

Jonah and the Giant Fish

Passage: Jonah 1-4

Theme: Christians believe that when we say sorry to God, he will always forgive us.

Resources: Memory stick with song words and music; CD with music on; Laptop (check cable); Projector (check 2 cables); Extension lead; Schools team t-shirts (3 spare); Spare scripts.

Boat; Big picture of a fish; Jonah costume; Suitcase; Bucket.

Person 1 - Person 1, Narrator, Talk

Person 2 - Person 2, God, Prayer

Person 3 - Person 3, Jonah, Questions

Introduction:

[Person 1 gets up as if to start Intro and Person 2 (walking and looking the other way) bumps into them.]

Person 1: Hey! What do you think you're doing? You hurt me!

Person 2: Sorry. [Sadly] I wasn't looking where I was going.

Person 1: It really hurt.

Person 2: I am really, really sorry. *Please forgive me.*

Person 1: [laughing nastily] Right! Whatever!

Person 2: Please...

Person 1: You are not my friend any more...

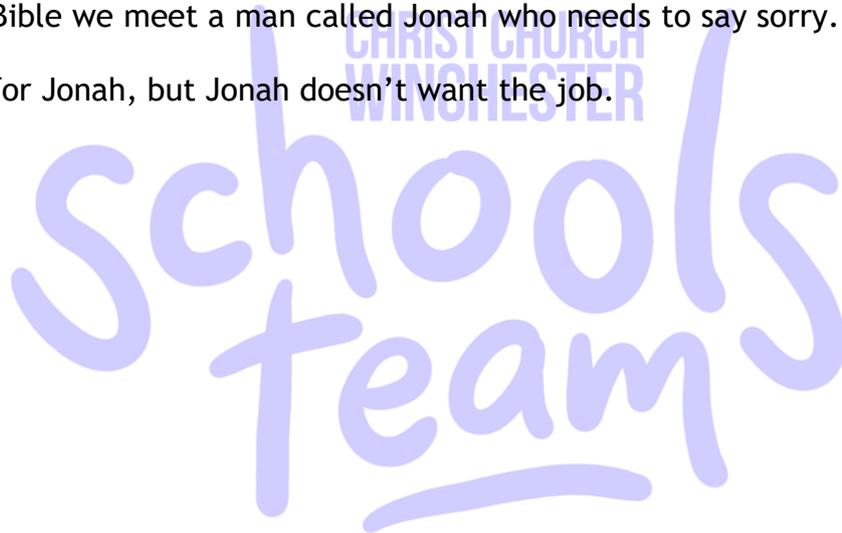
[Person 3 enters.]

Person 1 [Speaking to Person 3, pointing to Person 2]: You wouldn't believe what I heard about him/her.

Person 2 leaves sadly.

Person 3: Hello everyone, we are so pleased to be back with you again! We are _____ (*insert church/organisation name*), I am _____, and this is _____ (*introduce rest of the team*).

Today we are going to be thinking about forgiveness. In our story from the Bible we meet a man called Jonah who needs to say sorry. God has a job for Jonah, but Jonah doesn't want the job.



Story/Drama:

[Ask 2 children to come up to the front and hold the ends of the boat, explain that they have to move the boat along with the story. Ask these 2 children to stand to one side. Get the rest of the children prepared to be the rain in the storm by tapping their knees. Practise counting them down to stop or putting hands up or down to make it louder/stop]

[Jonah standing next to sign pointing to Nineveh, God stood to side of stage/out of sight]

God: Jonah [Pause], go to Nineveh and tell your worst enemies that I love them.

Jonah: *[Looking shocked]* No! They are bad people doing really bad things

God: Exactly! They have run far away from me, but I won't stop loving them, I will give them a new start. I will forgive them.

Jonah: No! They don't deserve it.

Narrator: So, Jonah decides to run away.

[Jonah looks at sign to Nineveh then runs the other way, towards the children with the boat.]

