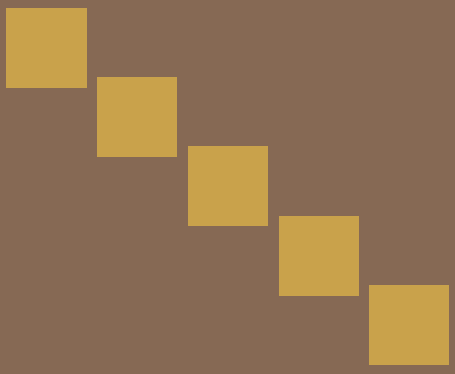
Jonah

A 4-week youth group study

Four chapters, four meetings, about 5 minutes of reading in all.



How to run a session (about 45 minutes)

- Opener (5 min): a quick game or prompt to get everyone talking.
- Read (5 min): read the chapter aloud. Take turns, a few verses each.
- Find it (15 min): ask each question. Nobody answers from memory; they find the words in the chapter and read them out. Check with the answer key.
- Background (5 min): read the note. Its label says whether it is in the text, history or interpretation.
- Talk (15 min): the talk question, then close in prayer.

Answers use the World English Bible (public domain); verse numbers match most English Bibles. Made by Honest Little Apps, the studio behind Wayfold: Understand the Bible, which includes its own free Jonah study and leader guide. Free to print and copy for your group.

JONAH 1 · 2 MIN READ

Running the other way

Opener

Everyone stand. The leader calls a direction (north, the door, the window) and the group points the opposite way as fast as they can. Ask: why is going the wrong way so easy?

Find it in the text

1. Where did God tell Jonah to go?
2. Where did Jonah head instead?
3. What was Jonah doing during the storm?
4. How did the sailors find out who was responsible?
5. What did the sailors try before throwing Jonah overboard?

Background: History

Joppa is the old port now called Jaffa, part of Tel Aviv. Where Tarshish was is debated; it was somewhere far to the west, across the sea, the opposite direction from Nineveh.

Talk

Jonah paid the fare to run (1:3). What does running from something cost you?

Answer key

1. Nineveh, that great city. (Jonah 1:2)
2. Tarshish, by way of Joppa. (Jonah 1:3)
3. Fast asleep in the innermost parts of the ship. (Jonah 1:5)
4. They cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. (Jonah 1:7)
5. They rowed hard to get back to land. (Jonah 1:13)

Scripture references: World English Bible (public domain). Free to copy for your group. Honest Little Apps.

JONAH 2 · 1 MIN READ

A prayer from the bottom

Opener

Hand out paper. Each person writes, privately, the lowest point of their week in five words or fewer. Nobody shares. Fold it and keep it.

Find it in the text

1. Where did Jonah pray from?
2. What does Jonah say God did when he called?
3. Finish the line: “When my soul fainted within me, I …”
4. How does Jonah’s prayer end?
5. What happened after the prayer?

Background: In the text

Jonah prays while he is still inside the fish. The rescue to dry land comes after the prayer, in verse 10.

Talk

Jonah prayed before he was out, not after. What would it look like to pray from where you are this week?

Answer key

1. Out of the fish’s belly. (Jonah 2:1)
2. He answered him. (Jonah 2:2)
3. “… remembered Yahweh.” (Jonah 2:7)
4. “Salvation belongs to Yahweh.” (Jonah 2:9)
5. Yahweh spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land. (Jonah 2:10)

Scripture references: World English Bible (public domain). Free to copy for your group. Honest Little Apps.

JONAH 3 · 1 MIN READ

The second time

Opener

Quick round: everyone names one thing they got a second try at (a test, a game, a conversation). One sentence each.

Find it in the text

1. What came to Jonah “the second time”?
2. What message did Jonah preach in Nineveh?
3. How did the people of Nineveh respond?
4. What did the king do?
5. What did God do when he saw what they did?

Background: History

Nineveh was a major city of the Assyrian empire, on the Tigris river near modern Mosul in Iraq. Assyria was Israel’s feared enemy, which helps explain Jonah’s reaction in chapter 4.

Talk

Jonah got a second chance, and so did Nineveh. Who do you find it hardest to want a second chance for?

Answer key

1. Yahweh’s word. (Jonah 3:1)
2. “In forty days, Nineveh will be overthrown!” (Jonah 3:4)
3. They believed God, proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth. (Jonah 3:5)
4. Took off his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. (Jonah 3:6)
5. He relented of the disaster and didn’t do it. (Jonah 3:10)

Scripture references: World English Bible (public domain). Free to copy for your group. Honest Little Apps.

JONAH 4 · 1.5 MIN READ

Angry at mercy

Opener

Rate it 1 to 10, hands up: how annoyed would you be if someone who wronged you got off with no consequences?

Find it in the text

1. How did Jonah feel when God spared Nineveh?
2. What reason does Jonah give for running to Tarshish?
3. What did God prepare to give Jonah shade?
4. What happened to the vine?
5. How does the book end?

Background: Interpretation

The book ends on a question with no answer from Jonah. Many readers take that as deliberate: the reader is left to answer it.

Talk

The book ends with God's question and no reply. How would you answer it?

Answer key

1. It displeased him exceedingly, and he was angry. (Jonah 4:1)
2. He knew God is gracious, merciful, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness. (Jonah 4:2)
3. A vine. (Jonah 4:6)
4. God prepared a worm, which chewed it so it withered. (Jonah 4:7)
5. With God's question: shouldn't he be concerned for Nineveh? (Jonah 4:11)

Scripture references: World English Bible (public domain). Free to copy for your group. Honest Little Apps.