About This Story

The story of Jonah teaches important foundational things about God. First, God’s saving love is huge—much bigger than we think. Second, God’s ways are not our ways. And third, God wants to work with us. In four short chapters we see these themes play out in the book of Jonah.

God wanted to work with Jonah. God called him to go to Nineveh and preach repentance and change to the people there. Jonah responded with, “Sorry God, not my plan.” He boarded a ship headed for Tarshish, which was in the opposite direction from Nineveh.

While on board the ship to Tarshish, there was a terrible storm. Jonah took full responsibility for having angered God. He was thrown overboard by the ship’s sailors and the storm immediately stopped. The sailors rejoiced and professed faith in Jonah’s God. Then a big fish swam by, swallowing Jonah up and saving him from himself by sinking to the bottom of the sea.

In the belly of the fish, Jonah sees the error of his ways and prays to God. The fish throws him up on dry land and Jonah heads to Nineveh as God asked. Jonah preaches to the Ninevites, telling them God’s message. They all repent. God decides to save the Ninevites. At this news, Jonah gets angry! God is exasperated. “What right do you have to be angry?” God demands of Jonah. “I am God and if I want to save them, why can’t I?”

Why This Story Matters

We are not like God and God is not like us. We are not the boss of God. Jonah’s response to God’s plan was petty and mean—he wanted the Ninevites destroyed. But we worship a God who saves.

We also worship a God who wants to work through us—even when we aren’t very cooperative. God wants our help. God wants us to tell others the good news. God always gives us another chance to join in the healing and saving activity that God is all about.

God’s love and imagination are so much larger than ours. We can’t run away or hide from God. God always knows where we are. And God will always give us another chance to tell the good news!
Big Picture Overview

Gather

Kids are introduced to the story Jonah and the Big Fish through an interactive skit.

**SPARK RESOURCES:** None

**SUPPLIES:** Fishing pole, booth, paper heart, paper fish, toy boat

Open the Bible

**INTRODUCE THE STORY:** Kids read facts about the Jonah and the Big Fish story and answer questions related to those facts.

**SPARK RESOURCES:** Jonah Fish Facts (pages 13-17)

**SUPPLIES:** Scissors

**SPARK STORY BIBLE STORYTELLING:** Kids experience the story as a PowerPoint presentation and review it with questions.

**SPARK RESOURCES:** Spark Story Bible PowerPoint slides

**SUPPLIES:** Laptop, projector

**CREATIVE DRAMA STORYTELLING:** Kids perform and watch a news broadcast performance telling about Jonah and the Big Fish and answer questions about the story.

**SPARK RESOURCES:** Bible Storytelling Script (pages 9-12)

**SUPPLIES:** CD of *Jaws* music and DVD player, cardboard shark fin, video camera, blanket, glass of water, jogging clothes, two-way radio, raincoat, umbrella

Activate Faith

**OFFERING:** Kids collect canned fish for a food shelf.

**SPARK RESOURCES:** None

**SUPPLIES:** Fishing net (optional)

Send

Kids do actions and say a prayer about Jonah.

**SPARK RESOURCES:** None

**SUPPLIES:** None
Welcome to the Large Group Gathering for Jonah and the Big Fish. Enjoy your time with kids and leaders as you sing, learn, and pray together. This Gathering gives you choices for music and storytelling. Choose a few songs to sing from the music recommendations on pages 6-8. You can display the PowerPoint slides to retell the story from the Spark Story Bible, or use the Bible Storytelling Script on pages 9-12 to tell the story.

**Set Up:** Set up a fishing booth. This might be a large appliance box with a “window” cut in it, a blanket or sheet strung across a clothesline, or a combination of shelving units/tables/rolling white boards positioned so that kids cannot see what is happening behind the “booth.” The goal is to fish over or into something large enough that kids will not be able to see what is placed on the fishing line until the line is reeled in. An attendant inside or behind the fishing booth will place the toy boat, cardboard fish, and paper heart on the line. A practice cast or two is a good idea; when the line goes into the booth, the attendant attaches the item named in the script and then jerks the line so it can be reeled in. If you are telling the story with the Spark Story Bible, check your projector, laptop, and screen to make sure everything is working. If you are telling the story with the Bible Storytelling Script, make sure all props are in place and all actors briefed.

Appear in front of the group with a fishing pole over your shoulder. **Hello! Say, did you come to go fishing with me? Thank you!** Fishing can be so boring if you’re all by yourself. **I’ve heard this is THE PLACE to fish. Some real whoppers have been caught here! Should we see what we can catch?** Cast a line into the fishing booth. Make conversation about the size of fish you hope to catch while the attendant attaches the paper heart. Reel in with great excitement that quickly changes to disappointment. **A big ol’ heart?! I wanted a fish that big! At least that big. What’s with the heart? . . . Hey. What’s it say on here?** Let kids read both sides of the heart. **Tell Go? Go Tell? What could that mean?** Shrug and give the heart to a kid near the front. **Let’s try this again!** Cast again. Reel in a toy boat. **A toy boat? I thought I’d get a big fish! This fishing trip isn’t going very well. Nobody told me there was all this other stuff in this fishing spot.** Give the toy boat to another kid to hold. Cast again. **Let’s try one more time. Think big fish, big fish, big fish!** Encourage participatory chanting as the attendant attaches the large fish. Pull it out with lots of drama, straining under the weight. **Finally! A giant fish!** Wild cheering! Pose for a fake picture. Pause until things have calmed down. **Hmmm, there’s something familiar about these three things all together.** Bring the three things up front so everyone can see. **A boat . . . a big heart that says “Go Tell!” . . . a giant fish. I feel like these things remind me of something . . . a song maybe? A story?** The attendant holds up a Spark Story Bible from behind the fishing booth, dancing it around until the kids begin to call out “A Bible story!” or “Jonah!” Have a great time overacting this. **What could it be? Ah, yes! That’s it! The story of Jonah and**
the Big Fish! It's one of my favorites! How could I have forgotten? Prompt the kids to tell the condensed story to you, holding up the giant heart, the toy boat and the big fish at the appropriate times.

Open the Bible

Introduce the Story

Set Up: Photocopy and cut out the five fish on Jonah Fish Facts (pages 13-17). Have the five paper fish fanned out like cards in your hand.

Nothing gets in the way of God's plans. That's what the story of Jonah is about. God wants everyone, EVERYONE!, to know how much she or he is loved by God. When Jonah doesn't cooperate with God's plan to go tell the Ninevites, God helps him do the right thing.

Let's look at few fish facts I have here about Jonah's story. Could I have a volunteer come pick a fish, please? Invite different kids to come up and each pick a fish, and have fun with this! You might say things like, “Do you really want to pick that one? Are you sure?” to make it a little silly and fun. If the kid is a reader she or he might read the Jonah fish fact; if not another reader can. Then pose each question below.

FACT: Some people call the great big fish in Jonah's story a whale. What is the difference between a fish and a whale?

FACT: Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. Assyria had a huge army. Why do you think Jonah didn't want to go there?

FACT: When Jonah was on the ship and the storm started, he went down in the ship's hold, a large lower deck where cargo was stored. Has anybody here ever ridden in a ship's hold? What do you think it feels like down there?

FACT: Jonah's dad's name was Amittai. Good to know! What do you think his mom's name was?

FACT: God loves everyone, even the Ninevites, who were doing terrible, terrible things when God told Jonah to go tell them to change their ways. Who does God love anyway? How many people?

Okay. Now you know your fish facts! Let's open the Bible and read the story of Jonah! It's a story that tells us pretty much what the whole Bible is about!
Spark Story Bible Storytelling

If you are going to use the Spark Story Bible PowerPoint slides to tell the story of Jonah and the Big Fish, display the title slide. Then begin the storytelling.

To get kids talking about the story, ask some of the questions below. If your group is a manageable size, you can have this conversation about the details in the story together. If your group is too large for that, have the kids talk about the story in their small groups with their Shepherd and bring their answers back to the big group.

- Where did God want Jonah to go?
- What was he supposed to do there?
- Where did Jonah go instead?
- I wonder what it is like to be in the belly of a fish—FOR THREE DAYS!
- What do you think Jonah thought about while he was in the fish’s belly?
- How do you think Jonah prayed while he was in the fish’s belly?
- Why did the fish spit Jonah out on the beach?

Creative Drama Storytelling

If you are going to use the Bible Storytelling Script to tell the story of Jonah and the Big Fish, invite your actors to join you onstage and then begin the show.

After the drama, ask some of the questions below to get a little conversation and reflection going. If your group is a manageable size, you might do this as a large group. If your group is too large for that, have kids talk about the story in their small groups with their Shepherds and bring their answers and reflections back to share with the big group.

- How did God help Jonah?
- How did Jonah make his own problems?
- Why is it hard to listen sometimes?
- What would you have done if you were Jonah?
- What’s it like to pray when you’re really scared?
- What one thing do you think God wants us to tell people?

Spark Resources
- Spark Story Bible PowerPoint slides
- Spark Resources Bible Storytelling Script (pages 9-12)

Supplies
- Laptop
- Projector
- CD of Jaws music and DVD player
- Cardboard shark fin
- Video camera
- Blanket
- Glass of water
- Jogging clothes
- Two-way radio
- Raincoat
- Umbrella
Activate Faith

Offering

If your group is collecting an offering, collect it at this time.

Suggested Offering: Canned fish for a food shelf

Collecting canned goods for your local food shelf is a great, concrete service opportunity for kids. In keeping with the day’s fish theme, offerings might be collected in fishing nets or placed in or near a fish pond or aquarium. Fun songs could be sung as the collection takes place. If the offering is not immediately packed up for delivery, it could be displayed around the fishing booth.

Send

The story of Jonah shows us that no matter what we do, God loves us. No matter what Jonah did or didn’t do, God loved him. “Go tell the Ninevites!” God said. When Jonah decided he didn’t really want to go to Nineveh, God insisted. God needed Jonah to go to Nineveh. So God sent a great big fish to help Jonah do the right thing. God made sure Jonah told the Ninevites what they needed to know. God does not ask us to do something without helping us to do it. God sticks with us, even when we go the wrong way.

Let’s pray this prayer with words and actions.

Dear God, (reach hands high over head and bring them down into folded praying hands over heart)

Way down deep in the belly of the fish, (crouch down)

Jonah got scared and made a great big wish. (make frightened face, still crouched)

He hoped God would forgive him for running away.

Jonah was sad, so he began to pray. (reach hands high over head and bring them down into folded praying hands over heart again)

God heard Jonah and things turned around.

The fish spit him out with a loud fishy sound——BLECH!!! (open mouth with tongue out)

Then Jonah rose up (jump up) with a wiggle and a swish! (wiggle whole body)

Love us, God. (cross arms over heart) Help us do what you wish! AMEN!

Make sure kids know which workshops to attend. If your group is large, dismiss by small groups or grade levels.

Spark Resources
None

Supplies
Fishing nets (optional)
Make sure you have the supplies (CD player, musical instruments) you need each day to lead music. Several Spark resources can support your musical leadership. When you lead songs from the Spark Song CD and Songbook, you can also use the Spark Song Lyrics and Spark Song PowerPoint Slides.

"Who Did Swallow Jonah?"

Sunday school/camp song
Traditional/Public Domain. An arrangement by Nylea Butler-Moore appears in Sing a New Song, published by Abingdon Press.

Form two groups—one will echo the other. Have each group stand when they sing and sit when the other group sings. The song should be sung at a lively tempo. The first two verses are about Jonah. Other verses can tell of other biblical heroes. Let’s TELL about the heroes of our faith!

Who did, who did, who did, who did, who did swallow Jo, Jo, Jo, Jo?
Who did, who did, who did, who did, who did swallow Jo, Jo, Jo, Jo?
Who did, who did, who did, who did, who did swallow Jo, Jo, Jo, Jo?
Who did swallow Jonah? Who did swallow Jonah down?

Whale did, whale did, whale did, whale did swallow Jo, Jo, Jo, Jo,
Whale did, whale did, whale did, whale did swallow Jo, Jo, Jo, Jo,
Whale did, whale did, whale did, whale did swallow Jo, Jo, Jo, Jo,
Whale did swallow Jonah, whale did swallow Jonah, whale did swallow Jonah down!

Noah, Noah, Noah, Noah, Noah in the arky, arky, (repeat 3 times)
Noah in the arky bailed.

"This Little Light of Mine"

Sunday school song
Traditional. Lifesongs, page 32; Spark Song CD, track 16; Spark Songbook, page 90.
If your church subscribes to sundaysandseasons.com, find it in the Hymns & Songs section of the website.

God told Jonah to “take the light” of God’s word to the Ninevites. We are also told to take our light into the world to share God’s message of love for all people. Add claps, finger snaps, or jazz hands to the second and fourth beats of the measure.
"Go into the World"

Hymn/anthem
Natalie Sleeth. LifeSongs, page 110. A longer version is published in The Faith We Sing 2239; Choristers Guild (CGA209). If your church subscribes to sundaysandseasons.com, search “Go into the World” under the Hymns & Songs section of the website.

This chorus is taken from a children’s choir anthem. It can be sung in a round. Its message to us is the same as God’s message to Jonah: “Go into the world and tell the story to ALL.” Encourage kids to sing to each other and to other audience members. We can encourage one another to go into the world and tell God’s story.

"You Are the Seed"

Global (Hispanic) hymn
Cesireo Gabarain, copyright © The United Methodist Publishing House. LifeSongs, page 139. United Methodist Hymnal 583; With One Voice 753; This Far by Faith 226; or do an Internet search for “Sois la semilla Song” or “You Are the Seed song.”

If possible, accompany this with guitar and maracas, and teach the chorus in Spanish to be true to the song’s origins. Guitar chords appear in the Leader/Accompanist version of LifeSongs. Teach the chorus first; younger children may find that the verses have too many words to learn. The chorus sums up the message, “We are to be God’s messengers to ALL of the people in the world.”

"Jonah Ran"

Piggyback song
Text by Erin Moore. Music traditional. (sung to the tune, “Camptown Races”)

God wanted Jonah to tell the word to the people of Nineveh, but Jonah ran away from his call. God sent obstacles to teach Jonah that you can’t run away from God’s will! God wants us to be brave and to tell everybody we meet all about God’s love.

God told Jonah, “Here’s my plan, Jonah, Jonah.”
When he heard it, Jonah ran,
Jonah ran away!
Jonah ran all night.
Jonah ran all day.
Should have gone to Nineveh,
But Jonah ran away.
Jonah caught a passing ship,
Jonah, Jonah.
God sent wind, and the boat did tip.
So Jonah swam away.

Jonah swam all night.
Jonah swam all day.
Till he was swallowed by a great big fish
That God had sent for him.

In the belly, Jonah was,
Jonah, Jonah.
Prayed for freedom from the guts,
Jonah prayed to God!

Jonah prayed all night.
Jonah prayed all day.
The fish spit him out in Nineveh.
Jonah preached God’s word!
(speaking) Hooray!

"Spark My World" New Lyrics

Text by Erin Moore. Music Aaron David Miller.
(sung to the tune, "Spark My World")

Go and tell the stories of God.
Go and tell the stories of faith.
Make new disciples. Share God’s love with them all.
God will go with you.

God gave Jonah one command,
"Go tell my word in a distant land."
Jonah denied God’s call and wish,
So he was swallowed by a great big fish!

T-E-double L, TELL!
T-E-double L, TELL!
(Anchor desk)

(Two news reporters are seated at a desk. Broadcast news music plays.)

Camera Operator: (holding camera) And you’re on in three, two, one . . .

