God wants us to obey him even when we’re in trouble.

Bible Verse
“We must obey God” (Acts 5:29b).

Growing Closer to Jesus
Children will
- experience what it might be like inside a giant fish,
- hear how God used a fish to rescue Jonah and teach Jonah to obey,
- play a beanbag toss game, and
- encourage each other to obey God this week.

Teacher Enrichment

Bible Basis
- Jonah is swallowed by a great fish.

God wasn’t finished with Jonah. Despite Jonah being tossed into a stormy sea, God had a plan to continue his work through this wayward servant. Part of this plan required Jonah to spend three days and three nights inside the belly of a great fish.

The species of fish God sent to swallow Jonah is not identified, nor is identifying a species necessary for the validity of the story. Given God’s unlimited creative power, it could even have been a creature uniquely formed for this important task. On the other hand, there are species in existence today, such as the whale shark, which would have been big enough for the job. Jonah was now a captive audience for God and had plenty of time to ponder his attitude and his situation.

Prayer
- Read John 15:10.
- How does obedience demonstrate love?
- Pray: Lord, help me to show my love for you as I obey your commands. Guide me in the area of…

Before the Lesson
- Collect the necessary items for the activities you plan to use, referring to the Classroom Supplies and Learning Lab Supplies listed on the chart.
- Make photocopies of the “Today I Learned…” handout (at the end of this lesson) to send home with your children.
- Pray for the children in your class and for God’s direction as you teach the lesson.
This Lesson at a Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Children Will Do</th>
<th>Classroom Supplies</th>
<th>Learning Lab Supplies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Welcome Time</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Welcome!</strong>—Receive name tags, and be greeted by the teacher.</td>
<td>“Praying Hands Name Tags” (p. 23), scissors, marker, safety pins or tape</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Let’s Get Started</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct children to one or more of the optional activities until everyone arrives.</td>
<td>Large box, construction paper, paper plates, tape, crayons, scissors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Option 1: Fish Box</strong>—Build a giant fish out of a box, and hear how Jonah was swallowed by a big fish.</td>
<td><strong>Option 2: Goin’ Fishin’</strong>—Catch paper fish, and talk about the big fish that swallowed Jonah.</td>
<td>“Fish Pattern” (p. 149), “Story Tickets” (p. 135), scissors, glue sticks, newspapers, laundry basket or box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Option 3: Feeling Fishy</strong>—Touch and smell slimy and fishy things to see what it might have been like for Jonah inside the fish.</td>
<td><strong>Pick-Up Time</strong>—Sing a song as they pick up toys and gather for Bible Story Time.</td>
<td>Box, towel, canned fish, paper cups, wet wipes, prepared gelatin or cooked noodles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bible Story Time</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Setting the Stage</strong>—Sing and play a game about getting swallowed by a fish as Jonah did.</td>
<td><strong>Bible Song and Prayer Time</strong>—Sing a song, bring out the Bible, and pray together.</td>
<td><strong>Hear and Tell the Bible Story</strong>—Listen with a partner for times Jonah was in trouble.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hear and Tell the Bible Story</strong>—Listen with a partner for times Jonah was in trouble.</td>
<td><strong>Do the Bible Story</strong>—Toss “Jonah” into the mouth of a fish.</td>
<td>Jonah figure (p. 134), scissors, beanbag, safety pins, fish box from Option 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Closing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cat Food</strong>—Help Whiskers get out of trouble as he’s being chased by a cat.</td>
<td><strong>Stamp and Remember</strong>—Stamp one another’s hands, and remind each other to obey God.</td>
<td><strong>See the end of this lesson for extra-time ideas and supplies.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Welcome Time

**SUPPLIES:** “Praying Hands Name Tags” (p. 23), scissors, marker, safety pins or tape

- Bend down and make eye contact with children as they arrive.
- Greet each child individually with an enthusiastic smile.
- Thank each child for coming to class today.
- As children arrive, ask them how they put last week’s lesson into practice. Use questions such as “Who did you tell about Jonah and the storm?” and “Tell me about a time this week when you were scared. What did you do?”
- Say: **Today we’re going to learn that **God wants us to obey him even when we’re in trouble.**
- Hand out the praying hands name tags children made during Lesson 1, and help children attach the name tags to their clothing. If some of the name tags were damaged or if children weren’t in class that week, have children make new name tags using the photocopiable name tag patterns.
- Direct children to the Let’s Get Started activities you’ve set up.

Let’s Get Started

Set up one or more of the following activities for children to do as they arrive. After you greet each child, invite him or her to choose an activity.

