

# Jonah Complains About God's Compassion

Jonah 3:10-4:11



### Worship Theme:



God loves people who don't know him.

### Weaving Faith Into Life:



Kids will praise God for his amazing love that stretches to everyone.

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
<b>1</b> Let's Praise God! (up to 25 minutes)	<b>Sing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "You, You, You"</li> <li>• "I Sing the Mighty Power of God"</li> <li>• "His Great Love" (Romans 5:8)</li> <li>• "Praise Him"</li> <li>• "Stand Together"</li> <li>• "Love the Lord" (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)</li> </ul>	<b>KidsOwn Worship Kit:</b> KidsOwn Worship DVD <b>Classroom Supplies:</b> Video equipment, decorated box of photos

## Preschool

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
<b>2</b> Let's Learn the Point! (up to 25 minutes)	<b>* Jonah's Job</b> Help tell the story of how God used a vine to teach Jonah.	<b>Classroom Supplies:</b> Bible, 1 plastic gem per child, ball of green yarn, old sock, markers
	<b>* Vine Vittles</b> Make a snack that looks like a vine.	<b>Classroom Supplies:</b> Several mini-breadsticks and 1 resealable plastic bag per child, 1 package frozen spinach, 8 ounces cream cheese, dry ranch dressing mix, spoon, scissors, napkins
	<b>Love March</b> Play a game about sharing God's love.	

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
<b>2</b> Let's Learn the Point! <i>(up to 25 minutes)</i>	<b>The Vine and the Worm</b> Act out the ending of Jonah's story.	<b>Classroom Supplies:</b> Bible, green paper, scissors, 1 egg carton per 10 kids, markers, poster board, tape
	<b>Crossing the Bridge</b> Practice being responsible for others and leading others to a reward.	<b>Classroom Supplies:</b> Masking tape, blindfolds, 1 juice box per child, ice chest
	<b>* "Love Everybody?"</b> Watch a video that explores God's love.	<b>KidsOwn Worship Kit:</b> <i>KidsOwn Worship DVD</i> <b>Classroom Supplies:</b> Video equipment

Session Sequence	What Children Will Do	Supplies
<b>3</b> Let's Pray! <i>(up to 10 minutes)</i>	<b>The Offering</b> Give their money, and offer God their "Jonah feelings."	<b>Classroom Supplies:</b> Offering bowls, music player, soft music
	<b>God's Love Is Higher</b> Say a prayer, and see how far God's love stretches.	<b>Classroom Supplies:</b> Retractable tape measure
	<b>Partner Prayer</b> Pray with someone they don't know well.	

\* Starred activities can be used successfully with preschool and elementary children together. Customize your session to fit your needs. You can separate preschoolers and elementary children for Section 2. Or, if you keep the children all together for the entire worship session, we suggest you choose from the starred activities.

# Jonah Complains About God's Compassion

Jonah 3:10–4:11

From this passage, it is apparent that Jonah's experience in the belly of the whale had changed his course of action, but it hadn't really changed his heart. Essentially he told God, "I told you so!" Jonah hadn't really wanted the Ninevites to be saved from destruction, but God saved them anyway, and now Jonah was angry.

Jonah had preached that Nineveh would be destroyed, so he may have felt that his reputation was at stake. He would have been glad to see Nineveh destroyed. When Jonah complained to God, God rebuked him, so he went out of the city to wait and see what would happen to it.

The vine that shaded Jonah was likely a common, fast-growing plant with broad leaves. Apparently God made the plant spring up with miraculous speed in order to shade Jonah. God also provided the worm that cut through the plant and caused it to die. Jonah was devastated by its destruction because he had appreciated the shade it provided. Now for the second time since Nineveh had been saved, he expressed a desire to die.