(speaking to the camera)

Reporter 1: (cheery) Good morning, everyone. I’m Suzi Sharpe.

Reporter 2: And I’m Ron Bradley, and this is station TGN, your source for The Good News of Jesus Christ.

Reporter 1: At the top of our broadcast, in spite of high levels of pollution in our area lakes, local fishermen report a recent, unexpected bumper crop of fish. A representative from the Department of Natural Resources says there isn’t an exact explanation for such an occurrence. Rather, he said it was more like a miracle.

Reporter 2: In other news, the findings of a recent study in family systems further confirm that parents of large families who favor some children over others will likely experience strained relationships between those siblings. Dr. Smart of the Thinker Institute said, “Siblings have a hard time getting along, especially when one is singled out as being the favorite. Parents only makes things worse when they lavish that child with gifts such as fancy clothing.”

Reporter 1: And now for our lead story. (hand to ear pretending to listen for instructions in an ear mic.) Oh, viewers. We are being told of some breaking news occurring down at the local beach. Apparently, a man has washed up on shore with quite a tale to tell. Our very own Chase Jones is on the scene to give us a report. Chase, are you there? (looking at the camera, pretending to talk to Chase through a monitor)

(On location)

Roving Reporter: Yes, Suzi, I’m here.

Reporter 1: What’s happening down there?

(Throughout the beach scene, rescue workers can periodically walk behind the reporter to add to the action of the scene. Also, stage a separate scene with Jonah and rescue workers. Jonah could be wrapped in a rescue blanket. The rescue workers could pretend to check him out, give him water, etc. Basically, they are tending to him.)

Roving Reporter: Well, it looks as if a rescue team was called out to help with what appeared to be a near-drowning victim. And with me today is Mary Jorgensen, a resident of our town and local running enthusiast. Mary was the first to find the man and call the rescue team. Good morning, Mary. Thank you for being with us this morning.
Mary: (dressed in running gear) Good morning to you.

Roving Reporter: Now, Mary, I understand that you were on your morning run when you found the victim. Can you tell us a little bit about what is going on here at the scene?

Mary: That’s right, Chase. Every morning I run by this beach, and it is usually very quiet. But today, I saw this man lying on the beach. So, I ran up to him to see if he needed help.

Roving Reporter: And what was he like when you got there?

Mary: Well, he was shaking a bit, but he seemed to be okay. In fact, he was almost smiling, maybe even laughing. He kept mumbling, “It worked! It worked! God listened to my prayer and I made it!” I had no idea what he was talking about. It was actually a little hard to help him because he kinda stunk like fish. (waving hand in front of nose)

Roving Reporter: (scrunching his nose) I see . . .

Rescue Worker 1: (interrupting scene, talking on a two-way radio) Everything seems to be checking out okay. Let’s load up. (starting to pack up supplies)

Roving Reporter: It looks as if the rescue team is finished. Let’s see if we can speak with the man. (moving toward man) Excuse me, sir. Can we have a few words with you?

Jonah: (waterlogged, but cheery) Certainly!

Roving Reporter: Sir, can you tell us who you are and how you got washed up on the beach this morning? Were you in a boating accident?

Jonah: Not exactly. Actually, my name is Jonah and . . .

Roving Reporter: Wait a minute! Did you say you are Jonah . . . the Jonah, the famous prophet of the Lord?

Jonah: Yes, that’s me.

Roving Reporter: (to audience) Ladies and gentlemen, this is a rare and chance encounter with one of God’s special messengers. (to Jonah) Jonah, what a pleasure to meet you.

Jonah: Thank you, I guess.

Roving Reporter: Jonah, I understand that you often bring the good news of the Lord to many people. So why are you here? What happened? How did you get so . . . wet?

Jonah: Well, I have to tell you, this is one time I’m not exactly thrilled about the message I have to send. You see, God wants me to go talk to the people in the community of Nineveh.

Roving Reporter: (excitement fades a bit) Oh, Nineveh. I do see.

Jonah: Since I would rather do just about anything else than go to Nineveh, I started to run in the opposite direction of where I was supposed to go.

Roving Reporter: Let me get this straight. You decided NOT to follow God’s command?

Jonah: That’s right.
Roving Reporter: That’s not exactly a good plan.

Jonah: You’re telling me! Next thing I knew I was sailing on a boat with a one-way ticket to Tarshish when suddenly, a huge storm came up. At that point I knew I was in big trouble.

Roving Reporter: So what happened?

Jonah: I had the crew throw me overboard because I realized I wasn’t going to get out of this one!

Roving Reporter: What? You told them to throw you overboard? That’s a little crazy, don’t you think?

Jonah: Maybe, but you have to remember, we’re dealing with the Lord here.

Roving Reporter: Well, what happened next?

Jonah: Well then, everything went dark and . . .

Roving Reporter: And . . .

Jonah: You won’t believe me when I tell you.

Roving Reporter: Try me.

Jonah: Okay, you asked. I was swallowed by a big fish.

Roving Reporter: I’m sorry. What did you say?

Jonah: I was swallowed by a big fish. You know . . . a big fish . . . gulp . . . right up.

Roving Reporter: Wait a minute. (surprised) You’re trying to tell me that that you tried to run from God in a boat only to get thrown overboard and then swallowed by . . . by a fish?

Jonah: That’s right.

Roving Reporter: (chuckling) I suppose that next you are going to tell me something even more crazy such as God felt sorry for you so God had the fish just spit you right back up on land.

Jonah: Well, you’re right. That is what happened.

Roving Reporter: Ladies and gentlemen, this is a tale of epic proportions! And remember, you heard it first right here on station TGN, where we always tell the good news of the Lord. Back to you, Ron and Suzi.

(Back to the anchor desk)

Reporter 1: Thank you, Chase. Whew, what a story! You know, Ron, I can’t believe Jonah didn’t follow God’s commands.

Reporter 2: Yeah, but . . .

Reporter 1: I suppose it must have seemed easier to just do something else.
Reporter 2: I suppose, but . . .

Reporter 1: I guess when it seems like a job or a task is difficult, we don’t trust that God will help us through it.

Reporter 2: That’s true, but . . .

Reporter 1: After all, there isn’t much that is more important than telling people about the good news of the Lord.

Reporter 2: Suzi!

Reporter 1: What, Ron?

Reporter 2: All those things are true, but I think there is something even more important.

Reporter 1: What’s that, Ron?

Reporter 2: Don’t ever have someone throw you in the water! Especially when there are big fish around. (Jaws theme music starts to plays briefly or someone can hum it.)

Reporter 1: (cautious) Ah, Ron . . . good point. Let’s go to Cassie Dean for our daily weather report.

(Cut to outdoors)

Weather Reporter: (wearing a raincoat and a holding a closed umbrella) Good morning, everyone. Looks like the stormy weather is behind us, at least for the moment. Even with all this sun, local authorities are cautioning beachgoers to stay away from the water. There have been recent sightings of some large fish activity. (Jaws theme music starts to play again or someone can hum it. For added effect, someone can move a paper shark fin just below the reporter. Hide the holder with a blue cloth.) Ah . . . ah . . . back to you, Ron and Suzi.

Reporter 2: (amazed) Well, Suzi, I think we survived today’s show.

Reporter 1: You know, Ron, I think you’re right.

Reporter 2: And we hope that you have a wonderful day. Oh, and I do recommend that you do as God says. You never know . . . (music and fin behind the reporters this time)

Reporters 1 and 2: AHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!

(Broadcast news music plays again.)
Jonah Fish Facts

Some people call the great big fish in Jonah’s story a whale.
Jonah Fish Facts

Nineveh was the capital of Assyria.
Assyria had a huge army.
When Jonah was on the ship and the storm started, he went down in the ship’s hold, a large lower deck where cargo was stored.
Jonah Fish Facts

Jonah’s dad’s name was Amittai.
Jonah Fish Facts

God loves everyone, even the Ninevites, who were doing terrible, terrible things when God told Jonah to go tell them to change their ways.
## Lower Elementary

### Gather
Kids introduce themselves and each other through a telling game.

**SPARK RESOURCES:** Lower Elementary Activity Page, Coloring Pages

**SUPPLIES:** Pencils, crayons or markers, name tags, kitchen timer, stickers of things kids like, containers, sticky notes (optional), backpack or pouch (optional)

### Open the Bible
Kids listen to the story of Jonah and the Big Fish and imagine what it would feel like to be Jonah.

**SPARK RESOURCES:** Spark Story Bibles, Spark Story Bible Booklets

**SUPPLIES:** Kitchen timer

### Activate Faith
Kids explore the story through a variety of workshops and projects, and continue to build on their learning with short transitional activities.

**SPARK RESOURCES:** None

**SUPPLIES:** None

### Send
Kids pray a one-minute silent prayer.

**SPARK RESOURCES:** Family Page

**SUPPLIES:** Kitchen timer
**Gather (10 minutes)**

**Set Up:**
- Put stickers in a container or two that kids can reach.
- If kids use Spark Story Bibles: Store them on a shelf or table. Try putting each kid’s name on a sticky note and placing it on the cover.
- If kids use Spark Story Bible Booklets: Store them in a backpack or pouch. Kids can write their names on the cover.
- Make copies of Coloring Pages and the Lower Elementary Activity Page. Set them out with pencils and crayons or markers for kids to work on as they arrive.

Have some fun with a “telling” game when all kids have arrived. Ask one kid at a time to tell you about one of the following subjects—pets, siblings, hobbies, their rooms, vacations, favorite foods, church. But here’s the tricky part. Each kid has only one minute to tell you as much as possible about that subject. Set a kitchen timer for one minute, and encourage each person to tell quickly! The other kids will listen to find out how much the person talking can tell in a minute.

*Use what you’ve already learned about the Spark Summer kids in your group as you play this introduction game. Tell us about a person in our group. Name three facts you know about a kid. For example: has brown eyes, runs fast, and likes summer. Who is it? The rest of the group has to guess who you are telling them about.* Give several kids a chance.

Let kids print their names on their name tags and draw a picture or use a sticker that tells something about them. For example, they might draw their family or a favorite summer activity. Allow time for them to show and tell what they drew.

**Open the Bible (10 minutes)**

Invite kids to open up to page 190 in their Spark Story Bibles or page 12 in their Spark Story Bible Booklets. *Remember when you got here today and had to tell about something in a minute? Today’s Bible story is about telling. God asks a guy named Jonah to tell, tell, tell people to change. But Jonah is not so sure he likes God’s plan. Let’s read the story and find out what happens between God and Jonah.*

Begin reading the story. Read through this line on the second page: *So Jonah walked and walked—away from Nineveh*. Invite kids to stand up and put their backs toward the center of the circle. Kids should then lock arms with the kids on both sides of them. **Walk in place, pretending to be Jonah walking away from God. Do you feel the arms of one another, holding you in place? We can try to run away, but God’s love still holds on to us.***
Invite kids to sit back down as you continue reading about Jonah and the Big Fish. **Pretend to be Jonah again, and curl up into a nap position, as in the story.** Read through this line on the last page: *The fish swallowed Jonah, and Jonah sat inside the dark, smelly fish for three days and three nights.* **Close your eyes and tell us about what it feels like in that fish.** Accept all descriptions. Then invite kids to open their eyes, and finish reading the story.

**What did Jonah do when God asked him to go to Nineveh?** *(He started toward Nineveh, then went the other way and hopped on a boat.)* **What happened when Jonah took a nap on the boat?** *(God made the wind rock the boat, and Jonah thought it was his fault.)* **When Jonah remembered this story later, how do you think he felt about what he did?** Accept responses.

God wanted Jonah to tell, tell, tell. Find a buddy and practice telling each other all that you remember about the story of Jonah and the Big Fish. Tell quickly! I’m setting the timer for one minute! Gather again after one minute. **Right now it’s time for us to gather with everyone else for the Large Group Gathering and workshops. What did God want Jonah to do?** *(tell, tell, tell)* I wonder how many people will tell us about Jonah today? You can keep a little count in your head of the people who tell you about Jonah.

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**Activate Faith**

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 Summer experience. 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!

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**Small Group Builders**

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

- **Right Hand, Left Foot**
  God told Jonah that the people of Nineveh 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, “Nineveh says, right foot.” Everyone raises their right foot. Continue with this game, like Simon Says. Mix up the directions to include other body parts, but always say, “Nineveh says” at the beginning, if the group is to do the action.

- **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 Nineveh 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 Nineveh wear sackcloth and stop eating?
• I wonder if God ever quit loving Jonah.
• What do you think Jonah did next?

**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?
Send (5 minutes)

Set Up: Make photocopies of the Family Page.

God wanted Jonah to tell, tell, tell. Jonah took a long time to do so! How long did we have to tell something about ourselves when we arrived today? (one minute) How long did we have to tell our friend about the story of Jonah? (one minute) How long do you think we will have for our closing prayer? (one minute) Bravo!

God wanted Jonah to tell, tell, tell. Prayer is about telling. When we pray we tell God what we may be wondering or worrying about. When we pray, we try to listen to what God is telling us. Prayer includes telling God what’s inside us and listening to what God is telling us.

We’re going to pray a one-minute silent prayer. Close your eyes, and for one minute, you can quietly tell God what you want to say, or just listen.

Here we go. Start the timer, and after one minute say,

Amen.

Send a Family Page home with each kid. If you’ll be meeting again, remind them of the next time you’ll get together. If this is your last time together, make sure you send their Bibles home with them. Let them know you hope you’ll see them again soon.
Upper Elementary

Gather
Kids decipher a message from God.

SPARK RESOURCES: Upper Elementary Activity Page

SUPPLIES: Pencils, markers, name tags, hand mirrors, paper, sticky notes (optional), backpack or pouch (optional)

Open the Bible
Kids work in groups to tell the story of Jonah and the Big Fish.

SPARK RESOURCES: Spark Bibles, Spark NRSV Bible Booklets, Spark Bible Stickers

SUPPLIES: Pencils

Activate Faith
Kids explore the story through a variety of workshops and projects, and continue to build on their learning with short transitional activities.

SPARK RESOURCES: None

SUPPLIES: None

Send
Kids say a prayer to thank God and to tell God about people who need God’s help.

SPARK RESOURCES: Family Page

SUPPLIES: None
Gather (10 minutes)

Set Up:
- Prepare code message sheets with these letters: LLAFLLIWHVENINROEGNAHC
- If kids use Spark Bibles: Store them on a shelf or table. Try putting each kid’s name on a sticky note and placing it on the cover.
- If kids use Spark NRSV Bible Booklets: Store them in a backpack or pouch. Kids can write their names on the cover.
- Make copies of the Upper Elementary Activity Page. Set them out with pencils and markers for kids to work on as they arrive.

God wants us to tell, but sometimes we get God’s message backward! Welcome kids to the space by providing a message-deciphering activity when they arrive. Hand kids a paper with these letters: LLAFLLIWHVENINROEGNAHC. Kids can work alone or together to figure out what the message says. Provide some mirrors for kids who figure out that the message may be written backward. If kids can’t figure out where the letters break into words, give them some clues. For example, the first word rhymes with strange.

Have kids introduce themselves by trying to say their names backward (or spell them backward), but make sure everyone knows one another’s correct name. Of course, they will have fun continuing the backward theme by printing their names backward on their name tags.

Open the Bible (10 minutes)

The theme for this session is Tell. Therefore, engage the kids in breaking down this long Bible story into parts they can tell the whole group. Form four small groups. Each small group reads and gets ready to tell what happened in one of these sections: Jonah 1:1-6; Jonah 1:7-17; Jonah 2:1-10; Jonah 3:1-5, 10.