Circulate among the children to offer help as needed and direct children’s conversation toward today’s lesson. Ask questions such as “Have you ever gone fishing? What was that like?” or “What do you think it might be like to be inside a big fish?”

**Option 1: Fish Box**

**SUPPLIES:** large box, construction paper, paper plates, tape, crayons, scissors

Bring in a large box to make into a big fish. Open one end of the box and hang construction paper teeth from the top of the opening. Give children paper plates to create scales for the fish. Let them decorate the plates; then help them tape the plate scales to the sides of the fish in an overlapping pattern. As children attach the scales to the fish, talk about what it might have been like for Jonah to be swallowed by a big fish. Explain to children that today they will learn that **God wants us to obey him even when we’re in trouble.**

You will use the big fish later in this lesson and for the next two weeks.

**Option 2: Goin’ Fishin’**

**SUPPLIES:** “Fish Pattern” (p. 149), “Story Tickets” (p. 135), scissors, glue sticks, newspapers, laundry basket or box

Before class, photocopy and cut out 10 to 12 fish using the “Fish Pattern” from Lesson 10. Also photocopy the “Story Tickets” from Lesson 9. Cut out the story tickets and glue each ticket to a fish. Cut or tear newspapers into strips, and put the strips into a laundry basket or box.

*It’s important to say the Bible Point just as it’s written in each activity. Repeating the Bible Point again and again will help children remember it and apply it to their lives.*

If new families have joined your church recently, ask if they have a leftover moving box you could use for this activity. Or check with your local grocery store. Even a relatively small packing box will make a big fish!
Lesson 11

Let children help you put all the fish into the laundry basket or box. Encourage children to hide the fish under the newspaper strips. Then let children take turns “fishing” by reaching into the newspaper strips and pulling out fish. As children are fishing, review what they’ve learned about Jonah and remind them that God wants us to obey him even when we’re in trouble.

When children catch a story fish, have them tell that part of the story. After they’ve caught all three story fish, they can put the story parts in order.

**Option 3: Feeling Fishy**

**SUPPLIES:** box, towel, canned fish, paper cups, wet wipes, prepared gelatin or cooked noodles

Before class, prepare sensory items as follows. In each paper cup, place a slimy or slippery item such as cold cooked noodles or prepared gelatin. Make a sniff box by placing a can of tuna, sardines, or anchovies inside a medium-sized box and covering the box with a towel.

Remind children that Jonah was trapped inside the fish for three days. Let children take turns sniffing the canned fish and feeling the noodles and gelatin. Explain that Jonah smelled and felt different things inside the fish.

Have wet wipes handy so children can clean their hands before continuing with the lesson.

When everyone has arrived and you’re ready to move on to Bible Story Time, encourage children to finish what they’re doing and get ready to clean up.

**Pick-Up Time**

**SUPPLIES:** CD player

Lead children in singing “Come Along With Me” with the CD (track 2) to the tune of “Come and Go With Me.” Encourage children to sing along as they help clean up the room.

**SING**

Come along with me and pick up all our things,  
Pick up all our things,  
Pick up all our things.  
Come along with me and pick up all our things  
So our room will be clean.

(Repeat 2x.)
Bible Story Time

Setting the Stage

**SUPPLIES:** CD player

Tell children that when they hear you clap your hands two times, they're to stop what they're doing and clap their hands two times. Practice this signal a few times. Encourage children to respond quickly so you'll have time for all the fun activities you've planned.

Ask: **What did you make or do when you came to class today?** (Made a giant fish; played a fishing game; touched squishy things.)

Say: **Some of you helped make a giant fish out of a big box. Some of you went fishing for story fish. And some of you got to feel some slimy, slippery things. You were all learning important things about our story of Jonah. Today we're going to talk about the big fish that swallowed Jonah. When Jonah was swallowed by the fish, he knew he was in trouble. God wants us to obey him even when we're in trouble like Jonah was. Let's play a game to help us see how Jonah got in trouble.**

Select two children, and have them join hands as if playing London Bridge. Say: [Names of children holding hands] **will be the big fish. The rest of us will be Jonah. In a minute we'll sing a song together, and as we sing the Jonahs will walk through the fish. Fish, when we sing, “A big fish got him,” you can bring your arms down and catch one of the Jonahs. You can keep Jonah until you hear us sing, “out came Jonah”; then you must let Jonah go.**

Let's listen to our song once so we can hear how it goes. Then we'll try singing it together:

Play “Jonah Ran Away” on the CD (track 17) several times. The first time let children listen to the words. The second time lead children in singing the song together to the tune of “London Bridge.” The third time have children play the game as they sing.

