part of the family of God." Child #2 invites another child (child #3) to stand next to him/her in the circle, and child #1 and child #2 both greet child #3 with the same words. Child #3 invites another child, etc. Continue as before until all the children in the room are in the circle. Hold hands and sing together "The Family of God" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 139) with the words below. The children look at each other as they sing:

*I'm so glad you're a part of the family of
God;
You've been washed in the fountain,
Cleansed by His blood!
Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this
sod,
For you're part of the family, the family of
God.*

After singing, say: **I am going to count to three. On three, take one step toward the center of the circle. Ready? One-two-three! Now, put your hands on the shoulders of the people standing on either side of you and take another step. One-two-three.** Keep repeating until everyone is squeezed into a grug (group hug). Then ask the children to sit down.

Debriefing

Ask: **How did you like our grug?** (O.K., didn't like, liked it, etc.) **Were you happy to be together in the friendship circle?** (yes, sort of, etc.) **Why?** (Because we need each other; we're friends; I am happy when I am included with the others, etc.) **Let's say today's message like we really mean it:**



I AM HAPPY WHEN OTHERS JOIN GOD'S FAMILY.

4

Sharing the Lesson

Glad Cards

Inform the adult Sabbath School superintendent and pastor of this activity ahead of time. Have the children prepare special welcome cards for people outside of the primary class, such as newly baptized members, visitors, a guest pastor, etc. Help them write the following message on the cards (adults assist as needed): "I'm glad you're here in God's house with us!" The children then go into the sanctuary after Sabbath School and give the cards to people as suggested above.

Debriefing

Say: **God wishes His house to be a place where everyone who comes**

feels welcome. That is why we are giving welcome cards to people in the sanctuary.

How do you feel about helping to make God's wish come true? (I am glad to make Him happy; I am glad to make people happy to be in His house.) **As you give away the cards, smile and think about today's message:**



**I AM HAPPY WHEN OTHERS
JOIN GOD'S FAMILY.**

Closing

Sing together verse one of "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 140). Pray that we will always happily accept others into our fellowship.

You Need:

- paper for making cards
- pencils, pens, markers, etc.
- stickers, pictures (items for decorating cards)

Lessons From a Worm

References

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

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).

The Message

I am happy when others join God’s family.

“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

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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 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.

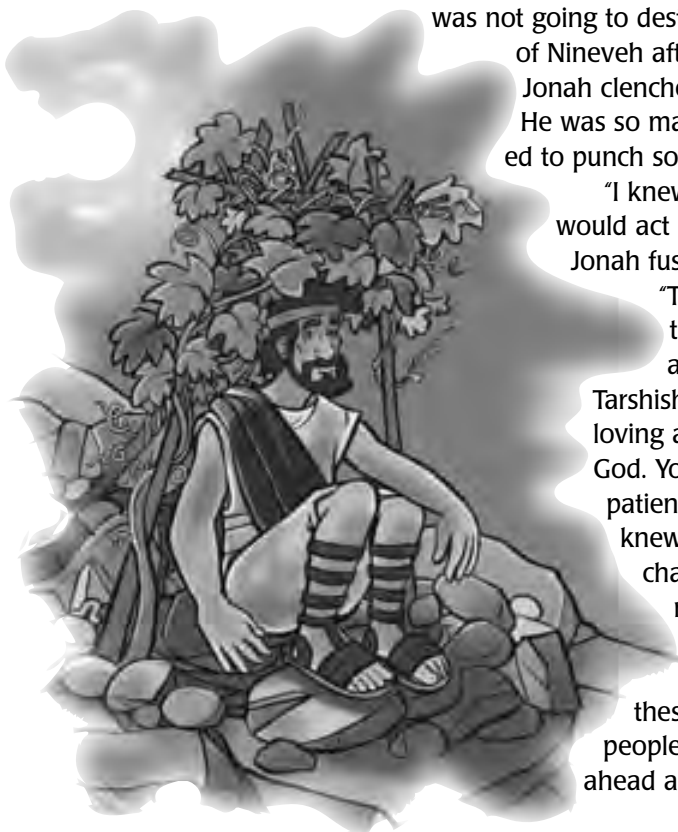
The vine climbed all over Jonah’s little shelter. It made a wonderfully shady place to sit. Jonah smiled to himself. It was nice not to be baking in the sun! He was very pleased with the plant.

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.

Daily Activities

Sabbath

- 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?
- Read 1 John 3:1. Teach the memory verse to your family. Thank God that you are His child.
- Sing together "We Are the Church, Everyone" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 143).

Sunday

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

Monday

- Read Jonah 4:3-5 with your family. Talk about arguing with God. With people.
- 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.
- Practice your memory verse with the vine and leaves you made yesterday.
- Sing "Smile, Smile, Smile" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 107). Thank God for plants and trees that give us shade.

Tuesday

- Read Jonah 4:6, 7 with your family. What good thing happened? Did it last? Why?
- Add a plant (real or artificial) next to Jonah's shelter in your diorama. Put a fake worm beside it.
- Find an unwanted plant, such as a weed. Cut it at the bottom today. Leave it where you cut it

and check it tomorrow.

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

Wednesday

- During worship, read Jonah 4:8, 9. Describe Jonah's feelings. What did God ask him?
- 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.
- Check the plant that you cut at the bottom yesterday. How does it look?
- Say your memory verse together. Then sing "I Have the Joy" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 109).

Thursday

- 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.
- 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.
- Say your memory verse together.

Friday

- 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 Ephesians 4:31, 32. What do you think it means?
- Watch for a visitor in church tomorrow. How will you show happiness that he/she came?
- Sing together "Jesus Bids Us Shine" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 133). Then thank Jesus for people who come to your church.