Give small groups a few minutes to read their passages aloud among themselves and figure out how to tell that part of Jonah’s story to the larger group. Some groups may want to engage the whole group in some simple actions with them, but the primary goal is for kids to be able to tell what happened to Jonah.

After the telling is complete, help kids find Jonah 3:4 and underline it. This is similar to the backward message you deciphered earlier. Suggest that they attach a sticker there. Kids can also draw a large fish next to Jonah 1:17, and draw Jonah back on dry land next to Jonah 2:10.
Even though it looked like God’s story wasn’t going to be told, God made sure it was. What’s it like when you have a great story but you have to wait to tell people? Allow time for kids to respond. What would you do if God told you to tell a story? Would you wait, or tell it right away? Allow kids time to respond.

At first Jonah thought he could hide from his responsibility. He thought he could just run away and ignore God’s command. In the end, however, God’s story always gets told. Now that you have practiced telling others the Jonah story, you really know the story! But with Bible stories, there’s always more to know. When you go to the Large Group Gathering and workshops, listen hard for something new that you didn’t know about Jonah and the Big Fish.

**Activate Faith**

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 Summer experience. 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 between activities.

- **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*. Ask for ideas about origins of the word *breakfast*.

- **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 emotionally hasty?
- Why did the king include the animals in the fast?
- Why did Jonah pray a psalm of thanksgiving?

Transition Tips

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

- 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 Nineveh. 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 Jonah and the city of Nineveh. 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.
Set Up: Make photocopies of the Family Page.

When we took off for the Large Group Gathering and workshops, you agreed to listen for more news about Jonah and the Big Fish. What else did you learn? Affirm several answers. Read Jonah 1:1-2. “Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, ‘Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.’” Our story started when God told Jonah to tell the people of Nineveh to change. But Jonah got God’s message backward, and Jonah also had to change.

Whether we say our prayers forward or backward, God hears them. When we pray, we tell God things. For example, we tell God thanks, or we tell God who needs help. Today, we’re all going to help with the prayer. Stand over here if you want to tell God thanks in the prayer. Stand over here if you want to tell God who needs help in the prayer. I’ll start the prayer, and I’ll leave you space to tell. You don’t have to speak one by one; you can all say your prayers aloud at the same time, or say your prayers silently. Don’t worry; God will hear and keep track of all of our prayers.

Let us pray,
   Thanks for telling us every day that you love us.
   Help us to tell other people that you love them, too.
   Today, gracious God, we want to tell you our thanks.
   We give you thanks for. . . . Pause for the first group to name things for which they are grateful.
   Many people who are sick, in trouble, poor, and lonely need your help, loving God.
   Many kids face hard things at home and in the world.
   We would like to tell you their names or their needs now. Pause for the second group to name names or needs.
   Backward or forward, we trust that you hear our prayers, O God.
   Keep us close to you.
   Amen.

Send a Family Page home with each kid. If you’ll be meeting again, remind them of the next time you’ll get together. If this is your last time together, make sure you send their Bibles home with them. Let them know you hope you’ll see them again soon.
Jonah and the Big Fish
(Jonah 1–4)
Tell

All Kids

Gather
Kids receive a letter from their Shepherd and practice remembering each other’s names by distributing envelopes.

SPARK RESOURCES: Activity Pages, Coloring Pages

SUPPLIES: Pencils, crayons or markers, name tags, paper, envelopes, fish stickers, sticky notes (optional), backpack or pouch (optional)

Open the Bible
Kids read the story of Jonah and the Big Fish and use a pizza and pizza box as an analogy for the story.

SPARK RESOURCES: Spark Story Bibles, Spark Story Bible Booklets, Spark Bibles, Spark NRSV Bible Booklets

SUPPLIES: Pizza delivery box, various colored paper, scissors, marker, glue

Activate Faith
Kids explore the story through a variety of workshops and projects, and continue to build on their learning with short transitional activities.

SPARK RESOURCES: None

SUPPLIES: Blanket

Send
Kids hear some prayers from the Bible.

SPARK RESOURCES: Family Page, Spark Bible

SUPPLIES: None
Gather (10 minutes)

Set Up:
• Print out and sign a copy of the letter below for each kid in your group. Insert each letter into an envelope labeled with a kid’s name.

  Dear Spark Summer Friend,
  I’m so glad that we are splashing in God’s word together this summer. I thank God for you. You bring your special gifts to our group. We need you! Thank you for trying hard, having fun, and learning about God. Always remember just how much God loves you.
  Splish, splash in Christ,
  [your name]

• If kids use Spark Story Bibles and Spark Bibles: Store them on a shelf or table. Try putting each kid’s name on a sticky note and placing it on the cover.
• If kids use Spark Story Bible Booklets and Spark NRSV Bible Booklets: Store them in a backpack or pouch. Kids can write their names on the cover.
• Make copies of Coloring Pages and Activity Pages. Set them out with pencils and crayons or markers for kids to work on as they arrive.

When kids arrive, hand them the letter addressed to them to open and read. Older kids can help younger kids read their letters. Then gather the opened envelopes, stack them up, and hand the pile to one of the kids in the group. This kid shows that he or she knows everyone’s name by passing out the envelopes to the correct people. Repeat this activity a couple times. Younger kids will need older kids to help them read the names.

Provide stickers of fish that kids may use to decorate their name tags.
Open the Bible (10 minutes)

Set Up: Write the word CHANGE in large letters on the top cover of the pizza delivery box. Cut the paper into triangular slices. Write “God loves you” on each slice. Glue the slices inside the box so they look like a round pizza. Hide the pizza box until it is time for Open the Bible.

Invite younger kids to find Jonah and the Big Fish on page 190 of their Spark Story Bibles or page 12 of their Spark Story Bible Booklets. Invite older kids to turn to page 1008 in the Spark Bible or page 12 in their Spark NRSV Bible Booklet. Read the first page of the story in the Spark Story Bible, and invite an older kid to read Jonah 1:1-2 in the Spark Bible. What did God want Jonah to tell the people of Nineveh? (Change your wicked ways.) Read the second page of the story in the Spark Story Bible, and ask an older kid to read Jonah 1:3. Why didn’t Jonah want to tell people God’s hard news? Pause for answers. Read the third page of the story, and invite an older kid to read Jonah 1:4-5. What happened after Jonah fell asleep? (A great storm blew in.) Finally, read the last page of the story, and invite an older kid to read Jonah 2:10—3:5. What helped Jonah finally get to Nineveh? (Jonah asked God for help. God gave Jonah a second chance.)

Show kids the pizza delivery box. God asked Jonah to deliver some news to the people of Nineveh. God wanted Jonah to tell them to (point to the word on the box—CHANGE!). Sometimes the news we deliver for God can be hard on the outside. Jonah didn’t want to tell the people of Nineveh God’s hard news. But the hard news wasn’t the whole story. Jonah being stuck inside the fish for three days wasn’t the whole story. The hard news—CHANGE—on the outside of this box is not the whole story. What do you think is on the inside? (pizza, a surprise, good news) Open the box. Jonah got to tell the good news inside the hard news: God loves you. God wants each of us to take a slice of this news and to tell others, “God loves you.”

I wonder how many people we could tell the good news, “God loves you,” on the way to the Large Group Gathering. Five people? Ten people? Let’s try it and see. What’s the news for us to tell? Point to the slices. God loves you!

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Spark Resources

Spark Story Bibles (page 190)
Spark Story Bible Booklets (page 12)
Spark Bibles (page 1008)
Spark NRSV Bible Booklets (page 12)

Supplies

Pizza delivery box
Various colored paper
Scissors
Marker
Glue
Small Group Builders

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

• **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 imaginary 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.

**Send (5 minutes)**

**Set Up:** Make photocopies of the Family Page.

**What did you receive from me when you arrived here today?** *(a letter)* Could you tell what was in the letter from the outside? *(no)* **What kind of news did Jonah have to deliver to the people of Nineveh?** *(hard news, change)* **What message was inside Jonah’s hard news and also inside our pizza box?** *(God loves you.)*

I love this Bible, but I wouldn’t really know from the outside what’s on the inside. I could tell you that this is a Bible, but I need to open the Bible to show you God’s good news on the inside. Did you know that there are prayers inside the Bible? I will tell some of the prayers for our closing prayer.

Here’s a prayer from right in the middle of the Bible: Psalm 100. “Make a joyful noise to the **Lord**, all the earth. Worship the **Lord** with gladness; come into his presence with singing. Know that the **Lord** is **God**.” And here’s a prayer in the Bible that Jesus prayed: “Peace be with you.” Amen.

Send a Family Page home with each kid. If you’ll be meeting again, remind them of the next time you’ll get together. If this is your last time together, make sure you send their Bibles home with them. Let them know you hope you’ll see them again soon.
Age-Level Overview

Lower Elementary

**FISH FRAMES:** Kids create fish-shaped frames and place pictures of themselves in the bellies of their fish frames.

**SPARK RESOURCES:** Jonah and the Big Fish Coloring Page (optional), Fish Frame template (page 4)

**SUPPLIES:** Light cardboard/tag board, scissors, hobby knife (adult only), variety of colored yarn in various textures, masking tape, photos of kids (either have kids bring to class or take/print), digital camera (optional), color printer and photo paper (optional), glue, wiggly eyes, brightly colored construction paper, stapler, glue dots, crayons or markers (optional)

Upper Elementary

**TELLING BOX:** Kids decorate a box in which they can keep things that help them tell about God.

**SPARK RESOURCES:** None

**SUPPLIES:** Recycled cardboard or plastic containers, tissue paper, decorative papers, gems, stickers, decoupage (store-bought or homemade), old paintbrushes, colored paper strips, colored pencils, pencils, raffia, paper punch

All Kids

**TOWN AND COUNTRY MURAL:** Kids work together to create a mural retelling the story of Jonah and add their own people to tell God’s story.

**SPARK RESOURCES:** Paper Person Outline (page 9)

**SUPPLIES:** Cardstock, mural paper, tempera paints (assorted colors), shallow containers for paint, rectangular sponges, sand, newsprint, soap and water, dishpan, assortment of decorating items (gems, stickers, markers, sequins, fabric, etc.), colored construction paper, shiny decorative papers, glue, light tag board, scissors, masking tape
Fish Frames

**Set Up:** Copy and cut out several copies of the Fish Frame template (page 4). Have a few extra adults on hand if possible to help with yarn winding and photo station, if you have it. Make copies of Jonah and the Big Fish Coloring Page for kids to color while they wait (optional).

**Photo Station Option:** If you are taking kids’ photos during class, set this station up beforehand and have a volunteer available to take photos and print them for the kids. Have kids go to the station one at a time to have their photo taken.

**Photo-from-Home Option:** You may wish to have kids bring in a photo for this project. If so, notify families ahead of time.

**Activity Instructions**

**Welcome to Art Workshop!** We are learning about how important it was for Jonah to tell God’s story. Today’s project is a great way for you to remember that each of you can tell God’s story just like Jonah. You will be creating a yarn-wrapped fish-shaped picture frame. Check out this cool cardboard fish. Show fish template. Guess what will go in the center hole—the “belly of the fish”? A picture of you! You can tell God’s story!

Let’s do this project in steps today so that everyone has fun making it. Follow along as we do each of the steps. You might have to wait a little bit for a friend to catch up, but just be patient. The final frame will be worth the wait. Here are the yarn choices that you will have to wrap your frame. Show yarn choices. If needed, provide some copies of the Jonah and the Big Fish Coloring Page for kids to color while they wait for everyone to complete each step.

1. Give each kid a Fish Frame template.
2. Trace the template on a piece of light cardboard/tag board.
3. Cut out the Fish Frame.
4. Have an adult cut out the center of the cardboard/tag board using a hobby knife. Cut the space to be .5-inch (1cm) smaller than the photo. Place a piece of cardboard underneath while using the knife to prevent cutting the work surface.
5. Have kids select one to three pieces of yarn to wrap the frame.
6. Tape the end of a piece of yarn securely to the back of the cardboard.
7. Bring the yarn through the hole in the center and wrap it around the cardboard. Continue to wrap until the frame is completely covered.

**Spark Resources**
- Jonah and the Big Fish Coloring Page (optional)
- Fish Frame template (page 4)

**Supplies**
- Light cardboard/tag board
- Scissors
- Hobby knife (adult only)
- Variety of colored yarn in various textures
- Masking tape
- Photos of kids (either have kids bring to class or take/print)
- Digital camera (optional)
- Color printer and photo paper (optional)
- Glue
- Wiggly eyes
- Brightly colored construction paper
- Stapler
- Glue dots
- Crayons or markers (optional)
8. Note: If you need to add more yarn or want to change colors, tie a new piece of yarn to the end of the first piece and continue wrapping the cardboard.

9. When the frame is completely covered, cut the yarn and tie a knot on the back of the frame around the final strand.

10. Use glue to add a wiggly eye to the fish. Cut out pieces of brightly colored construction paper in the shape of a top fin and tail.

11. Staple the fin and tail to the frame. Adult help may be needed.

12. To add the photo, turn the frame over and place it on a flat surface.

13. Place the picture in the open space.

14. Cut a piece of light cardboard, slightly larger than the photo, and put glue dots on the edges.

15. Glue this to the back of the yarn-wrapped frame.

16. Let the frame dry and take home for display.

Have kids stand in a big, open circle and hold their fish frames. Let's all “swim” with our fish while we tell our neighbor something about God. Slowly move fish frame back and forth while telling about God. Place your Fish Frame where it will remind you to tell others about God at home. I hope you'll have fun swimming your fish around the rest of the day.
Fish Frame
**Telling Box**

**Set Up:** Gather recycled cardboard or plastic containers with lids and prewash them with a small amount of liquid detergent and a damp cloth. Use hot water to rinse the inside and outside of the containers. Let dry. Collect one container per kid. Precut colored paper into strips. Make decoupage if not purchasing from the store.

**Activity Instructions**

It's a recycling day here in Art Workshop. As we think about Jonah and the big fish, we're going to create a “telling box” using a recycled cardboard or plastic container. Your box will help you tell God's story.

There is a collection of tissue paper and decorative papers to use to create an underwater theme on the outside of the box. The inside of your telling box will be a place to hold some strips of paper with stories to tell about God, Bible verses, and prayers to share with others.

1. **Select items to decorate the outside of the container from this collection of supplies** (stickers, tissue paper, decorative papers, gems, etc.).

2. **Use the decoupage glue and a brush to attach the items to the box. Decorate with style and color. Maybe you'll be inspired by the underwater theme of Jonah.**

3. **Use a paper punch to punch a small hole in the front of the lid.**

4. **Attach a piece of raffia and a tag with [Name]’s Telling Box written on it.**

5. **Choose as many slips of paper as you’d like.**

6. **On each slip, write stories to tell about God, a Bible verse to share, or maybe a prayer to pray with someone else.**

**Let's get started. If you need help, just ask.**

When the group is finished, have them put all of their slips into their boxes and tie them closed. Use this Telling Box to remind you to tell others about God and tell God’s story just like Jonah. Let's practice. Invite kids to remove a slip of paper from their box and tell something about God to their neighbor. Use your box to tell about God during your next activity. Don't forget to use your telling box at home, too!
Town and Country Mural

Set Up: Unroll a long piece of mural paper on the floor and prep to allow kids to create a town and country scene with handprints and sponges. Have a clean-up area ready nearby. Make copies of the Paper Person Outline (page 8) on cardstock, and cut out for kids to trace. Set up a collection of assorted decorating items kids can use to decorate their paper person. Organize a group of volunteers to help with the hand-printing portion of the project.