**SING**

Jonah ran away from God,
Away from God,
Away from God.
Jonah ran away from God.
A big fish got him!

Three days inside that fish,
Inside that fish,
Inside that fish.
Three days inside that fish,
Then out came Jonah!

When the “fish” catches a Jonah, have the rest of the children circle around until Jonah is let go.

Repeat the game until most children have had a chance to be the fish and Jonah.
Lesson 11

Bible Song and Prayer Time

SUPPLIES: Bible, CD player

Say: Now it’s time to choose a Bible person to bring me the Bible marked with today’s Bible story. As we sing our Bible song, we’ll pass around our special Bible. The person who’s holding the Bible when the music stops will be our Bible person today.

Lead children in singing “I’m So Glad for the Bible” with the CD (track 3) to the tune of “Give Me Oil in My Lamp.” As you sing, pass around the special Bible.

I’m so glad for the Bible,
Keep me learnin’, learnin’, learnin’.
I’m so glad for God’s book today.
I’m so glad for the Bible,
Keep me learnin’, learnin’, learnin’—
Keep me learnin’ all about his way.

Let me hear ’bout God’s love—
Keep me learnin’, learnin’, learnin’.
Let me hear ’bout God’s love for me.
Let me hear ’bout God’s love—
Keep me learnin’, learnin’, learnin’.
Let’s shine the light for all to see.

(Repeat first verse.)

When the music stops, invite the child who’s holding the Bible to bring it to you. Stamp the child’s hand with the fish stamp, and thank the child for bringing you the Bible. Then stamp the other children’s hands. Return the fish stamp and ink pad to the Learning Lab.

Say: I’m thankful for [name of child who brought the Bible], and I’m thankful for everyone in our class today. Let’s thank God together for all our friends in this class.

Lead children in singing “I’m So Glad We’re Together” with the CD (track 4) to the tune of “Give Me Oil in My Lamp.”

I’m so glad we’re together.
Keep us prayin’, prayin’, prayin’.
I’m so glad we’re all here today.
I’m so glad we’re together:
Keep us prayin’, prayin’, prayin’—
Prayin’ for each other every day.

Lead children in folding their hands and bowing their heads as you continue to sing.
Thank you, Lord, for each one.
Keep me thankful, thankful, thankful.
Thank you for everyone who's here.
Thank you, Lord, for each one.
Keep me thankful, thankful, thankful—
Thankful for our friends both far and near.

■ Hear and Tell the Bible Story

**SUPPLIES:** Bible, CD player

Open your Bible to **Jonah 1**, and show it to the children. Say: **Our Bible story comes from the book of Jonah in the Bible. Our Bible Big Book shows us pictures of our Bible story.** Before we hear our story today, I’d like everyone to find a partner sitting near you. When you’ve found a partner, stand up together.

Help children find partners, and then continue: **The person you’re standing with will be your listening partner.** You may sit down now. Listen together to our Bible story about Jonah, and see if you and your partner can hear the times when Jonah was in trouble.

Play the “Jonah” segment from the CD (track 18). As you listen, show children the pictures in the Bible Big Book: Jonah. Follow the text on the back of the book, and turn the pages when you hear the chime.

After the story, stop the CD. Say: **Listening partners, stand up if you can tell us one time Jonah was in trouble.**

Use the pictures in the Bible Big Book to help children recall times that Jonah was in trouble. Call on several partners, and then have everyone sit down.

Say: **When Jonah decided not to obey God, it got him into big trouble. When we don't obey God, we can get into trouble, too.**

Ask: • **Who can tell me about a time when you were in trouble?** (When I didn’t put my favorite toy away and my baby brother broke it; I wasn’t supposed to climb a tree. I did anyway and got stuck.)

Say: ▶ **God wants us to obey him even when we’re in trouble.** But God won’t send a big fish to swallow us when we don’t obey him. Instead, God gives us parents and teachers who help us learn to obey. When we forget to be nice and kind like God wants us to be, our parents and teachers can help us remember:
Lesson 11

**Do the Bible Story**

**SUPPLIES:** Jonah figure (p. 134), scissors, beanbag, safety pins, fish box from Option 1

Before class, copy the Jonah picture from Lesson 9, color it, and cut it out. Use safety pins to attach the picture onto a beanbag. If you didn’t make a fish box in Option 1, you can make one for this activity out of a box or laundry basket. Draw a large fish on colored poster board and cut it out; then tape the fish to the side of the box or basket.