God's response to Jonah's anger is the key to this passage and the entire story. God had put up with Jonah's bad attitude throughout this whole episode. God had spared Jonah's life when he disobeyed and continued to provide for him even after he had expressed his anger toward God. God had saved the people of Nineveh through Jonah's preaching. But Jonah only responded that it was unfair to

save Nineveh. Jonah was selfishly concerned about the vine because it shaded him, but he had no compassion for the 120,000 people of Nineveh who needed God. And God didn't like it. When Jonah whined about the destruction of the vine—which God had miraculously provided—and said he wanted to die, God had had enough!

Was God infuriated or brokenhearted when he spoke the words recorded in Jonah 4:10-11? After all that God had brought Jonah through, God sorrowfully acknowledged that Jonah still hadn't gotten the point: God loves all people, even those who are not like us, and God wants us to have the same compassion for them that he has.

## **Devotion for Leaders**

When we show compassion for other people, we share the love that Jesus shows us. Thank you, Jesus, that your love is not exclusive. You want everyone to have a relationship with you!

**Weaving Faith Into Your Life:** What does compassion look like to you? Maybe it means forgiving an enemy or giving to the needy. Compassion comes in many forms. And it's a great way to spread Jesus' love to others. What can you do to share his love through compassion? Ask God to help you see how you can be compassionate. He'll be sure to show you.

## Why We Worship for Leaders

It's easy to love people who love us. It's hard to love people who don't love us in return. And it's really tough to love people we don't even know!

*That's* human love. God's love, on the other hand, is perfect, complete, and unconditional. And, because his love is unconditional, it doesn't depend on one's feelings or knowledge of God. The Ninevites did not know anything about God, their creator. But God knew all about them. God loved the Ninevites, just as he loved us before we knew him. "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

## Easy Prep for Leaders

### Let's Praise God!

- Make sure your video equipment is ready.
- Fill a small box with photos of people who won't be in your worship session—your family photos would be great. Decorate the box to look like a treasure chest or a box for keeping treasure in.

**The Vine and the Worm**—Write the words of Jonah 4:1 on a piece of poster board and hang it where kids can see it. Cut giant leaves from green construction paper (about two for every five children). Cut egg cartons into strips of six cups, and use markers to decorate each strip to look like a worm. You'll need one worm for every five children.

**Crossing the Bridge**—Use masking tape to make a winding path about 8 inches wide and 15 feet long. Place juice boxes in an ice chest. If your group is larger than 15 children, make several paths leading to the cooler.

**"Love Everybody?"**—Watch "Love Everybody?" at least once before the worship session so you'll be familiar with it.

**Preschool Activities**—Refer to the preschool pages for preparations.

## 1 Let's Praise God!

Play KidsOwn Worship music videos as children arrive. Greet children by name, and ask them what treasures they have at home.

When all children have arrived, begin worship.

**Say** Welcome to children's church, everybody! On your way in, I asked you about your treasures. But God has even better treasures for you. God wants to give you treasures because he loves you.

**One treasure is that you can trust God—no matter who you are.**

 Sing "You, You, You."

**Say** Today we're going to talk about what God treasures—what's most precious to him.

### ALLERGY ALERT

See Session 1.



**Ask** • What do you think is most precious to God?

Show the treasure box of photos. Handle it with awe, and encourage children to guess what's inside the box. Then show the photos one at a time.

**Say** People are precious to God—all people, whether or not they know him or love him. Babies, grandparents, and people from all nations are all loved by our great and mighty God. God gives his treasures to people who know him.

God's love reaches out to all people, whether they are living in a relationship with him or not. He wants to give his endless treasures to all people. It's our job to let others know that God loves them and wants to bless them as he has blessed millions of others with his mighty power. Let's declare that message as we sing.

 Sing "I Sing the Mighty Power of God."

**Ask** • What are some of the great and mighty things the Lord has done to show his love? (Created the world; died for us on the cross; helped us in bad times.)

**Say** Let's do a treasure trade. Find a partner, tell each other something—little or big—that God has done to show his love for you. Allow the kids a minute to share. Then call for their attention.

When we share our stories of God's love, we begin to realize how much God is doing all around us. Let's honor God for how far his love stretches as we sing about God's great love.

 Sing "His Great Love" (Romans 5:8).