Activity Instructions

Welcome to Art Workshop! What is today’s story about? (Jonah and the big fish) What are some ways that people tell stories? (books, talking, music, pictures) Today we’re going to tell a story through a picture. We will create a large group mural that incorporates your handprints, sand, and sponge printing to bring the story of Jonah to life. Like Jonah, everyone can tell God’s story. You can tell it in the ocean, you can tell it in the country, and like Jonah, you can tell it in the city.

Jonah spent some time in the belly of a fish in the ocean. Each of you will help to create the seaweed at the bottom of the ocean by dipping the palms of your hands into a mixture of paint and sand. Jonah also spent time in the country away from Nineveh. You may use your handprints to add trees and bushes to the country space as well. And finally, Jonah went to the city of Nineveh. You’ll use sponges to create a city scene next to the country.

When you aren’t stamping the mural, you will be working on your own personalized paper person using the collection of decorating materials. When your paper person is finished you will add it to the mural to show where you would like to tell God’s story!

Let’s get started!

Paper Person: Give each kid a piece of tag board. Direct kids to create a personalized person using the materials available. Kids can trace the sample paper people you created. Have older kids help younger kids cut out a paper person shape. Send a group of kids to the materials collection and let them select items to create their paper person.

Town and Country Mural: Send another group of kids to the mural/handprint/sponge station to make handprints and stamp with sponges. Prepare a shallow dishpan of sand and blue or green paint. Provide shallow containers of the other colors of paint. Spread newsprint on the floor to catch drips of paint and sand. Have kids place their palms into the dishpan and then stamp them on the lower edge of the mural to create handprint seaweed. Let some of the older kids help paint in some pieces of coral and taller seaweed pieces to tie the handprints together. Encourage kids to add handprint trees and bushes to the country scene and sponge-print buildings and streets to create a city scene.

Spark Resources
Paper Person Outline (page 8)

Supplies
Cardstock
Mural paper
Tempera paints (assorted colors)
Shallow containers for paint
Rectangular sponges
Sand
Newsprint
Soap and water
Dishpans, 2
Assortment of decorating items (gems, stickers, markers, sequins, fabric, etc.)
Colored construction paper
Shiny decorative papers
Glue
Light tag board, 5 x 7 inches (12 x 18cm), 1 per kid
Scissors
Masking tape
Kids will then rinse off most of the paint/sand in a dishpan of warm water and then finish washing hands in the bathroom sink.

Once all of the stamping is completed, have the kids bring their paper people to the mural and use masking tape loops to attach them to the mural.

Place the heading “Everyone can tell God’s story!” on the mural and display in a high-traffic area of your church.

Once the mural is completed, invite kids to tell the group why they put their paper person where they did. **Who would you tell about God’s story to? What would you say?** Encourage kids to tell one thing they know about God to their Shepherd, a friend nearby, and a family member at home. **We can all tell God’s story, no matter where we are.**
Age-Level Overview

Lower Elementary

STUCK IN A FISH: Kids pretend to be Jonah in the belly of the fish and try to figure out the action that will let them get out so they can go tell God's story.

SPARK RESOURCES: Spark Story Bible Booklets or Spark Story Bibles
SUPPLIES: None

MOUTH MATCHING: Kids play a Memory-type game to learn more about Jonah's story.

SPARK RESOURCES: Mouth Matching Word Cards (pages 4-5)
SUPPLIES: Scissors

Upper Elementary

WHALE BLABBER: Kids talk in whale-speak and try to guess what part of the story is being told.

SPARK RESOURCES: Spark NRSV Bible Booklets or Spark Bibles, Whale Blabber Sheets (pages 8-10)
SUPPLIES: Video or audio clip of whale-speak from Finding Nemo (optional), scissors

SPARK BIBLE BALL BALANCING BONANZA: Kids try to balance a Ping-Pong® ball on a Bible and discover that opening the Bible can help.

SPARK RESOURCES: Spark Bibles or other Bibles
SUPPLIES: Ping-Pong® balls

All Kids

PICTURE TAG: Kids tell the story of Jonah by working in teams to draw pictures.

SPARK RESOURCES: None
SUPPLIES: Large pieces of paper, markers, timer

CATCH AND RELEASE: Kids play a game of link tag and work together as a big fish to catch Jonah.

SPARK RESOURCES: None
SUPPLIES: None
Welcome

Welcome the kids as they arrive. Welcome! We're going to play some games while we learn more about Jonah and the Big Fish. In this story, God asks Jonah to tell some people all about how great God is. At first, Jonah doesn't want to do it. And that gets him in trouble. No matter what, though, God makes sure Jonah gets his chance to tell the story. Who here has ever caught a fish? Does anyone have a fish story? Tell us. Allow time for kids to respond. If no one has a story, tell one of your own. Telling stories is fun. Let's tell Jonah's story with some games!

Stuck in a Fish

Set Up: Make sure you have a clear, open, safe place to play.

Activity Instructions
Any one of us can tell God’s story to someone else. In today’s story, Jonah made his own problems. But, sometimes it might seem like it’s hard to talk about God. We’re going to play a game where you need to get out of a big fish so you can tell me one thing you remember about this story.

Explain the game. I’m going to choose two or three people to be Jonah, and the rest of us are all going to be the big fish. All of the big fish kids will form a circle and stand as close together as they can. The team who is playing Jonah will go out into the hall while everybody in the fish circle decides on a secret action that will open the mouth of the fish. When Jonah comes back into the room, they will be in the middle of the circle, or the belly of the fish. Jonah’s job is to figure out the action that will open the mouth of the fish, get out of the fish belly, and come tell me one thing about today’s story.

Choose two or three kids who will work together as a team to be Jonah and then help the other kids get into a circle and stand close together. Send the Jonah team into the hallway with a Shepherd while you pick two kids who will be the mouth of the fish. Work with the kids who are the mouth to decide on an action that will open the mouth of the fish. The action could be tapping them both on the head, shaking both their hands, touching both their feet, or something else. Once the group decides on an action, bring the Jonah team back into the room and have them work together to figure out where the mouth of the fish is and how to get out.

Here we go! Let’s see if Jonah can get out of the big fish to come tell me one thing about the story! Give several kids a chance to be a part of the Jonah team. Have your Booklet or Bible open in case they need a reminder from the pictures. Play as long as time allows.
Hint: To make the game easier, you can instruct the big fish kids to perform the action when Jonah isn’t looking. Jonah can try to catch someone while they are doing so, and mimic the action to get out of the big fish.

What did you think of this game? Was it easy or tough? Allow time for kids to respond. Sometimes it’s easy to tell God’s story, sometimes it can be hard. But we can always tell God’s story!

**Mouth Matching**

**Set Up:** Make copies of the Mouth Matching Word Cards found on pages 4-5 of this guide. Make enough “decks” for small groups to play a matching game together in a circle. Cut and shuffle the word cards into decks.

**Activity Instructions**

In our story today, Jonah needed to match his actions with his words. God needed Jonah to tell the Ninevites about God. Jonah told God he would do what God asked, but then he didn’t do it. When have you said you would do something you were supposed to do, but then you didn’t do it? What made you change your mind and finally do it? Allow time for kids to respond. In today’s game, each of us will have a chance to tell someone about God. If you could tell someone one thing about knowing God, what would you say? Allow time for kids to respond. Let’s play a game called Mouth Matching. It will help us know how to tell the story of Jonah to someone else.

Divide into groups small enough to take turns matching cards. Hand out the decks of Mouth Matching cards. Explain the game. Most of you probably know how to play the game Memory. This game is a lot like that. First, lay out all the cards on the table with the words facing down. Don’t look. Then, starting with the youngest, turn over two cards, and try to get a match. If the cards match, pick them up and keep them. If they don’t match, turn them back over where they are. Then the next player gets a turn. Play until all the cards are matched. Then, if there’s still time, mix up the cards and start again.

Be aware that kids might pick up the cards and put them back in different places. This will make the game much harder. Help them say the words out loud, if necessary. Play as long as time allows.

After the game, take time to discuss. Can anyone use your deck of cards to tell the story of Jonah and the Big Fish? Let someone try, or have the whole group do it as one person puts the words in the proper order. All of you are now God’s storytellers—just like Jonah. We can all tell God’s story.

Thanks for all your energy today; it was fun to see and hear you tell the story of Jonah. You can always tell God’s story. You might already have learned that God will give you the words. That’s pretty cool. Try it sometime, and let me know what happens.
Mouth Matching Word Cards

Jonah  
God

Nineveh  
Boat

Nap  
Sea
Mouth Matching Word Cards

Sailors  Overboard
Smelly fish  Change their ways
Beach  WHOOSH!
Welcome

Welcome kids as they arrive. Who has traveled somewhere, sometime? Where? What was it like? What was the best part? What were some tough parts? Allow a few kids to fill in some details. Today we’re going to talk about the story of Jonah and the Big Fish. Jonah was supposed to tell God’s story to the people of Nineveh, but he decided he didn’t really want to go there.

Even though it looked like Jonah wasn’t going to tell God’s story, God made sure he did. What’s it like when you have a great story but you have to wait to tell people? Allow time for kids to respond. What would you do if God told you to tell a story? Would you wait, or tell it right away? Allow kids time to respond.

Whale Blabber

Set Up: Copy and cut apart the Bible verse strips from the Whale Blabber Sheets on pages 8-10. Look up a clip from Finding Nemo to hear some examples of whale-speak. If you are able, prepare to show that clip in class.

Activity Instructions

How did God make sure Jonah would go to Nineveh and tell God’s story? (God had a big fish swallow Jonah.) Let’s play a game to have fun with this. We can’t know exactly what kind of fish or sea creature swallowed Jonah. Let’s of people say it’s a whale, so we’re going to practice our whale-speak today.

Scatter kids all around the room. Have them bring their Spark Bibles or Spark NRSV Bible Booklets with them. Explain the game. I’m going to hand out a strip of paper with a Bible verse from the story of Jonah on it. Don’t let anyone see it. The kid who gets the strip I hand out should get ready to speak whale. When it’s your turn, read the verse like a whale. If you have a clip of whale-speak from Finding Nemo, show it to the group. If not, ask a kid who has seen the movie to demonstrate. The rest of the group will listen and try to find the verse in Jonah. When you find it, call out “Whale Blabber!” Good luck!

Mix up the Bible verse strips and distribute them. Pick a random kid to start. Remind them that the slower and more exaggerated they talk, the better. Allow time for kids to find the verse in their Bibles or booklets quietly on their own or in small groups.

Try to do as many verses as possible, and play as long as time allows. Try to have all kids have a chance to read a verse in whale-speak. If you have extra time, shuffle the verses and start over.

Spark Resources

Spark NRSV Bible Booklets or Spark Bibles
Whale Blabber Sheets (pages 8-10)

Supplies

A video or audio clip of whale-speak from Finding Nemo (optional)
Scissors
After the game, gather the kids in a central location. *That was pretty funny and kind of hard sometimes. What made it hard to find the verses? What things seemed easy?* Allow time for kids to respond. *When have you tried to explain something to someone but they had a hard time understanding you? What was that like?* Allow kids time to respond. We worked hard to tell God's story in this game. Like God did with Jonah, we pushed until people heard the story. Name two things you can do this week to tell God's story. Accept thoughtful responses.

Spark Bible Ball Balancing Bonanza

**Set Up:** Make sure you have a clear space to play this game. This activity would work well outside.

**Activity Instructions**

In today's story, God used Jonah to encourage people to change from bad behavior to good. Sometimes the things God asks us to do are difficult, like telling someone they have to stop doing bad things. Other times it's easy, like telling people that God loves them. How do you share God's story with others? Allow time for kids to respond.

Divide the group into three teams. Each team will need one Spark Bible or other Bible. Explain the game. *We're going to play a game that might be easy for some people and really hard for others. But, remember, all of us just want to have fun. We're going to race from one end of the room to the other as if we're stuck in the whale with nothing better to do. We need to keep our spirits up while we're stuck in here for three days. To make the race interesting, you will need to balance a ball on a Bible while holding it with only one hand. Your other hand must be behind your back. If you drop the ball you must go back to the beginning and start over. The first team to get back and forth with every member wins. Any questions?*

Make sure each team has a Bible. Give the second person the ball and have him or her hold it on the Bible while the first person puts his or her other hand behind his or her back. **Remember, you have to keep the ball on the Bible all the way down and back. Ready. Go.** Let kids try the game.

Play as long as time allows. For an additional lesson, wait as long as you can, but if a kid is struggling, show him or her the trick of opening the Bible and putting the ball in the opening. Talk about the difference between the two ways of balancing the ball.

After the game, gather in a circle. **Wow, that was pretty hard, wasn't it? What made it easier?** *(opening the Bible) The Bible is filled with stories, isn't it? (yes) God's story is always there to help us, and God wants us to share that story.*

**Thanks for all your energy and excitement today. Now you know the story of Jonah and the Big Fish, and you know that you can tell God's story.**
**Whale Blabber**

**Jonah 1:1-2** Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, “Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.”

**Jonah 1:3** But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid his fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.

**Jonah 1:4-5** But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and such a mighty storm came upon the sea that the ship threatened to break up. Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried to his god. They threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten it for them. Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down into the hold of the ship and had lain down, and was fast asleep.

**Jonah 1:6** The captain came and said to him, “What are you doing sound asleep? Get up, call on your god! Perhaps the god will spare us a thought so that we do not perish.”

**Jonah 1:7-9** The sailors said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, so that we may know on whose account this calamity has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. Then they said to him, “Tell us why this calamity has come upon us. What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?” “I am a Hebrew,” he replied. “I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”

**Jonah 1:10** Then the men were even more afraid, and said to him, “What is this that you have done!” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them so.

**Jonah 1:11-12** Then they said to him, “What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?” For the sea was growing more and more tempestuous. He said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will quieten down for you; for I know it is because of me that this great storm has come upon you.”
Jonah 1:15-16  So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord even more, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

Jonah 1:17  But the Lord provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Jonah 2:1-3  Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish, saying, “I called to the Lord out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me.

Jonah 2:4-6  Then I said, “I am driven away from your sight; how shall I look again upon your holy temple?” The waters closed in over me; the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped around my head at the roots of the mountains. I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the Pit, O Lord my God.

Jonah 2:7  As my life was ebbing away, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple.

Jonah 2:8-9  Those who worship vain idols forsake their true loyalty. But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you; what I have vowed I will pay. Deliverance belongs to the Lord!”

Jonah 2:10  Then the Lord spoke to the fish, and it spewed Jonah out upon the dry land.
Whale Blabber

Jonah 3:1-5 The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying, “Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.” So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days’ walk across. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s walk. And he cried out, “Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

Jonah 3:10 When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

Jonah 4:1-3 But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. He prayed to the Lord and said, “O Lord! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. And now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.”

Jonah 4:4-5 And the Lord God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, “It is better for me to die than to live.”

Jonah 4:9-11 But God said to Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?” And he said, “Yes, angry enough to die.” Then the Lord said, “You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?”
Welcome

Welcome kids as they arrive. Today we’re going to play some games and talk about the story of Jonah and the Big Fish. After you hear the story, you’ll be excited to know that God makes sure good things happen. Since it’s a fish story, I have a little test for you. Stand up. I’m going to say some words. If you think the word I’m saying is the name of a fish, stay standing. If not, sit down.

Walleye (fish)
Perch (fish)
Pixar (not a fish)
Wide Mouth Mosh (not a fish)
Eelpout (fish)
Leviathan (fish)
Platypus (not a fish)
Guppy (fish)

The fish in the Jonah story is usually called a Leviathan in the Bible. But sometimes people say it was a whale. Today, we’ll just call it a big fish.