Jonah: *[To narrator]* One ticket to Anywhere-but-Nineveh please *[Narrator gives Jonah a ticket, Jonah picks up case and climbs into the boat]*

Narrator: Well it wasn't long before a fierce wind blew and the rain beat down, *[encourage children to make rain/storm noises]* and the boat went up and down, left and right, [children with boat to move it] and everyone started turning green.

Jonah: Oh no, this is all my fault.

Narrator: When Jonah realises that the storm has happened because he tried to run away from God, he tells the sailors to throw him overboard.

[Jonah “jumps” out of the boat “into” the sea and sits on the floor]

As soon as Jonah hits the water, the waves grow calm and the storm stops. *[children stop making storm noises]* And just when Jonah thinks it is all over, God sends a big fish to rescue him, *[picture of a big fish]* It swallows Jonah whole.

Inside the big fish Jonah has lots of time to think.

[Jonah sat inside the fish/on the floor]

Jonah: I’m sorry God for running away, and not doing what you asked. Please forgive me.

Narrator: God hears Jonah and forgives him. God makes the big fish spit Jonah out onto the beach.

[Jonah acts being thrown out of the big fish’s mouth and onto the ground]

God: Jonah, go to Nineveh and tell the people how much I love them.

[Jonah at signpost again. Heads towards Nineveh.]

Narrator: And this time Jonah obeys God. When Jonah goes, the bad people of Nineveh say sorry to God too, and God forgives them as well.

Talk:

In our story from the Bible today, God wants a man called Jonah to go to his worst enemies in a city called Nineveh [Pointing to sign]. Jonah doesn't want to go there. And he certainly doesn't want to tell his worst enemies anything, especially not that God loves them and will forgive them for all the bad things they have done.

So, Jonah runs away. Jonah goes in completely the opposite direction [Walk away from Nineveh]. But not long after Jonah sets out, a massive storm starts. Jonah knows that the storm is happening because he has disobeyed God [Point away from Nineveh] so he tells the sailors to throw him overboard. When the sailors do that, the storm stops. Completely calm.

Jonah must think he is going to drown, being thrown out into the middle of the sea. But God sends a giant fish to rescue Jonah. It swallows Jonah whole. And Jonah realises what he has done. From inside the fish's smelly belly [pause], Jonah says sorry to God. And God forgives him. Three days after he is swallowed, the fish spits Jonah out onto the beach, and this time when God asks Jonah to go to Nineveh, he goes.

Jonah doesn't do what God asks him to do in the beginning, but when Jonah says sorry to God, God forgives him. The whole city of Nineveh had done lots of bad stuff, but then they say sorry to God, God forgives them too. Christians believe that when we say sorry to God, God will always forgive us. So, next time we mess up and do something wrong - and we all mess up sometimes - we can remember this story from the Bible. We can remember that Christians believe that when we say sorry to God, God will always forgive us. And maybe this will help us forgive other people too.

Song: Great big God

[Introduce actions and get the children stood up ready to join in]

Questions:

I'm going to ask some questions so you can show me how well you've been listening.

I won't be able to hear you, but you may want to shout them out anyway:

1. Where does God ask Jonah to go? [*Nineveh*]
2. What swallows Jonah in the sea? [*A Big Fish/Whale*]
3. What have we learnt about what Christians believe from this story? [Christians believe that when we say sorry to God, God will always forgive us.]

Prayer:

To finish our assembly, I am going to say a short prayer for us all. So, please close your eyes, so that you aren't distracted and if you agree with my prayer, you can join in with "Amen" at the end.

Dear God, thank you so much for _____ (*insert school name*). Thank you that we have learnt from this story, that Christians believe that when we say sorry to you, you always forgive us. Please forgive us now for the things we have done wrong. I pray that you would bless every child and every member of staff in this school. Amen.

Close:

Thank you for having us today and we really hope to see you again soon.