**Say** That's how much God loves us—enough to send his Son to die for us! And he died not only for us, but for others who don't even know God yet. We can be grateful that we have come to know God, yet we need to remember that God is always seeking the others he loves, calling them to come and be part of this wonderful family. Let's praise him for his love!

 Sing "Praise Him."

**Say** God's love is so big that it's hard to contain! God loves us even when we don't make right choices. God loves people who have said no to a relationship with him. God loves people who have never heard of his plans. God loves criminals and church people. And God wants to fill us with his love so that it spills out from us to everyone around us. Let's sing about standing together in love.

 Sing "Stand Together."

**Say** ▶ **Let's end our praise time today by telling God that we love him with all our hearts and souls and strength.**

 Sing "Love the Lord" (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

**Pray** ▶ **Dear God, we praise you because your love is so big that it reaches out to those who don't know you, as well as to those of us who love you with all our hearts. We thank you for helping us to come to know you and blessing us with your many treasures. Help us to love others in a way that will show them how amazingly great your love is. In Jesus' name, amen.**

## 2 **Let's Learn the Point!**

### ***Preschool Activities, pages 53-54***

At this time, have the preschool leader invite the preschoolers to go to their own room for this section of activities. Tear out the Preschool Activities page, and give it to the preschool leader. Have the preschool leader bring the preschoolers back to participate in Let's Pray! with the older children. If you prefer to keep all the children together, do the starred (\*) activities. They will work well with both elementary and preschool children.

### ***Elementary Activities*** ***The Vine and the Worm***

Open your Bible to Jonah 3:10.

**Say** ▶ **God told Jonah to tell the people of Nineveh about God's love, but Jonah was certainly reluctant to go tell the Ninevites about God. He'd tried to run off to Tarshish—which was in the opposite direction from Nineveh—but God got his attention by saving him from death at sea with the help of a giant fish. After three days, the fish spat Jonah out, and Jonah went straight to Nineveh. He told the people that in 40 days God would destroy their great city because of their wickedness. The people decided they didn't want to be punished by God, and they trusted God to save them.**

**Ask** ▶ • **What do you think God did?** (God loved them; God saved them.)  
• **What do you think Jonah did?** (He helped them know God; he loved them; he got mad because God forgave them.)

**Say** ▶ **Let's find out if you're right by reading Jonah 4:1 together.** Read the verse from the poster board you prepared.

**Ask** ▶ • **Have you ever felt angry when something good happened to someone? Tell about it.** (I was jealous when my friend got an iPod and I didn't; I was mad when my parents told my sister they were proud of her but didn't tell me.)

**Say** ▶ **Let's act out the rest of the story.**

Have kids form groups of five. Give one or two paper leaves to someone in each small group; give a worm puppet to another. Tell these kids to be ready to use their props when you prompt them.

**Say** ▶ **The rest of us will be "Jonahs" as I tell the end of the story. Here we go.**

**In his frustration, Jonah ran to the desert. Start running in place, Jonahs.** Have the kids continue as you read the next few lines:

**It was hot in the desert. The sun beat down on Jonah. Wipe the sweat from your brows, Jonahs. Jonah became tired.** Signal the kids to stop running and sit on the floor.

**God sent a vine to grow over Jonah and shade him from the hot desert sun.** Have the "vine" kids stand and fan the others with the paper leaves.

**The shade and the breeze felt so good that Jonah fell asleep.** Dim the lights, if possible. Have the "Jonah" kids lie down and pretend to sleep.

**In the early hours of the morning, God provided a worm to chew the vine.** Have the kids with the worm puppets pretend to bite the leaves, and then slink away and sit down.

**When Jonah awoke, there was that blazing hot sun again and no vine to cool him! Jonah was even angrier than before! Jonahs, stand and stomp your feet, and then sit down and pout.** (Pause.)