What’s the strangest thing about this story? Allow time for kids to answer. Why do you think Jonah decided not to tell God’s story? Accept thoughtful responses. Whether Jonah was scared or bored or just didn’t think he was right for the job, he learned that running away from God doesn’t work. God wants us to tell God’s story! How would you tell someone you know the best story ever heard? Allow kids time to respond. Jonah eventually did go to Nineveh to tell God’s story. We can tell God’s story too! Choose to play one or both of the following games.
Picture Tag

What are some ways you can tell a story? *(speaking it, writing it down, drawing a picture, making music)* We’re going to play a game called Picture Tag to tell the story of Jonah in pictures. It’s a sit-down game, so find four people and sit in a circle with your backs in and your feet out. Help kids get organized in groups with two older kids and two younger kids. Give each kid a marker and each group a large piece of paper. Explain the game. I’m going to read a small part of the Jonah story. The first person will start to draw a picture of what I’m reading. While you’re drawing, you have to keep your marker on the paper at all times. When you lift your marker up, you must pass the paper to the person on your right. You’ll have 30 seconds to draw. The next person will add to the drawing, and the next and the next. The picture at the end will be a great surprise! After every team member has had a chance to add to the first drawing, I’ll start reading a new part of the story and a new kid will get to start the drawing. We’ll do this enough times so everyone will have a chance to start the drawing. Any questions?

Hand out the paper and markers. Read a short part of Jonah and the Big Fish. You can use one of the sentences below or choose your own.

- God said, “Jonah, I want you to go to Nineveh.”
- Jonah paid to get onto a boat to take him even farther away.
- “I’m going to take a nap.”
- WHOOSH! God sent a strong wind.
- Jonah said, “So throw me overboard!” And they did.
- Gulp, gulp, gulp. The fish swallowed Jonah.
- Trudge, trudge, trudge. Jonah went to Nineveh.
- They believed him and changed the way they were living.
- God was happy.

Play as long as time allows, using your timer to make sure kids don’t draw for more than 30 seconds each. Remember to switch which kid starts drawing with each new sentence.

When you’re done, gather the group together. Good job. You made some interesting and incredible art today! Art is a way of telling a story. You can tell God’s story in many ways!
Catch and Release

Set Up: Make sure you have lots of room for this game. If you have kids that don’t like to get in the middle of things, have them be the referees and keep the group safe.

Activity Instructions
Jonah went the wrong direction in today’s story. God made sure Jonah went to Nineveh to tell God’s story by gathering up Jonah in the fish and spitting him out near Nineveh. Let’s play a game called Catch and Release. We’ll see how well we can follow directions!

Gather the group in a circle in the middle of the room. (This would be a great game to play outside, weather permitting.) Explain the game. This game is like link tag. One person will be Jonah. The rest of you will link arms to be the big fish. The big fish has to catch Jonah and swallow him. But, the only way to swallow Jonah is to make sure the kids on both ends of the line are touching Jonah with their free hands. You’ll have to work together to catch Jonah. Everyone in the line needs to have arms linked at all times. And you’ll need to be careful so no one gets hurt. Any questions? Go!

1. Line up all kids, alternating older and younger, and have them link arms.
2. Set up boundaries if outside or in a really big space.
3. Choose one kid to be Jonah first.
4. Say “Go!” and have the fish try to catch Jonah.
5. Remind kids to be careful and not pull each other over.
6. If the game is too hard, divide the big fish into more fish and have the groups continue to work together to swallow Jonah.
7. Play as long as time allows and make sure lots of different kids get a chance to be Jonah.

After the game, gather everyone together. What made that game hard? What made (or would have made) it easy? Allow time for kids to respond. It was hard for Jonah to be in the whale for three days. But even after that, it was hard for him to tell God’s story. If you were with Jonah, how would you encourage him? Allow thoughtful responses. It’s fun to pretend to be a fish or Jonah. And in the end, Jonah did the right thing. He told God’s story. We can tell God’s story too.
**Age-Level Overview**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lower Elementary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>STOMACH SPEAK</strong>: Kids learn about the digestive system and what our stomachs tell us.</td>
<td><strong>SPARK RESOURCES</strong>: Digestive System Diagram (page 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUPPLIES</strong>: Large plastic garbage bag, scissors, masking tape, newspaper, paper bags, heavy-duty plastic sandwich bags, crackers, small plastic figure, spray bottles, water, small plastic salad tongs, bowl, garbage can, marker, kid-sized non-latex gloves (optional)</td>
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<th>Upper Elementary</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>GOD CAN TELL</strong>: Kids learn about casting lots and experiment with probability and chance.</td>
<td><strong>SPARK RESOURCES</strong>: Spark Bibles or Spark NRSV Bible Booklets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUPPLIES</strong>: Pennies, index cards, pencils, whiteboard, marker, calculator (optional), broom straws, scissors, dice</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>All Kids</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TELL ME AGAIN</strong>: Kids direct each other to a special spot to practice listening skills.</td>
<td><strong>SPARK RESOURCES</strong>: None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUPPLIES</strong>: Paper, pencils</td>
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Stomach Speak

Set Up: Fill spray bottles with water. Set up the demonstration in a large, open area, using the Digestive System Diagram on page 5 as a guide. Cut open the large plastic garbage bag and tape it to the floor. Place one spray bottle on the garbage bag. At one end of the bag, use the tape to make two parallel straight lines on the floor, 18 inches (46cm) apart and 3 feet (1m) long. Use the tape to make a square at the end of the lines. Place the salad tongs and one spray bottle in the square. At the opposite end of the bag, use the tape to make two parallel curvy lines on the floor, 18 inches (46cm) apart and about 15 feet (4.5m) long. Place the bowl in the middle and the garbage can at the end of the curvy lines. Place the crackers in one of the plastic sandwich bags and seal tightly. Wrap this bag in a piece of newspaper and place in a paper bag. Mark this bag “Food.” Place a small plastic figure representing Jonah in a plastic sandwich bag. Wrap this bag in a piece of newspaper and place in a paper bag. Mark this bag “Jonah.” Provide kid-sized non-latex gloves for kids who don’t want to get their hands messy.

Activity Instructions
Welcome Spark Scientists. Today we’re learning about telling God’s story. Who was Jonah supposed to tell about God? (the Ninevites) What happened when Jonah didn’t do what God asked him to do? (He was swallowed by a big fish.) I wonder if that fish had a stomachache. Stomachaches are one way that our bodies tell us there’s something wrong. What other things do your bellies tell you? (I’m hungry. I didn’t like some food. I’m sick.)

I would imagine that Jonah did give the big fish a bellyache. Most big fish don’t eat people. We taste bad. How do you think Jonah’s stomach felt when he was in the belly of the fish? (It hurt. It was nervous.) Jonah probably had a stomachache for lots of reasons. I bet the fish’s belly smelled bad, which might have made Jonah’s stomach hurt. Sometimes our stomachs can hurt when we’re feeling scared and nervous. I bet Jonah’s belly felt scared and nervous.

Today, we’re going to explore more about stomachs and how they tell us things. Here on the floor is a big model of the digestive system.

Gather kids by the tape square where you put the tongs and the first spray bottle. It all starts here, in the mouth. When we eat, what’s the first thing we do? (bite, chew, use our teeth) That’s what these tongs will be—teeth. When you chew food, have you ever noticed that it gets wet? That’s spit/saliva. Hold up water bottle. This will be our spit.

Move kids next to the parallel straight lines—the throat. After we chew food, what happens? (We swallow it.) These straight lines will be the throat—the tube that takes food to the stomach. Food gets squeezed and mashed as it goes down.
Gather kids around the garbage bag. **What happens when food gets to the stomach?** *(It rolls around. It gets digested.)* **Stomachs make a liquid called acid that helps turn food into a slimy, stinky mess.** Show second spray bottle. **This will be our bottle of stomach acid.**

Move kids next to the parallel curvy lines—the intestines. **The food then moves out of the stomachs into the small intestine.** In the small intestine, the food keeps getting smaller and smaller. As the food gets smaller, the energy from the food goes all over our body. **This makes our bodies able to run and jump.** Point to the bowl. **We’re going to use this bowl as the place where all the energy pieces go.**

**What happens to the things that don’t go all over our bodies to give us energy?** *(I don’t know. They come out as poop.)* **Everything that doesn’t go into our blood goes through our large intestine and comes out our bottoms as waste products.** Have kids walk along the curvy lines to the garbage can.

**Now that we know how it all works, let’s see it in action.** Have kids stand at different parts of the digestive system: the mouth, throat, stomach, small intestine, large intestine, and waste. If possible, have two kids at each location. **As I explain what’s happening to each piece of food, you’ll pass it from one part of the digestive system to the next.** Expect lots of giggles!

1. **Hold up the bag with crackers inside. Here’s a piece of food. The energy is trapped inside. We’ll work together to get it out.**

2. **Hand the bag of food to the kids with the tongs. We’ll start at the mouth. First, the teeth will tear open the outer layer.** Allow time for the kids with salad tongs to smash the crackers. **As we chew, the food gets all wet with spit.** Have kids with the spray bottle spray the food.

3. **After we chew food, we swallow it and it goes down the throat.** Have kids pass the food bag to the kids at the throat. **As it goes down, it gets squeezed and mashed.** Have kids smash and squeeze the bag as they pass it to the kids in the stomach. By this time, the paper should be getting shredded.

4. **In the stomach, the food gets covered with stomach acid.** Have kids in the stomach spray the food some more. **Our stomach muscles are very strong, so the food gets mashed.** Encourage the kids to mash the bag. When the crackers become visible through the paper, be sure that everyone has the chance to see them.

5. **Have kids pass the food from the stomach to the small intestine. In the small intestine, the tiny food pieces turn into energy that goes all over the body.** Have kids open the plastic bag and pour the cracker dust into the bowl.

6. **Have kids pass the food from the small intestine to the large intestine. Everything that’s left keeps moving through the large intestine until it ends up as waste.** Have kids throw the remaining materials away in the garbage can.
Now that we know how it works, switch stations, and let’s do it one more time. But this time, we’re going to use a special piece of food. What does this bag say? (Jonah) We’re going to see what happens as Jonah goes through our digestive system. Repeat the steps above using the Jonah bag. As Jonah goes through the digestive system, ask kids these questions: What do you think it felt like as the fish chewed Jonah and covered him in spit? What do you think it felt like as Jonah slid down the fish’s throat? How do you think the fish’s stomach felt when Jonah was inside?

Stop after Jonah gets to the stomach. Jonah didn’t go through the fish’s intestines. What happened to Jonah in the story? (He got spit out.) Once Jonah agreed to go to Nineveh, the fish spit Jonah out. Take Jonah out of the bag and send him back up to the mouth, while the rest of the packaging goes down to the garbage can. I bet the fish’s stomach felt a lot better after Jonah wasn’t in there anymore. Our stomachs can tell us lots of things!

Jonah had an important job. He needed to tell the Ninevites all about God, but he didn’t want to do it. So he ended up in the belly of a fish. I bet the fish’s belly was telling the fish that having Jonah inside didn’t feel good. And I know Jonah knew that being inside the fish’s belly didn’t feel good. Jonah knew what the right thing to do was, and when he agreed to go to Nineveh, he got out of the belly! You did a great job learning about our digestive system today, Spark scientists. Remember to tell everyone about God!
**God Can Tell**

**Set Up:** Cut the straws into various lengths. Make several groups of five or six different-length straws.

**Activity Instructions**

*Welcome to Science! How does God talk to you?* Allow time for kids to respond. God often needs to tell us things, but God sometimes talks to us in unexpected ways. Let’s look back at today’s story. Read Jonah 1:4-10 from the Spark Bible or Spark NRSV Bible Booklet. How did the sailors discover who was responsible for the stormy weather? *(They cast lots.)* Casting lots is when people use chance to randomly select something. In the story of Jonah, the sailors intended to randomly select someone who might be responsible for the stormy weather, but God made sure that Jonah was selected. God was telling the sailors that Jonah was responsible. And God was telling Jonah that he better do what he was supposed to do.

We don’t talk a lot about casting lots in today’s world, but we do encounter random selection and chance. What are some activities or events with outcomes that are decided by chance or luck? *(card games, contests in which a name is drawn out of a hat, raffles, sweepstakes)* Do you think casting lots is a reliable way to get accurate information? *(It works to choose a random answer, but it doesn’t tell the reason behind the answer.)* The sailors knew they could cast lots to select the person responsible, but they couldn’t have known whether Jonah was really innocent or guilty without God’s help. We’re going to experiment with probability and chance today.

*Casting lots is usually about chance.* Show a penny. *What is the chance that when I flip this coin, it will land with heads up?* *(50%, 1 in 2 chance)* Flip the penny and announce results. According to the laws of probability, the penny should land heads up half the time. Let’s see if that is true. Find a partner. Distribute a penny, index card, and pencil to each pair. Take turns flipping the penny 10 times with your partner. Record each time whether it lands heads up or tails up. Allow time for kids to perform the experiment.

Let’s compare results. How many times total was a penny flipped? Count 10 times for each pair of kids and write that number on the board. How many total times did it land heads up? Add the pairs’ results and write those numbers on the board. Then divide the second number by the first number. Move the decimal point two spots to the right, and that’s your percentage. For example, if the coin was flipped 50 times total and came up heads 29 times, 29÷50=0.58 or 58%. Is that close to 50%, or half the time? What does this tell us?
When have you seen a coin flip used to decide something? (sports, at school, with friends)

In a ball game of two opponents, the fairest way to decide who gets the ball first is to flip a coin. Scientists use random tests, too, when they’re testing something new. For example, if a company is developing a new chemical to kill weeds, they have to randomly choose which weeds to spray it on. The results tell them how well the weed killer works. When people cast lots or flip a coin, they assume the results will be fair and random. When the sailors in today’s story cast lots, they assumed the result would be random. But God picked Jonah. God was telling Jonah that he better get back to Nineveh.

Sometimes, people can cheat random tests. How could you cheat with flipping a coin? (You could make sure it lands heads up or tails up.) How do you think you could influence which side lands up? (start it with heads up, control how many times it spins or how high you flip it) How can we test those ideas? (various replies) Let kids perform tests as they are able. Record and discuss results. Do you think that the results of casting lots in the story were fair? Why or why not? Help kids understand that God influenced the results, but that it was because of God that the results were fair. Jonah was guilty, and God made sure that he was chosen.

Although there are things we might be able to do to influence the results of flipping a coin, we can’t be absolutely sure of the results. The story of Jonah shows that God uses lots of different ways to tell us what we need to know. It took a lot of different messages—being thrown into the sea and swallowed by a big fish—for Jonah to hear what God was telling him.

Let’s cast lots to see who gets to be the line leader for each Shepherd group. Pass out a set of straws or dice to each Shepherd group. Be sure there’s a straw or die for each kid. If your group has dice, roll them at the same time ten times. Each time, keep track of who has the highest number. The person who gets the highest number the most times gets to line up first. If your group has a pile of straws, have one person hold the straws so all the straws are the same height above their hand. Roll the straws between your hands to mix them up. Each group member should draw a straw. The person with the shortest straw gets to line up first. Once you figure out who will line up first, return your materials to the table and line up. Allow time for kids to perform the experiment.

We discovered today that casting lots, flipping a coin, or rolling dice are great ways to make a decision randomly and fairly. But when God is involved, these random tests can be a way that God tells us something. Both God and Jonah knew that Jonah was hiding from his calling in today’s story. God used lots of different ways to tell Jonah he’d better get back to Nineveh—from making the storm to picking Jonah when the lots were cast to sticking him in the belly of a fish. Keep your eyes and ears open every day. You never know when God is telling you something important. So long, scientists!
Welcome everyone. I want to ask you a question. Are you a good listener? I’m going to give you an instruction, and I want you to do what I say. Use a whispered voice. Say, “Tell me again.” (Tell me again.) Use a louder voice. Say, “Tell me again.” (Tell me again.) Use a shouting voice. Say, “Tell me again!” (Tell me again!) You did a great job following my directions.

