





Christians Against Christian Nationalism translates TikTok activism to local politics This is an FYI

Lesson background

If you were to conduct a “Family Feud” style survey asking people to list “classic” children’s Bible stories, the tale of Jonah and the whale (or big fish) would likely appear in the top five answers. While this story is often equated with children, we rarely explore its deeper meaning with children. With a portion of the reading making a rare appearance in the Revised Common Lectionary this week, we have the opportunity to dig into the complicated prophet Jonah.

What you’ll need

- A children's Bible that includes a retelling of the entire book of Jonah or at least two chapters. (We recommend *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* or *Peace Table*)
- A computer with Internet access connected to a data projector or television, "[A Kids Book About Racism by Jelani Memory](#)," blank paper, and crayons or markers (optional)
- Chart paper, a marker, blank paper and pencils (optional)

Starting out

Greet the children as they arrive.

Ask the children to share stories about times they were grumpy about having to do something they didn't want to do. Why were they grumpy? Did they end up doing what they had to do or did they refuse? How did they feel afterward?

Hearing and exploring the story

Prepare to read aloud the portion of the selected children's Bible about Jonah.

Provide the children with a context for the reading:

- This story is part of the Old Testament.
- The main character Jonah is considered a prophet. Have the children share what they know about prophets. If they are unfamiliar with the term, offer a definition such as "a prophet is someone who is close to God and who God calls to share an important message to people."
- In the story, Jonah will be asked to speak to the people of Nineveh. This is a city that was the capital of the nation of Assyria a long time ago. The people of Nineveh were not caring for one another. God wants them to change, so he calls Jonah to speak to them.

Read aloud the story of Jonah from the chosen children's Bible.

After reading, ask the children:

- Why do you think Jonah refused to go to Nineveh? He gives some reasons but could there be others?
- How does God respond when Jonah says he won't go to Nineveh?
- Why do you think Jonah began praying to God when he was inside the big fish?
- How does Jonah change throughout the story?

Connecting the story to our lives

To help the children connect the Bible story to their own lives and experiences, invite them to engage in one or more of the following activities:

- **How we discriminate:** Gather the materials you'll need for this activity: a computer with Internet access connected to a data projector or television, "[A Kids Book About Racism by Jelani Memory](#)" video, blank paper, and crayons or markers.
 - Remind the children that Jonah did not want to go to Nineveh because he and his fellow Israelites did not like people from that area. Have the children wonder about why the people of Israel did not like the people of Nineveh. Note that people sometimes believe others are unlikeable because they have misconceptions about them. They may believe they are "less than" they are.
 - Tell the children there are many reasons why people may discriminate against one another. One kind of discrimination is racism. Ask the children to define *racism*.
 - Show the video "A Book About Racism by Jelani Memory Read Aloud."
 - After the video, hand each child a piece of blank paper. Ask them to use the crayons to write or draw important ideas from the video.

- Have each child share their responses. As a child shares a new idea, have the rest of the group reflect on it and connect it to their own lives noticing where they have experienced or seen racism.
- Offer a prayer for the group to see each person as a unique child of God and to respond to them as such.
- **We can do hard things (with God's help):** Gather the materials you'll need for this activity: chart paper, a marker, blank paper and pencils.
 - Remind the children that Jonah tried to escape God's call for him to go to Nineveh to share difficult information with the people. Not only did he dislike the Ninevites, the task was also difficult.
 - Ask the children to brainstorm a list of difficult things they have to do in their lives. Record their answers on the chart paper.
 - Divide the group into pairs. Ask each pair to select one of the "hard things" on the list. Then, provide them with blank paper and pencils to write a prayer asking God to help someone navigate that challenging situation.
 - Have each group share their prayers.