**God said to Jonah, "You care so much about that little vine that sprang up and withered all in one day. But you don't care at all about a whole city of people who need to know about me! Whether you understand it or not, Jonah, I love those people. I'm concerned about the great city of Nineveh."**

**Ask** ▶ • **Have you ever wanted someone else to be punished? Why or why not?** (Yes, because I want things to be fair; no, it's not right to want that for someone else.)

• **What truth about God did Jonah not understand?** (That God loves everyone; that God forgives everyone.)

**Say** ▶ **Jonah cared about his little vine and the comfort it gave him. God cared far more for the people who didn't know him than for Jonah's comfort. God reminded Jonah that he has a heart of love and wants people to come to know him. Jonah had to learn to share God. We have to learn to share God with others, too.**

# Jonah Complains About God's Compassion

Jonah 3:10–4:11

## Worship Theme:



God loves people who don't know him.

## Easy Prep for Leaders

**Jonah's Job**—Make a wiggly worm puppet by drawing eyes, a mouth, and stripes on an old sock. See the illustration below.

**Vine Vittles**—Thaw and squeeze the moisture from one package of frozen spinach. Whip an 8-ounce package of cream cheese with about 2 tablespoons of powdered ranch dressing mix. Fold in the spinach. If the mixture is too thick, add milk a teaspoon at a time until it is soft enough to be easily squeezed through a pastry bag. Spoon a couple of tablespoons of the mixture into a resealable plastic bag for each child.

## Using Theo

Consider using Theophilus the FaithRetriever puppet today in these ways:

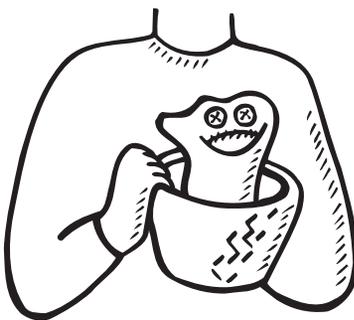
- Have Theo lead the preschoolers from the main worship area to the preschool room.
- Have Theo take the place of the "worm" puppet in "Jonah's Job."
- See the KidsOwn Worship Kit for a puppet skit written for today's worship session.



## \* Jonah's Job

Welcome the children and invite them to sit in a circle. Open your Bible to Jonah 3:10, and show it to the children.

**Say** The Bible tells us about a huge city called Nineveh, where no one knew God. Because people didn't know God or his ways, they were wicked, mean people. God wanted them to stop behaving so badly. He asked Jonah to take his message to the people of Nineveh.



Let's make one group be the wicked Ninevites, and one group be the blessed Jews. Make a face to show me which part you want to play. It really doesn't matter how many are in each group. The children will enjoy choosing roles for themselves. Send the "Ninevites" to one side of the room and the "Jews" to the other.

God had given his riches to the Jews. Give each "Jewish" child a gem. The Jews knew they were very special to God. God loved the Ninevites, too. They just didn't know it yet. When Jonah finally went to tell them to stop behaving so badly, do you know what they did? They stopped! Then God was able to share his riches with them, too.

Have the "Ninevite" children say, "We're sorry, God. We want to know you." Then give a gem to each of the "Ninevite" children. Choose one of the "Jewish" children to pretend to be Jonah. Whisper in the child's ear to yell out, "Hey, that's not fair!"

**Say** Jonah didn't like the idea of God blessing those mean Ninevites. Jonah wanted God to bless his own people. Jonah went stomp, stomp, stomping away to the desert. It was hot in the desert, and God could see that Jonah was too hot. So God made a vine grow over Jonah to shade him from the sun.

Hand the yarn to one of the "Jewish" children, and have that child hold onto the end as you hand the ball of yarn to one of the "Ninevite" children. Go back and forth with the ball of yarn until each child is holding part of the yarn "vine" over Jonah.

**Say** The shade felt great! Jonah was so relieved. That night, while he slept, a worm crawled out of the ground. Bring out the worm puppet. "Yum!" thought the worm, "This vine sure looks tasty!" And the wiggly worm ate the whole vine! Open and close the mouth of the puppet so it "gobbles up" the yarn from each child.