God gave Jonah an important direction: go to Nineveh to tell the people how to behave. What did God say would happen to Nineveh if Jonah didn’t go? (The city might be destroyed.) Although the people of Nineveh didn’t know it, it was very important for Jonah to follow God’s directions.

Some people learn by listening to others. For these people, listening is easy. They can hear a long set of instructions and follow them. Others learn by touching or seeing. For these people, listening can be harder. They can hear instructions, but all the details might not stick. Sometimes, people who learn by seeing or touching will forget what they just heard. These people have to learn how to listen. Learning to follow directions is an important part of learning to listen. How well do you follow directions? (Very well. Sometimes I forget what I am supposed to do.) Let’s find out.

Distribute paper and pencils. Pick one spot in the room. It could be a chair, the left side of the door, a picture on the wall, or some other place. Write down some words or make a drawing that describes your spot. What makes that spot special? How is that spot different from all the other spots in the room? Write those things down. Do not tell anyone else your special spot. Allow time for kids to find and describe their spot. When you are done, fold your paper in half with the words or drawing inside so no one can see them.

Find a partner who is younger or older than you. Decide who will go first. Without naming exactly where the special spot is, the first person must tell his or her partner five specific instructions on how to get to the special spot. For example, if you are giving directions, you might tell your partner, “Go two steps forward. Turn to your left.” And so on. The partner who is directing cannot move until all five of the directions have been followed. Once all five directions have been followed, go to your partner and show your paper. We’ll see how close everyone gets to the right spot! Give the kids several minutes to complete the experiment. Encourage the use of specifics: go right or left, go toward the windows or toward the door, etc.

How close is your partner to the right spot? Allow time for kids to share results. How did it feel to follow directions without knowing where you were supposed to be going? (frustrating, funny, harder than I thought it would be) Were you ever tempted to go a
different way? (yes, no) How did it feel to watch your partner, especially if your partner got confused and didn’t follow your instructions? (Frustrating. I wanted to just say go to the special spot.)

Switch roles and try it again. This time, if you’re not sure where you’re supposed to be going, don’t move. Instead, say, “Tell me again.” If your partner says, “Tell me again,” you should come up with a new direction that’s easier to follow. Allow time for kids to perform the experiment again. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being very hard and 10 being very easy, how would you rate your partner’s directions? Allow time for kids to respond. How many times did you have to repeat an instruction? Allow time for kids to respond.

God had to tell Jonah over and over again to go to Nineveh. Finally, Jonah went. While it was very important for Jonah to follow God’s directions, another important part of Jonah’s story was giving good directions. When Jonah finally went to Nineveh, he had to tell the people to change their ways. His instructions had to be clear and convincing. If he had just said, “Do the right thing,” or “Behave better,” people might have been confused. But God told Jonah exactly what to tell the people. By following these instructions, the people of Nineveh were saved.

If time permits, ask kids to practice giving and following directions on how to tie a shoe, play hopscotch, write their names, etc.

After today’s experiment, do you think you learn best by listening, or do you think you learn a different way? Allow kids to share their answers. Sometimes it’s hard to listen. Other times we just need someone to “tell us again” what to do. Jonah was a good listener. He just didn’t want to do what God said to do. Listening to instructions is important. Sometimes, even if we don’t want to do something, we have to listen to what our parents, teachers, or friends tell us. Practice listening really hard to your Shepherd for the rest of the day. See how well you do!
Age-Level Overview

Lower Elementary

GOD’S GOT THE GOODS ON YOU: Kids watch excerpts from Cars 2 or The Lion King and learn that telling important things can make a big difference. They may watch videos of whale “singing.”

SPARK RESOURCES: None

SUPPLIES: Cars 2 or The Lion King; DVD player and TV; computer, tablet, or phone capable of showing a video from an online source

Upper Elementary

GOD SAYS, “GO AND TELL!": Kids watch excerpts from Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules or The Muppets Take Manhattan and learn about the importance of telling God’s story. They may watch videos of bare-handed catches.

SPARK RESOURCES: Spark Story Bible

SUPPLIES: Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules or The Muppets Take Manhattan; DVD player and TV; computer, tablet, or phone capable of showing a video from an online source

All Kids

I CAN TELL SOMETHING IMPORTANT: Kids watch excerpts from The Secret of Moonacre or Chicken Little and learn about characters who tell important things. They may watch videos of smart fish.

SPARK RESOURCES: None

SUPPLIES: The Secret of Moonacre or Chicken Little; DVD player and TV; computer, tablet, or phone capable of showing a video from an online source
God's Got the Goods on You

**Set Up:** Preview and select the DVD clip you would like to use. Set up the TV and DVD player in your space. Make sure that everyone in the room will be able to see it. If desired, prepare a snack for the kids to enjoy while they watch the DVD. Before serving any food, check with caregivers for kids with food allergies. Provide an alternative if necessary.

**Welcome**

Invite kids to sit where they can see the video and you.

**Welcome to the video workshop!** Today we’re going to learn how telling others something important can make a big difference. Jonah didn’t want to tell the people of Nineveh the message God sent, but we’ll see that telling made a big difference!

**Video Option 1: Cars 2 (2011, PG, animated)**

**Start cue:** (Chapter 1, 00:00:44) Turbo says, “This is Agent Leland Turbo. I have a flash transmission for Agent Finn McMissile.”

**End cue:** (Chapter 1, 17:48) Lightning McQueen says, “You got me into this thing. You’re coming along.” “Alright!”

**Scene Set-Up:** Finn McMissile receives a cryptic message from a fellow agent that starts him on an adventure. Lightning McQueen and Mater reunite and make a plan to compete in an around-the-world race.

**Activity Instructions**

Read the scene set-up. Let’s see if we can tell what’s going to happen to Finn McMissile and Lightning McQueen. Watch the clip from Cars 2 together. After the clip, discuss the following questions:

- **What are the cars guarding on the oil derricks?** *(a camera)*
- **What does the camera do?** *(We don’t know.)*
- **What does Professor Z plan to do with the camera?** *(We don’t know.)*
- **What’s going to happen to Lightning McQueen and Mater during the race?** *(We don’t know.)*
- **What do we know?** Allow time for kids to respond.

It’s hard to put together the whole story when we don’t have all the information. We need to be told important pieces of the story in order to make sense of it. Jonah has information from God that God wants delivered to the people of Nineveh. God wants them to know that God isn’t happy with how they are behaving. God is going to punish them if they don’t change their ways. What might happen if the people get that important information? Allow time for kids to respond. What might happen if the people of Nineveh don’t get that important information? Allow time for kids to respond.
Video Option 2: The Lion King (1994, G, animated)

Start cue: (Chapter 16, 53:47) Timon and Pumbaa sing “The Lion Sleeps Tonight.”

End cue: (Chapter 19, 1:09:37) Rafiki celebrates!

Scene set-up: Nala and Simba meet after they are grown and Simba has run away from his pride. Nala convinces him to return and take his place as the new king.

Activity Instructions
Read the scene set-up. Let's see what happens when Nala tells Simba something important about the pride. Watch the clip from The Lion King together. After the clip, discuss the following questions:

Why was Nala surprised to see Simba alive? (She thought Simba had died.) Why was Nala angry with Simba? (She thought that if he was alive he should take his place as the king.)
What did Nala tell Simba about the pride? (Scar had ruined the land, run off the animals, and destroyed the pride.) What changed Simba's mind about returning to the pride? (He had a conversation with his father, who reminded him who he really was: a king.) Why do you think it was important for Simba to hear the truth? (The truth helped Simba see that he had to return to the pride and take his place as the rightful king.) Do you think Simba felt good about doing what his father told him to do? Why or why not?

Why was Jonah afraid to tell the people of Nineveh what God had said? (He was afraid they would be angry.) What changed Jonah's mind? (God had a big fish swallow Jonah. God and Jonah had a talk.) Do you think Jonah felt good about doing what God told him to do? Why or why not?

What are some things we can tell that can make a big difference? (when someone is being bullied, when we've made a mistake or had an accident)

Sometimes telling somebody something important, even if it's a little thing, can make a big difference. Jonah didn't want to tell Nineveh what God had said, but it turned out to make a huge difference. The people of Nineveh changed their ways, and God forgave them. It's important for us to tell important things.

Online Video Option: The World’s Biggest Hit Single

Set Up: Make sure you have Wi-Fi access so that you can view the video with kids. Position your laptop, tablet, or smart phone so all kids can see it. Keep in mind that many online videos have settings available to optimize their viewability. For example, if the video you've selected seems grainy or hard to see, check for the option to view it in 720p or 1080p (higher definition) before trying a different one. Most videos will have the option of enlarging the video to a full-screen size. If the video has annotations (comments added by the person who posted it) you can, and probably should, turn them off before watching.

Note: For this activity, HEARING the audio is more important than seeing the video, so if you're forced to choose, make sure kids can hear the sound.
To locate a great video to show kids, search YouTube or another content site using the key words “whales singing.” You can also check for specific video recommendations on the Spark Sunday School Facebook page. Today’s videos should be short examples of the amazing sounds that whales make when they’re “singing.” Try to stick to simple whale sounds, and avoid videos with commentaries and ones that are mashed up with ambient/techno music. Possible video links:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=grRuw1cE9LU
www.youtube.com/watch?v=WabT1L-nN-E
www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0fa_QCu2K0

**Activity Instructions**

Make sure that the kids in your group feel welcome today. Try greeting each of them by name, and keep on the lookout for positive behavior you can reinforce with language such as, “I notice that you’re ready to watch today’s video, Maureen! Way to go!”

Tell kids that you’ll be viewing today’s video in a different way from all of the other videos for this week. The group will begin by listening with their ears, trying to figure out what might be making such strange noises. Ask your group to close their eyes and listen to the sound. The videos you’ll find today average about two minutes, but you can also look for an appropriate video that’s longer if you want to give your group more time to guess.

Explain that, as soon as kids have an idea of what they’re listening to, they should raise their hands. When you give them a high-five, they can open their eyes.

Once the video has finished, and everyone sees where that strange sound is coming from, ask questions such as these: **Who guessed that we were listening to whales? What else did you think it might have been? What do you think these whales are telling each other? Sometimes talking with someone can feel like talking to a different species. We just can’t understand them! In today’s story, why do you think Jonah had trouble with the idea of talking to the people of Nineveh?**

**Some people think that the fish from today’s story might have been a whale, but the Bible says it was a big fish. If you wanted to tell someone this story, would it matter to you which one it was? Why?**

**Remember that our God is the same God who gave whales the ability to make incredible noises like this. If there’s something that God wants us to tell other people, God will give us a voice to do just that!**

Dismiss kids to their next workshop.
God Says, "Go and Tell!"

**Set Up:** Preview and select the DVD clip you would like to use. Set up the TV and DVD player in your space. Make sure that everyone in the room will be able to see it. If desired, prepare a snack for the kids to enjoy while they watch the DVD. *Before serving any food, check with caregivers for kids with food allergies. Provide an alternative if necessary.*

**Welcome**

Invite kids to sit where they can see the video and you.

**Welcome to the video workshop!** Today we’re going to learn how telling others something important can make a big difference. Jonah didn’t want to tell the people of Nineveh the message God sent, but we’ll see that telling made a big difference!

**Video Option 1: Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules (2011, PG)**

**Start Cue:** (Chapter 9, 34:27) There’s a party at Greg and Rodrick’s house.

**End Cue:** (Chapter 13, 54:09) Greg says, “I couldn’t believe it! Rodrick was actually trying to be nice to me.”

**Scene Set-Up:** Brothers Greg and Rodrick don’t get along. When they keep a party secret from their parents, their relationship changes.

**Activity Instructions**

Read the scene set-up. **Let’s watch to see whether or not Greg will tell his mom that they had a party while their parents were away.** Watch the clip from *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules* together. After the clip, discuss the following questions:

**Rodrick and Greg host a party while their parents are away. Before their parents return home, they clean the house and pretend nothing has happened. Do you think their parents suspect something has gone on there? Why or why not?** *(Yes, the house is unusually clean; the bathroom door has been replaced with a door with no lock. No, they don’t accuse the kids of doing anything wrong.) Why does Greg want to keep the secret, even though he is generally an honest kid?* *(He wants his brother, Rodrick, to like him and treat him well.) At the end of the clip, why do you think Greg’s mom decides to help him keep the secret?* *(She doesn’t know the whole truth, that “a few friends” means “a party”; she also wants Rodrick to treat Greg well.)*
Why do you think Jonah didn’t want to tell Nineveh what God said? Allow time for kids to respond. What happened when Jonah refused to tell? (Jonah was thrown into the sea and swallowed by a big fish.) What made Jonah change his mind about telling Nineveh? (God spoke with him and had the fish spit him onto dry land.) What might have happened if Jonah had never told God’s message to the people of Nineveh? Allow time for kids to respond.

**Video Option 2: The Muppets Take Manhattan** (1984, G)

**Start cue:** (Chapter 24, 1:13:24) Ronnie talks about producing the show.

**End cue:** (Chapter 26, 1:23:06) Kermit tells other Muppets they can be in the show.

**Scene set-up:** Kermit can’t quite figure out what’s missing from his show to make it more exciting. It suddenly dawns on him that the answer is in more of what he knows works—more animals, more people, more everything.

**Activity Instructions**

Read the scene set-up. Let’s watch to see what happens when Kermit decides it’s time to go and tell the others they are in the show. Watch the clip from The Muppets Take Manhattan together. After the clip, discuss the following questions:

Kermit forgets who he is for a while. How is that like Jonah in the story? Allow time for kids to respond. Have you ever wished you could just pretend you didn’t know something or didn’t have to do something or tell something to someone? What did that feel like? What did you do? Allow time for kids to respond.

After the clip, make some connections with the story of Jonah. There was a big cheer when all the other “people” got to be in the Broadway show with Kermit and his friends. How do you think the people of Nineveh reacted when they knew God was happy with them again? Allow time for kids to respond. What can you do to make sure you’re doing good things for God? What are some good things you can do for God? Allow time for kids to respond.

All’s well that ends well, and like the happy ending in our video, the story of Jonah had a happy ending. What kinds of things make happy endings when God is part of a story? Allow thoughtful responses. Where are some places you can make good things happen, at home, at school, and in the community? Allow time for kids to respond.

We learn from this story that there’s no reason to avoid doing the good things God is asking you to do. With the help of a pastor, parent, or friend, you can figure out what good things need to be done, and do them. When God wants you to tell something important, tell it to someone you trust. You’ll have fun, and you’ll feel good about it. God will help you all the way, and, like Jonah, you’ll have lots of chances to make it happen.

**Online Video Option: A Slippery Fella**

**Set Up:** Make sure you have Wi-Fi access so that you can view the video with kids. Position your laptop, tablet, or smart phone so all kids can see it. Keep in mind that many online videos have settings available to optimize their viewability. For example, if the video...
you’ve selected seems grainy or hard to see, check for the option to view it in 720p or 1080p (higher definition) before trying a different one. Most videos will have the option of enlarging the video to a full-screen size. If the video has annotations (comments added by the person who posted it) you can, and probably should, turn them off before watching.

