

Jonah and the Big Fish

Welcome to the story of Jonah and the Big Fish. As the caring leader of your small group of kids, you are an important part of their Spark experience. You also support the other Rotation leaders by being a consistent and friendly presence with your group. Use these Small Group Builders, Conversation Sparks, and Transition Tips to generate conversation and build relationships with your kids. Have fun as you grow in faith together!

Small Group Builders

Try these tips to build relationships, trust, and friendship with your small group of kids when you have a few minutes at the beginning of Sunday school or between activities.

- **Right Hand, Left Foot**
God told Jonah that the people of Ninevah did not know their right hand from their left foot. See if your group can play a right hand, left foot game. Sit in a circle. One person will call out the words, “Ninevah says, right foot.” Everyone raises their right foot. Continue with this game. Mix up the directions to include other body parts, but always say, “Ninevah says” at the beginning.
- **Fish or Swim**
The sailors threw Jonah out of the boat. Sit in a circle. Move back and forth like the group is in waves. Share what you would do if thrown out of a ship. Would you rather swim or be eaten by a big fish? Be specific and creative. If you are swimming, what stroke? If you are swallowed, what kind of fish swallowed you?
- **By God’s Steadfast Love**
God continued to love Jonah through good times and bad decisions. Stand in a circle. Shout out times you knew God’s steadfast love. After each shout, say as a group, “by God’s Steadfast Love.” God’s steadfast love was there for Jonah and it is there for you.

Conversation Sparks

Spark some faith-filled conversation during time you wait for activities to start or between activities. Use these questions with the kids in your group whenever you have a minute or two.

- Why did God send Jonah to Ninevah two times?
- How did Jonah get in the belly of the fish?
- How does God want us to change our evil ways?
- Why did the people of Ninevah wear sackcloth and stop eating?
- I wonder if God ever quit loving Jonah.
- Why did God grow the bush over Jonah? Why did the worm come to eat the bush?

Transition Tips

As your group moves from one place to another, keep things fun and story-focused! Try these tips as you transition.

- **Sleepy Time**

Jonah was sleepy on the ship. Place your head on your hands as if you are going to take a nap. Close your eyes and walk slowly to the next activity. Keep one eye open a little bit so you do not run into the other group members.

- **Sun, Wind, or Storms**

When Jonah was on the ship, it was tossed by a bad storm. God brought sun and a breeze to Jonah later in the story. Choose to be the sun, the wind, or a storm. Move while acting out the weather you chose. Be weather-walkers.

- **Weed Wrap**

Jonah prayed while he was in the fish and described his fears to God. He said he was wrapped in weeds. Close your eyes and imagine being wrapped in weeds under water. How would you get out of the weeds? Relocate as you twist and turn trying to get unwrapped from the weeds.

- **Walking Holy**

Several times Jonah mentions a holy temple. While you are moving to the next place, show others that you are walking holy. What does that mean? What body language will tell others that you are walking holy?

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- **Anger Management**

Jonah had problems managing his anger. He got mad at God and everyone else when he did not get what he wanted. Share with your group some times when you have trouble managing your anger. Be honest and know that God still loves you even when you are angry.

- **Pray and Fast**

When Jonah needed to talk to God, he prayed and fasted. Talk about how this might help us talk to God and hear from God. Talk about the word *breakfast*. "I wonder where the word *breakfast* originated."

- **Solemn Vow**

Jonah made a solemn vow or promise to God. Stand in a circle shoulder-to-shoulder facing outward. Each of you will say a quiet solemn vow to God. Begin with "I promise . . ." After you make your vow, turn around and face your group. Your vow is between you and God, but you are part of a group that loves God.

Conversation Sparks

Spark some faith-filled conversation during time you wait for activities to start or between activities. Use these questions with the kids in your group whenever you have a minute or two.

- How would you explain Jonah's job as a prophet?
- What is a "vain idol"? What vain idols do we worship today? Why?
- How do you feel when you make a good decision?
- Why was Jonah so hasty emotionally?
- Why did the king include the animals in the fast?
- Why did Jonah pray a psalm of thanksgiving?

Transition Tips

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- **Fish Mouths**

The fish spit out Jonah. It couldn't have been an easy job. As you go to your next activity, make your mouth like a fish mouth. Suck in your cheeks and move your lips up and down. Be sure that everyone you pass sees an entire group of fish mouths.

- **Tarshish Tiny Steps**

Tarshish was the town that Jonah tried to sail to so he would not have to obey God. Take tiny baby steps and get going to your next activity. The smaller the steps the more you will emphasize that Jonah could not really get away from God.

- **Listening Post**

A listening post is a place to stop and listen for what is happening. Jonah stopped under the bush to listen to what was happening in the city Ninevah. Count to five and then stop. When you stop, stand straight and still and listen to what is happening around you. Count, stop, and listen as many times as you need to in order to get to your next location.

- **Change Directions**

God changed his actions about Jonah and about the city of Ninevah. Appoint a leader to your group. This leader will lead your line to the next place but will often change his or her directions. The leader may take you sideways down a hallway or around in circles. No matter what the leader does, change directions with him or her.

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- **Swing the Blanket**

The sailors swung Jonah and tossed him out of the ship. Spread a blanket on the floor and have a volunteer sit in the middle of it. Have everyone else take the edges and pick up the blanket. Swing the person back and forth carefully. Put the person down and talk about trust and being tossed. Try this with other people in your group.

- **Proclamation**

The king proclaimed that all would wear sackcloth on their bodies and quit eating. Take turns sharing what you would proclaim for everyone to show God that you are followers.

- **Calamity Add-on**

There were lots of calamities in this story. The sailors thought the storm was a calamity. As a group, invent a huge calamity. One person will start with one thing that happened. Each person will add on a new part of the calamity. Keep adding until this is the worst calamity anyone has ever heard.

Conversation Sparks

Spark some faith-filled conversation during time you wait for activities to start or between activities. Use these questions with the kids in your group whenever you have a minute or two.

- I wonder why Jonah tried to get away from God.
- Why did the sailors throw Jonah in the ocean?
- Name five kinds of “big fish.” Is a whale a fish?
- How would you pray in the belly of a fish?
- Why did God cover Jonah with a bush?
- Why was Jonah angry at God?

Transition Tips

As your group moves from one place to another, keep things fun and story-focused! Try these tips as you transition.

- **Back Away**

Jonah was always going back or turning away. Line up and face your back in the direction you are moving. Move to your next place walking backwards. Try not to bump into anyone as you back away.

- **Distress Call**

Jonah called to God out of his distress. The number we call on the phone when we are in distress is 911. Walk quickly and hold your pretend cell phone and dial 911 to God. Tell God about your troubles and distress. God always listens when we call.

- **Wave Riders**

The ship to Tarshish was in a huge storm with big waves. Going to your next location, make your arms into big waves. Ride the waves on your surfboard or wave runner. Look out! There's a huge wave coming.

- **Group Rowing**

The sailors rowed their boat to land. Sit on the floor facing backwards. Pretend you are rowing the boat together. You must get the rhythm right or the boat will go in circles. Row to your next location.