Jonah woke up. He stretched and yawned. Have children repeat these motions. He looked around. "Something's missing!" he said to himself. "My vine! What happened?" Jonah pouted and whined. "God, what did you do to my vine? It's so hot here!" Show me what Jonah looked like. (Pause.) God knew Jonah was still mad about the Ninevites becoming God's friends. God reminded

## \* *Jonah's Job (continued)*

Jonah that God loves and cares for everyone.

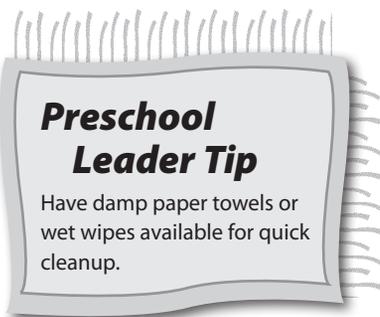
- Ask**
- Why did God send Jonah to the Ninevites?
  - Did you ever have something you didn't want to share with others? What did you do?
  - Why wasn't Jonah happy that the Ninevites came to know God?
  - How do you think God wanted Jonah to act?

**Say** God loved the Ninevites so much he sent Jonah to tell them about his love. That didn't mean that God didn't love Jonah anymore. It just meant that God has enough love for everybody, even people who don't know him. God's love is a real treasure to be shared with everyone!

Allow the children to take the gems home to remind them of the treasure of God's love.

## \* *Vine Vittles*

**Say** God showed his love to Jonah by giving him a vine to protect him from the sun when he was out in the desert pouting.



**Ask**

- Do you think God was pleased with the way Jonah was acting? Why or why not?

**Say** God showed his love to Jonah even though Jonah was not making good choices. Let's remember God's love by making a snack that looks like Jonah's vine.

Give each child a napkin and several short breadsticks. Show children how to put the breadsticks end to end in a vine pattern on the napkin. Clip a corner off the plastic bag so children can squeeze the cream cheese mixture over the breadsticks.

**Say** The vine reminds us that God loves us when we're doing right, God loves us when we're making bad choices, and God even loves people who don't know him at all. We serve a loving God.

### ALLERGY ALERT



Be aware that some children have allergies that can be dangerous. Know your children, and consult with parents about allergies their children may have. Also be sure to carefully read food labels, as hidden ingredients can cause allergy-related problems.

## *Love March*

Have the children stand in a line. Choose one child to hold hands with you to form a bridge, and have the rest of the children walk under the bridge. Lower the "bridge" on a child on the last line of the verse.

Sing this song to the tune of "London Bridge" as you play:

**Sing** Do you know that God loves you,  
God loves you, God loves you?  
Do you know that God loves you,  
Loves you [child's name]?

Have the child who was "caught" replace the child who is helping you and continue the game.

**Say** OK [child's name], now you can tell someone else about God's love. After everyone has had a turn being part of the bridge, have the children be seated.

**Ask**

- Why is it important to tell people that God loves them?
- Who do you know who needs to know about God's love?

**Say** God loves people before they ever know him. That's why he sends people like you to tell them about him! All people need to know that they are special to God.

(continued from page 52)

## Crossing the Bridge

Show the kids the winding path you marked off before the session and the ice chest at the end of it.

**Say** ▶ **Let's imagine that this path is a very narrow bridge crossing a roaring waterfall!**

If your group is large, help kids form as many groups as there are paths. Give each group a blindfold.

**Say** ▶ **Imagine that the reason you're all going to cross the bridge is that just beyond it lies a treasure chest. Each of you will be blindfolded, but I really want you to have the treasure, so I'm going to help the first person get across. As your guide, I can only use words to help you get across. After you're across, but before you get the treasure, you may remove the blindfold. Then go back and hand the blindfold to the next person in line, staying on the bridge. You'll give him or her directions in the same way I gave them to you, but you must remain on the bridge. After you've led the next person to safety, you may get a treasure from the box. Be seated near the treasure chest and hang on to your treasure until everyone has crossed the bridge.**

Make sure the instructions are clear, and then help someone across the bridge. After everyone has crossed the bridge, discuss the experience. Allow the children to drink the juice while they discuss.