To locate a great video to show kids, search YouTube or another content site using the key words “bare handed fishing.” You can also check for specific video recommendations on the Spark Sunday School Facebook page. Always preview these videos by listening to them as well as watching them. The ones we suggest below are safe bets, but don’t assume that all videos on public sites are safe for kids. Some videos have questionable language, while others have no sound at all. Find a video that works for your group. Many of the videos you’ll find today are less than one minute long, so you could watch more than one, or leave that time to read the suggested Bible story. Possible video links:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=cX3Rwf2qqfA
www.youtube.com/watch?v=aEdCqtpPpAvk
www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZWTeNz934U

Welcome each of the kids to this workshop and invite them to get comfortable in a place where they can see the screen. Make your space as comfortable as possible without putting kids to sleep. See what you can do about finding comfortable seating or dimmed lighting to remind kids of watching a movie at home.

Activity Instructions
You can preface today’s video by asking how many kids in your group have ever been fishing, what their experiences were like, if there was a lot of waiting involved, and so forth. Those questions could be added after the video as well.

Once the video is over, ask questions such as these: How did the people in this story feel after they caught a fish? Why do you think they acted that way? Affirm answers. If you were one of the people in these videos, how would you tell someone else what happened? What makes this exciting enough to share with others?

What excites you about God? Are you in a hurry to tell people about God, or to turn the other way? Accept all responses. Sometimes when God asks us to do something new, it can be scary or feel strange, sort of like being expected to catch a fish with your bare hands.

Open a Spark Story Bible to page 258 to check out one of the stories of Jesus fishing with the disciples. Read this out loud so everyone can hear it. Jesus’ friends took his advice, and when they started fishing in a unique way, they were more successful. Then Jesus told them to start focusing on people instead of fish. How do you think they felt then? Affirm all responses.

God wants us to tell people about the love God has for everyone. Sometimes that’s scary, and we might turn and run like Jonah did. Sometimes that’s exciting, and we might drop everything to do it, like the disciples did. But no matter what, God gives us everything we need to TELL others all about it!

Dismiss kids to their next workshop.
I Can Tell Something Important

**Set Up:** Preview and select the DVD clip you would like to use. Set up the TV and DVD player in your space, making sure that everyone in the room will be able to see it. If desired, prepare a snack for the kids to enjoy while they watch the DVD. *Before serving any food, check with caregivers for kids with food allergies. Provide an alternative if necessary.*

**Welcome**

Invite kids to sit where they can see the video and you.

*Welcome to the video workshop! Today we’re going to learn that telling others something important can make a big difference. Jonah didn’t want to tell the people of Nineveh the message God sent, but we’ll see that telling made a big difference!*

**Video Option 1: The Secret of Moonacre (2010, PG)**

*Start Cue:* (Chapter 8, 53:24:00) Maria escapes from the dungeon.

*End Cue:* (Chapter 10, 1:13:48) Sir Benjamin Merryweather says, “Maria. Where the devil is that girl?”

**Scene Set-Up:** A curse has come upon the land because of the pride of those who live there. Maria is on a quest to find magic pearls to prevent the curse from becoming eternal. Maria’s uncle, Sir Benjamin Merryweather, and the woman he loved, Loveday, can also end the curse if they will only speak words of forgiveness and love to one another.

**Activity Instructions**

Read the scene set-up. *Let’s watch to see if Benjamin and Loveday will tell that they love each other.* Watch the clip from *The Secret of Moonacre* together. After the clip, discuss the following questions:

**What happens when Maria tries to tell her uncle where she was?** *(He yells at her and she doesn’t tell him.)* What might have happened if she had told him and he had listened? *(They might have been able to work together to stop the curse.)* Why do you think Benjamin and Loveday won’t tell that they love each other? Allow time for kids to respond. Encourage them to think it through.

**Why do you think Jonah didn’t want to tell Nineveh what God said?** Allow time for kids to respond. *What happened when Jonah refused to tell?* *(Jonah was thrown into the sea and swallowed by a big fish.)* What made Jonah change his mind about telling Nineveh? *(God spoke with him and had the fish spit him onto dry land.)* What might have happened if Jonah had never told God’s message to the people of Nineveh? Allow time for kids to respond.
What might happen if you tell important things? Allow time for kids to respond. What might happen if you don’t tell important things? Allow time for kids to respond.

**Video Option 2: Chicken Little (2005, G, animated)**

**Start cue:** (Chapter 12, 46:31) The whole gang is in the field being chased by aliens, and Abby Mallard says, “The school bell. We’ve got to ring the school bell to warn everyone.”

**End cue:** (Chapter 15, 59:16) Chicken Little and the orange alien kid give each other an elaborate high-five.

**Scene set-up:** Chicken Little and his friends see that the aliens are “attacking” and decide to sound the alarm to warn the town, but no one believes them and Chicken Little feels helpless.

**Activity Instructions**
Read the scene set-up. **Let’s watch to see whether or not Chicken Little can convince the town of danger.** Watch the clip from *Chicken Little* together. After the clip, discuss the following questions:

**Over and over in this story, Chicken Little has to decide whether or not to take a risk to tell people the truth. What’s it like when you have to tell the truth to someone about something important?** Allow time for kids to respond. **When Chicken Little tells the truth, people don’t want to believe him. Then, bad things happen. What kinds of things happen when you don’t tell the truth?** Allow time for kids to respond. **When the people finally see that Chicken Little is telling the truth, it’s already too late. How do you think God reacts when we are slow to listen or believe?** Allow time for kids to respond. **It’s sad when Chicken Little’s dad doesn’t believe him, but we know he’s wrong. In the Bible story, Jonah knows the truth about God, but he doesn’t want to tell anyone. But God makes sure it happens. God helped Jonah to do the right thing, and we can trust that God will help us do the right thing, too.**

**Sometimes it’s hard to tell something important. We might be afraid. But when we tell something important, good things can happen. Jonah saves the people of Nineveh from destruction. We can make good things happen, too, when we tell important things to people we trust.**

**Online Video Option: "Tanks" for Your Support!**

**Set Up:** Make sure you have Wi-Fi access so that you can view the video with kids. Position your laptop, tablet, or smart phone so all kids can see it. Keep in mind that many online videos have settings available to optimize their viewability. For example, if the video you’ve selected seems grainy or hard to see, check for the option to view it in 720p or 1080p (higher definition) before trying a different one. Most videos will have the option of enlarging the video to a full-screen size. If the video has annotations (comments added by the person who posted it) you can, and probably should, turn them off before watching.
To locate a great video to show kids, search YouTube or another content site using the key words “world’s smartest fish.” You can also check for specific video recommendations on the Spark Sunday School Facebook page. Many of the videos you’ll find will feature Comet, a trained goldfish whose owners started an at-home, mail-order business based on Comet’s ability to do tricks. Even if you’re not impressed by Comet’s ability to swim through tunnels, it still makes for good discussion. However, if you find a video that works even better, then you should go for it! Possible video links:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=oRcNqNvQZ9U
www.youtube.com/watch?v=15Xi-IUKj7A
www.youtube.com/watch?v=yEtk8_FB9OQ

Activity Instructions
Welcome each of your kids to this workshop and invite them to get comfortable in a place where they can see the screen. Make your space as comfortable as possible without putting kids to sleep. See what you can do about finding comfortable seating or dimmed lighting to remind kids of watching a movie at home.

Ask kids whether or not they think fish are smart. You’ll get varying responses. Next, show the video you’ve chosen. Then ask questions such as these: **How many of you were impressed by this video? Who thinks it wasn’t that great? Why do you think the people in this video were impressed enough to post it on the Internet? Why did they want to tell other people about this fish?** Accept responses.

**Going back to the earlier question, do you still think fish are smart, or not? What’s something any fish is smart enough to do?** (find food, avoid bigger fish, etc.) **Albert Einstein is usually thought of as one of history’s greatest geniuses. There’s a quote attributed to him that says, “Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.”**

That’s one way of saying that all of us have things that we know a lot about or can do really well. What’s something from today’s story that Jonah could do really well? **Accept responses. What’s one thing he struggled with, like a fish climbing a tree?**

**God wants us to TELL other people that God’s love is for everyone. Sometimes we think that, because there are a few things we can’t do well, God can’t work with us. But in a world where fish can do surprising things like this, God can certainly use us in surprising and amazing ways!**

Dismiss kids to their next workshop.
Big Fish Funnels with Jonah Juice Bags

Check for kids with allergies before serving any foods. Provide an alternative, if needed.

Set Up: Clean up the area and wash your hands before you prepare the snack. Chill the juice bags before serving. Mix the crackers and candies together in a large bowl. Drop one graham cracker bear into each sugar cone. Add a scoop of the fish crackers and candies to each cone. Just before kids arrive, place the cones on trays. Make sure kids wash their hands before eating.

Prayer
Cup your hands around your mouth to make a “megaphone” and speak loudly and clearly. Pause after each phrase of the prayer so kids can repeat what you say. This is an echo prayer. Cup your hands around your mouth like a megaphone and repeat after me!

Dear God,
You sent Jonah / to tell Nineveh / about your love!
Use us to tell / your story / to the world!
And the big fish says . . .
Amen! (Open arms like a big fish’s mouth and snap them closed.)

Serve each kid a Big Fish Funnel on a plate with a napkin and a Jonah Juice Bag. Your Big Fish Funnel has a big mouth and full tummy. See if you can find Jonah inside and make the fish spit him out. Allow time for kids to search for Jonah as they eat their snack.

Jonah was sent to Nineveh to tell God’s story to the whole city. When you empty your Big Fish Funnel, bite off the tip to turn it into a megaphone. Hold a sample cone missing its tip up to your mouth. Munch on your megaphone as you tell your friends what you think is important for everyone to know about God. Look at the story in your Spark Story Bibles or booklets for ideas!
If you’re interested in leading a Cooking workshop with kids, take a look at what’s in Spark Rotation:

Lower Elementary kids make Fudge Fish. Kids make fudge and use it to form different parts of Jonah’s story. Stir up a seaside storm of fudge balls that kids can shape into a picture from the story before eating. Extras get sprinkles and go home with kids so that they can share a snack and tell the Jonah story.

Upper Elementary kids make Nineveh’s Break-fast. Kids learn about fasting and cook breakfast while reviewing Jonah’s story. Older kids take charge of the kitchen to learn about Jonah. Gobble up the Jonah story step by step with grape juice sea drinks, apple and cheese ships, and big fish bagels with bacon.

All Kids make Cookie Surprise. Kids make cookies with a surprise to remind them that God’s ways are surprising. Rock Jonah’s boat with these sugar cookies with a twist—potato chips! Kids stir, crush, and mix their way through the Jonah story to end up with a surprising sweet treat.
Big Picture Overview

Gather

CENTER TIME: Kids send mail, sort big and little fish, color a Jonah and the Big Fish Coloring Page, or play at a water table.  
SPARK RESOURCES: Jonah and the Big Fish Coloring Pages  
SUPPLIES: Paper, envelopes, box with slot or toy mailbox, stickers, mailbag, postal carrier’s hat, rubber stamp, construction paper, scissors, paper clips, dowels, string, magnets, wading pool or bucket, fish nets, blank paper, crayons or markers, water table or dishpans, toy boats, plastic toy fish and other sea creatures, aquarium nets, small bowls, strainers, funnels, beach towels, hand towels, non-slip rugs, warm water

CIRCLE TIME: Kids share fishy welcomes and hear a message from God.  
SPARK RESOURCES: None  
SUPPLIES: Toy telephone

PRAYER TIME: Kids pray a fish prayer.  
SPARK RESOURCES: None  
SUPPLIES: None

Open the Bible

JONAH AND THE BIG FISH STORYTELLING: Kids contribute to the story of Jonah and the Big Fish.  
SPARK RESOURCES: Spark Story Bible Booklets or Spark Story Bibles  
SUPPLIES: Stuffed animal fish

Activate Faith

GAME: RUNAWAY JONAH: Kids try to catch Jonah.  
SPARK RESOURCES: None  
SUPPLIES: None

GAME: JONAH TOSS: Kids toss clothespins into a Hula Hoop® big fish mouth.  
SPARK RESOURCES: None  
SUPPLIES: Clothespins or tongue depressors, marker, Hula Hoop®, masking tape

GAME: FIND JONAH: Kids find Jonah underneath a plastic cup labeled “Boat,” “Belly,” or “Nineveh.”  
SPARK RESOURCES: None  
SUPPLIES: Small rubber ball, permanent marker, identical plastic cups, masking tape
### Activate Faith (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Spark Resources</th>
<th>Supplies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MUSIC: WHERE IS JONAH?:</strong> Kids sing a piggyback song about Jonah to the tune of “Where Is Thumbkin?”</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MUSIC: WALKING MUSIC:</strong> Kids listen to music and walk like Jonah did.</td>
<td>Spark Song CD (or other kid’s praise CD)</td>
<td>CD player</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MUSIC: GIANT FISH SONG:</strong> Kids chant a piggyback chant in the rhythm of the camp chant, “Baby Shark.”</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ART: PAINTING UP A STORM:</strong> Kids use watercolors to paint a storm.</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>White paper, watercolor paints, paintbrushes, paint shirts, table coverings, containers for the water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ART: FISHY FISH:</strong> Kids make paper bag fish and put Jonah in the belly.</td>
<td>Jonah Template (page 13)</td>
<td>Paper lunch bags, circular packing stickers, yarn, newspaper, scissors, markers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ART: FINGERPRINT FISH:</strong> Kids make fingerprint fish.</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>White construction paper, washable ink pads, wet wipes or wet paper towels, blue cellophane, markers or crayons, kid-safe scissors, scissors, clear tape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SNACK: FLOATING JONAH:</strong> Kids float a gummy bear Jonah on a frosting ocean and share a snack together.</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Cookies, white frosting, blue food coloring, gummy bears, napkins, plastic knives or craft sticks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SNACK: BUBBL Y PUNCH:</strong> Kids create a bubbly ocean punch and pretzel fish, and share a snack together.</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Pretzel twists, fruit juice, clear pitcher, carbonated seltzer water, cups, napkins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SNACK: HIDDEN SURPRISE:</strong> Kids find a marshmallow surprise in pudding and share a snack together.</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Instant pudding, mini marshmallows, spoons, bowls</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GOOD-BYE TIME: Kids say good-bye with a fish toss.

SPARK RESOURCES: None

SUPPLIES: Two stuffed animal fish

PRAYER TIME: Kids remember to tell God’s story with a fish sticker and share a prayer together.

SPARK RESOURCES: Jonah and the Big Fish Family Page

SUPPLIES: Fish stickers
Gather (20 minutes)

Center Time

You may choose to set up one or more of these creative play centers where kids can play as they arrive in your classroom. Have helpers in each center to help children with the activities. Kids can stay in one center or travel to more than one.

SENDING MAIL

Set Up: Set the items where the kids can play with them. Use tables or other furniture to make a post office counter.

Activity Instructions

We tell news to our friends and family in the mail. God used Jonah to tell the people of Nineveh news about God. Jonah was a letter from God! Let the kids write and mail letters. Pretend the stickers are stamps. Use the rubber stamp with or without ink to cancel the letters. Pack the mailbag and deliver letters all over the room. Have the kids take turns being the mail carrier collecting things from the mailbox.

BIG AND LITTLE

Set Up: Cut big and little fish shapes from construction paper. Add a metal paper clip to each fish. Mix them up in a small wading pool or bucket. Make several fishing poles by tying string to dowels. At the end of each string, secure a magnet.

Activity Instructions

Today's Bible story tells us about a big fish. It was so big, it swallowed Jonah! Let the kids go fishing with the magnet rods in a wading pool of construction paper fish. When they pull a fish from the pond, they may sort the fish into two fishing nets, one for big fish, the other for little ones. Dump the fish back into the pool for unlimited fishing and sorting fun.
COLORING CENTER

Provide copies of the Jonah and the Big Fish Coloring Pages, blank paper, and markers or crayons for each kid. Be sure to write their names on their drawings before they move to Circle Time.

WATER TABLE

Set Up: Fill the water table or dishpans halfway with warm water. Place dishpans on a beach towel on top of a kid-sized table. Remove chairs from the table. Place non-slip rugs where kids will stand and play. Place water toys in the water and have hand towels nearby for drying wet hands.

Activity Instructions
Ask kids to wash their hands before dipping into the water. Let the kids play in the water, pouring, dumping, and catching the sea creatures in nets.

When all kids have arrived and have had time to participate in at least one center, take a fish net from the Big and Little center and say to the kids, When I wave this fish net, we will know that it is time for everyone to help clean up and get ready for Circle Time. Be sure to wave the fish net where everyone can see it.

Circle Time

Let’s say a fishy welcome. Swim like fish. We’ll go around the circle, and when it is your turn, say, “Glub! Glub! Welcome, [Name]. Welcome, little fish! We’re glad you’re here.” Go around the circle until everyone has been welcomed.

Hold up the phone. Someone is calling us. Is it God? Does God call us on the phone? No, God tells us messages in lots of ways, but not through the phone. As we pass the phone around, I will tell you the message. Say to each kid as you pass the phone, “God loves you, [Name].” God calls Jonah. That means God has a job for Jonah. God has a job for you, too. Just like Jonah, God wants us to tell others about God’s love.

Prayer Time

Raise your arms over your head to make a big fish mouth, opened wide for our prayer.

Dear God,
The big fish opened its big mouth to swallow Jonah. Help us open our mouths to tell others about your love.
Amen. Clap your arms closed like a mouth for each syllable of “Amen.”
Open the Bible (15 minutes)

Jonah and the Big Fish Storytelling

When I hold up this fish, I want you to say, “Tell God’s story!” Let’s practice. Hold up the fish. (“Tell God’s story!”) Great job!

Jonah is a good man. God chooses him to go to a different town to tell God’s story. God knows that Jonah will . . . Hold up the fish. But Jonah does not do what God wants. Jonah goes a different way. Is that a good idea? No, he should go and . . . Hold up the fish. Jonah tries to hide from God. He even gets on a ship so he won’t have to . . . Hold up the fish.

Can Jonah hide from God? No! God sends a storm. Jonah goes overboard to save the other people on the boat. And still he does not want to . . . Hold up the fish. God sends a big fish to swallow Jonah. When Jonah is in the belly of the fish, he knows that he should . . . Hold up the fish. He prays to ask God to forgive him. He promises to always . . . Hold up the fish. Jonah goes to the people of Nineveh, and the people listen to him . . . Hold up the fish. The people of Nineveh promise to always . . . Hold up the fish. They want to follow God just like Jonah follows God. Jonah will not forget being swallowed by the big fish. He will always . . . Hold up the fish. We know that we are like Jonah and the people who lived in Nineveh. We should always . . . Hold up the fish.

Help kids open to the story of Jonah and the Big Fish on pages 190–193 in the Spark Story Bible, or pages 12-15 in the Spark Story Bible Booklet. Read the story out loud and talk about the corresponding pictures. Look for Squiggles the caterpillar in each picture. Ask kids what they think Squiggles is feeling or doing. Encourage them to make a face or move like Squiggles.

Ask the following questions, allowing time for kids to answer.

Who did God send to tell God’s story to the people of Nineveh? (Jonah)

What would you do if God asked you to tell God’s story to a friend?

Who would you tell about God’s love?
**Activate Faith (60 minutes)**

Expand or condense Activate Faith time with your group depending on how long you are together. Choose from the following Game, Music, Art, and Snack options to fill your day.

### GAME: RUNAWAY JONAH

Jonah tried to run away from God. He tried to go his own way and not God's way. We are going to play a game. Who wants to be our first Jonah? Choose one kid to be Jonah. When Jonah ran away to hide, God found him. When Jonah jumped into the water, the fish found him. We're all going to be the fish and try to catch Jonah. Jonah will try to run from one side of the room to the other without being tagged. Fish, you need to stand in one place and reach out your fins when Jonah goes by you. Spread out fish, and let's catch Jonah. When you catch Jonah, tell him, “Time to go to Nineveh!” The first fish who catches Jonah will be the next Jonah. Play until the kids tire of the game. Modify the game by creating a team of Jonahs and a team of fish to make it a little harder.

### GAME: JONAH TOSS

**Set Up:** Use a marker to draw faces on the clothespins or tongue depressors.

**Activity Instructions**

Lean the Hula Hoop® against a chair or table so that it is upright. Make a masking tape line that kids will stand behind. Give each kid a clothespin or tongue depressor. **We're going to pretend this Hula Hoop® is the mouth of a very big fish and the clothespin is Jonah. We'll take turns trying to throw Jonah into the fish's mouth.** Have the kids take turns tossing Jonah into the Hula Hoop®. Move the masking tape line backward or forward to make the game harder or easier as needed.

### GAME: FIND JONAH

**Set Up:** Use a permanent marker to draw a Jonah face on a small rubber ball. Arrange the three cups, upside down, on a table. Put a piece of masking tape in front of each cup. Write “Boat” on the first piece, “Belly” on the second, and “Nineveh” on the third.

**Activity Instructions**

Make a big show of hiding the Jonah ball under one of the cups. Quickly slide the cups around several times. Allow the kids to guess the cup they think Jonah is hiding under. **Where did God tell Jonah to go? (Nineveh)** Where did Jonah go to hide from God? (boat, belly of fish) Silly, Jonah! You can't hide from God. Come out, come out, wherever you are! It's time to go to the people of Nineveh to tell them about God's love! Where's Jonah? Lift the cups one at a time to reveal the hidden Jonah. **He's in [name of cup he was in]!** Repeat several times.
MUSIC: WHERE IS JONAH?

Sing to the tune of “Where Is Thumbkin?”

Where is Jonah? Where is Jonah?
Here he is, here he is.
Telling God’s great story, telling God’s great story.
Tell them all. Tell them all.

Where is Jonah? Where is Jonah?
On the ship. On the ship.
Jonah tries to hide. Jonah tries to hide.
God finds him. God finds him.

Where is Jonah? Where is Jonah?
In the storm. In the storm.
Rocking to and fro. Rocking to and fro.
Overboard. Overboard.

Where is Jonah? Where is Jonah?
In the fish. In the fish.
God hears him pray. God hears him pray.
God saves the day. God saves the day.

Where is Jonah? Where is Jonah?
Nineveh. Nineveh.
Telling God’s great story. Telling God’s great story.
Tell them all. Tell them all.

MUSIC: WALKING MUSIC

Jonah has a long walk to Nineveh. He would have an easier time if he had some music.
Let’s play some music and walk together. We’ll pretend we are walking to Nineveh to tell about God’s love. Play some music with different tempos. Walk faster or slower depending on the beat of the music. Add some variety to your walking by marching, skipping, or walking backward.
MUSIC: GIANT FISH SONG

Do the giant fish dance as you sing this variation on a classic camp chant, “Baby Shark.” The sillier and larger the actions, the better for dancing fun with the kids! If you aren’t familiar with the chant, do an Internet search for “Baby Shark camp song.”

**Baby fish! Doot doo, doot doot duh-doo!** (tap thumb and forefinger together, like a fish mouth opening and closing)

**Mama fish! Doot doo, doot doot duh-doo!** (open and close whole hand and thumb, making a bigger fish mouth)

**Giant fish! Doot doo, doot doot duh-doo!** (open and close arms like a giant fish mouth, clapping hands together)

**Going swimming! Doot doo, doot doot duh-doo!** (do strokes with arms)

**Swallowed Jonah! Doot doo, doot doot duh-doo!** (rub belly)

**Spit him out! Doot doo, doot doot duh-doo!** (stick tongue out)

**Go to Nineveh! Doot doo, doot doot duh-doo!** (march around)

**Tell the world! Doot doo, doot doot duh-doo!** (use hands to make a magaphone over your mouth)

**God loves you! Doot doo, doot doot duh-doo!** (cross arms over chest in American Sign Language sign for love)
**ART: PAINTING UP A STORM**

**Set Up:** Cover the tables and fill the containers with a little water.

**Activity Instructions**
Help kids put on paint shirts. We're going to paint a storm just like the one that Jonah felt on the boat. Use lots of water and lots of paint to cover your papers with the storm. Have fun making everything wet and colorful! God sent a big storm to tell Jonah that he could not hide from God. There was lots of rain and water, just like in our paintings.

**ART: FISHY FISH**

**Set Up:** Make copies of the Jonah Template (page 13). Cut out one Jonah for each kid.

**Activity Instructions**
Let's make fish today, like the fish that swallowed Jonah. Give each kid two stickers and a lunch bag. These lunch bags will be the fish. We'll use the stickers for eyes. Decorate your fish with markers. Then I'll help you stuff the fish. Show the kids how to crumple the newspaper and stuff it into the lunch bag. Don't forget to put Jonah inside your big fish. Jonah was in the big fish for three days! Add a paper Jonah to the stuffing of each fish. Help the kids tie the yarn around the open end of the lunch bag to hold the stuffing inside. Show them how to fluff the ends to make the tail stick out.

Swim all the way to Nineveh, big fishies! Tell the world about God's love! Let the kids swim their fish around the room.

**ART: FINGERPRINT FISH**

**Set Up:** Cut the paper in half the long way.

**Activity Instructions**
Pass out the art materials. Wet the paper towels if necessary. Show the kids how to cut a wave along one of the long edges of the paper. We're going to make some fish today. We'll stamp our fingerprints onto the paper using these ink pads and then use crayons and markers to draw the rest of the fish. You can make lots of fish. Use different colors so you have many colors of fish. Use the wet towels to clean your fingers. You might like to draw some seaweed or other things in your underwater drawing, too. When we're done, we'll attach this blue cellophane to make our drawings look more like the world underwater. Tape the cellophane over the drawings.
**SNACK: FLOATING JONAH**

Before serving any food, always check with caregivers for kids who have food allergies. Provide an alternative if necessary.

**Set Up:** Tint the frosting with the blue food coloring.

**Activity Instructions**
Have the kids help pass out spreaders and napkins. Give each kid a cookie and a blob of frosting. **Use your spreader to spread the frosting around. When you are done, I will give you a gummy bear that you can pretend is Jonah floating in the water. Will you make him float? Or maybe he can dive into the blue frosting water. Whisper in his ear, “Go to Nineveh to tell God’s story, Jonah!”**

**SNACK: BUBBLY PUNCH**

Before serving any food, always check with caregivers for kids who have food allergies. Provide an alternative if necessary.

Pass out napkins, cups, and pretzels. Pour the juice into the pitcher. Leave some room for the seltzer. **When Jonah got thrown into the water, I bet there were lots of bubbles. We are going to make some bubbly drinks for our snack. When I pour this bubbly seltzer into the juice, watch for the bubbles floating to the top.** Pour the seltzer water in the pitcher and point out the bubble action. Then pour each kid a little punch. **See if you can eat away part of your pretzel to make it look like a fish. Does your fish have a tail? You might have to use your imagination to think of your pretzel like a fish! Now gobble up your fish and bubbly punch snack.**

**SNACK: HIDDEN SURPRISE**

Before serving any food, always check with caregivers for kids who have food allergies. Provide an alternative if necessary.

**Set Up:** Make the pudding as directed. Pour into bowls to set. Poke marshmallows into the pudding so they can’t be seen.

**Activity Instructions**
Jonah tries to run away and hide from God. **We have something hidden in our snacks today.** Pass out the pudding bowls and spoons. **Dip your spoon in carefully to see if you can find the hidden surprise. Yoo hoo! Where are you, Jonah? You need to go to Nineveh to tell God’s story!**
**Send (5 minutes)**

**Good-bye Time**

We're going to say good-bye with fish. As I toss this fish to someone, I'll say, "Tell God's story, [Name]." Then you can toss it to someone else. Let's make sure everyone gets a turn. If the game is going well, you can add more action by throwing a couple of fish at the same time.

**Prayer Time**

When God told Jonah to tell God's story, Jonah did not listen. I am going to put a fish sticker on your hand to remind you to tell God's story. Why do you suppose we are using a fish sticker? We're using a fish sticker because of Jonah's fish. Remember to tell God's story: God loves us! Put a sticker on each kid's hand.

Dear God, help us to tell your story. Thank you for loving us. Amen.

Send home a Jonah and the Big Fish Family Page with each kid.
Jonah Template
Good Luck Hiding!

Jonah couldn’t hide from God. Can you find the seven fish that are trying to hide in this picture? Circle each fish when you find it.
Creature Code

God has a message for Jonah, but it got scrambled in the fish! The key to this code is scattered throughout the body of the big fish. Collect the letters first. Then fill in God’s message!

If you have time, try making a message of your own. You can add letters and numbers to the fish.

Upper Elementary, Jonah and the Big Fish Activity Page. Spark™ Summer © 2012 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. May be reproduced for local use only.
God's Fishy Directions

Circle every third letter to reveal a key phrase from today's story! The first one has been circled for you.

God's Fishy Directions

Circle every third letter to reveal a key phrase from today's story! The first one has been circled for you.

God's Fishy Directions

Circle every third letter to reveal a key phrase from today's story! The first one has been circled for you.

God's Fishy Directions

Circle every third letter to reveal a key phrase from today's story! The first one has been circled for you.
God’s Fishy Directions Solution

Circle every third letter to reveal a key phrase from today’s story! The first one has been circled for you.

H N G I U O
W M U K O N R V T L D O M S
N J Q I K X N D P E M
A V J C E H V H

G O U N T O N I N E V E H.
“Hmmm,” Jonah thought, “I don’t really want to go to Nineveh.”

When Jonah got to the sea, he paid to get onto a boat to take him even farther away.
Look out, Jonah! Here comes a BIG fish! Gulp, gulp, gulp.
Jonah told the people of Nineveh what God had said, and they believed him.
Today’s Bible story is

**Jonah and the Big Fish**

from Jonah 1–4.

Jonah runs away from God, and a fish swallows him.

Ask each other what you remember about:

- Jonah
- Nineveh
- Tarshish
- Prophet
- Prophesy

Today, Nineveh is the site of Mosul, Iraq.

### Family Conversations

1. What do you think it would be like to travel inside a big fish?

2. What difficult things have you been asked to do?

3. How does God help us do difficult things?

4. Jonah gets really angry with God towards the end of this story. God can handle our anger. Take turns practicing “angry prayers” as well as prayers of thanksgiving and prayers asking for help. Go ahead and stomp your feet and wave your arms and throw a magnificent tantrum, then pick yourself up and say “Thank you, Lord, for sticking with me!”

### Eye Spark

What fish can you see? When you spot them, think of Jonah and his ride.

### Ear Spark

What sounds can you hear that make you think of the sea? Boats? Fish?

### For families to do together

Play a game of Go Fish as a family and remember Jonah.

### For younger kids

Have some goldfish crackers as a snack. Share them with someone who is often left out.

### For older kids

Jonah was in the Mediterranean Sea. Go online to research what large fish might have lived in that sea or other bodies of water during Jonah's time.

Read the whole story together in the Bible. Then say this prayer together.

Plan a meal with fish as the main course, or have a snack with fish crackers. Offer this prayer.

**Dear God,** thank you for sticking with us even though we misunderstand, mistrust and resist your directions. Help us tell your story. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.