- Ask** ▶
- **What was the best thing your leader did to help you across?**  
(She talked to me; he gave me clear directions.)
  - **Why do you think I made sure every person had a leader?**  
(Because we wouldn't be able to make it without help; to make sure everyone had a chance to get across.)
  - **What do you think would have happened if some of you had been unwilling to go back for the others?** (They would have fallen into the "water"; they wouldn't know how to get here.)
  - **How is this like or unlike God sending Jonah to help the Ninevites?**  
(God wanted Jonah to help the Ninevites; Jonah wasn't willing to help.)

**Say** ▶ **The Ninevites were spiritually blind. They didn't know God. But God loved the Ninevites even though they didn't know him. God wanted to give them his treasures. God sent someone he knew could tell them the way to walk. That someone was Jonah.**

Collect the empty juice boxes before beginning the next activity.

### ALLERGY ALERT

See Session 1.



## \* "Love Everybody?"

 Show the video titled "Love Everybody?" It shows kids' inner thoughts about their peers. After the video,

- Ask**
- **Tell about a thought in this video you've had about someone. Don't say any names.** (That someone is fake; that someone is hilarious; that someone is mean; that I'd like to be friends with someone.)
  - **Tell what you think God sees when he looks at someone you don't like.** (He loves them; he forgives them; he wants them to stop being mean.)
  - **Jonah was mad that God showed love to the people of Nineveh. Don't answer aloud...but think of someone you don't think deserves love.** Pause. **What does God's love for those people tell us about the kind of God we serve?** (We serve a loving God; he's caring; God is awesome.)
  - **Why does God love people who *don't* know him as much as he loves people who *do* know him?** (God's love is for each person; he loves people whether they know him or not.)

**Say** Our God is a great God. The Bible tells us that his love lasts forever. The Bible also tells us that God loves every person in the world. God's love for people is one reason we praise and worship him. Let's thank him for his love right now.

### 3

## Let's Pray!

### The Offering

**Say** Today, there are people you have trouble loving. You may even wish these people would get what they deserve. We all feel that way. Think about one or two of those people and what it would be like to tell them about God. (Pause.) Now think about what it would be like if God forgave the people you're thinking about and if you learned to accept them as friends. (Pause.)

If you have done these things, you probably understand Jonah a little better. God loves people who make you mad. God loves people who have done bad things. God loves people who don't know him.

This is what we do when we want to get something off our hands. Brush your palms together: first one, then the other. As the offering bowls come around today, you can brush some of those Jonah feelings into the offering bowl along with your money. Tell God you're willing to share him with some of the difficult people in your life.

Play some soft music, and allow a little extra time to pass the offering bowl.

## God's Love Is Higher

**Say** ▶ Let's use this tape measure to help us recognize that God's love stretches farther than ours because he loves *all* people, even those who don't love him.

Extend the tape measure only a few inches off the ground, and have kids squat down low.

**Pray** ▶ Dear Jesus, thank you for loving those who love you with their whole hearts. Stretch the tape measure to waist height; have kids stand a little taller.

**Thank you for loving all the people who know you.** Stretch the tape measure to shoulder height. Have kids stand up.

**Thank you for loving people who know about you, but don't live for you.** Pull out the tape measure as high as possible, tapping the ceiling if you can. Have kids jump to try to touch the ceiling.

**Finally, Lord, thank you for loving even those people who don't know you. Help us love more like you do. In your name, amen.**

## Partner Prayer

**Say** ▶ Let's take a step toward God's kind of love. Walk around the room and find someone you don't usually hang around with.

Wait for everyone to sit down with a partner. Have children repeat the following prayer, line by line, filling in the blank appropriately.

**Pray** ▶ Dear Jesus, thank you for [partner's name].  
Even though we don't know each other very well,  
We know that *you* know us.  
You created us, and you loved us  
Even before we could love you in return.  
We praise you for your amazing love!  
In your name, amen.