Have children sit in a circle on the floor near the fish box. Say: **We’ve been learning what the Bible tells us about Jonah. We’re going to play a game to get Jonah (show children the beanbag with Jonah on it) into the mouth of the fish (point to the fish box). We’re going to pass Jonah around as we say God wants us to obey him even when we’re in trouble. Whoever has Jonah when we say the word trouble will go toss Jonah into the fish’s mouth and then go sit down.**

You will need to retrieve Jonah after each turn. Play until each child has had a turn throwing Jonah into the mouth of the fish. Save the fish box to use in next week’s lesson.

**BIBLE POINT**

Say: **Jonah sure was in trouble when he got swallowed by that fish! But God loved him, and he still wanted Jonah to obey him. God loves us, too, and wants us to obey him. One way God shows his love to us is by giving us Jesus as our best friend. Let’s say “thank you” to Jesus right now.**

Lead children in saying, “Thank you, Jesus!” as a short and simple prayer.

Say: **God wants us to obey him even when we’re in trouble. Let’s call our friend Whiskers and see what kind of trouble he’s been getting into lately. Maybe we can tell him what we’ve learned about how God helps us.**

**Closing**

**Cat Food**

**SUPPLIES:** none

Bring out Whiskers the Mouse, and go through the following puppet script. When you finish the script, put Whiskers away and out of sight.

---

*Hands-On Bible Curriculum—Preschool, Ages 3 & 4*
Whiskers: (Peeks out from under teacher’s arm and says in a small voice) H...h...hello?


Whiskers: I am. I was out behind the church, and I saw a giant cat prowling around. He spotted me, so I ran in here. He’s probably outside the door looking for me right now! He’ll swallow me if he sees me. Then you know what I’ll be.

Teacher: Cat food?

Whiskers: Yeah! Just like Jonah. He got swallowed by that giant fish. Fish food!

Teacher: What were you doing out behind the church, Whiskers?

Whiskers: (Sheepishly) My brother and I got in a fight, and I pinched his tail. I was afraid I’d get in trouble, so I ran outside. That’s when I saw that great big cat.

Teacher: Oh, I see. You are like Jonah then. Jonah was in trouble, too.

Whiskers: He was?

Teacher: (To children) Children, let’s tell Whiskers about Jonah’s troubles.

(Help children explain to Whiskers that Jonah ran away because he knew he’d be in trouble for disobeying God. Point out that he wound up in worse trouble when the fish swallowed him.)

Whiskers: (Thoughtfully) Hmm. You’re right. I was afraid I’d get in trouble, and now I’m in even bigger trouble. If I hadn’t gone back there, that cat would never have seen me. Now he’ll keep looking ‘til he finds me. (Fretfully) Oh, what will I do?

Teacher: Whiskers, God wants us to obey him even when we’re in trouble. Maybe you should go home and apologize to your brother. Children, can you help Whiskers think of a way to get home?

(Help children suggest ideas to Whiskers such as going straight home or waiting in a safe place until the cat is gone.)

Whiskers: You’re right. I’m going straight home to tell my brother I’m sorry. I still might get in trouble for pinching his tail, but not as much trouble as I’d be in if that cat ate me. Gulp! Thanks, friends. I’ll see you next week—if I can make it back. Goodbye.
Lesson 11

Stamp and Remember

SUPPLIES: none

Form a circle on the floor. Our Bible verse is from Acts 5:29, and it tells us “We must obey God.” God loves us and will help us obey if we ask him. Before we leave today, let’s use our fish stamp to help us remember that God loves us and wants to help us obey him. I’ll stamp [name of child sitting next to you]’s hand, and then [name of child] will stamp the next person in our circle. Each time a person gets his or her hand stamped, we’ll say, “God will help [name of child] to obey.” Stamp the hand of the child sitting next to you, and lead children in saying: “God will help [name of child] to obey.” Move around the circle with the ink pad and help children stamp one another’s hands. When everyone’s hand has been stamped, close by shouting the verse together: “We must obey God.”

Growing closer to Jesus extends beyond the classroom.

Photocopy the “Today I Learned…” handout (at the end of this lesson) for this week, and send it home with the children. Encourage parents to use the handout to plan meaningful family activities to reinforce this week’s topic.
Hands-On Bible Curriculum—Preschool, Ages 3 & 4

For Extra Time
If you have a long class time or want to add additional elements to your lesson, try one of the following activities.

Lively Learning: Swimming Fish

Play “Jonah Ran Away” from the CD (track 17) as children “swim” around the room and pretend to be fish. The words to “Jonah Ran Away” are found on page 155. Just for fun, each time the song says, “A big fish got him!” have children join hands with a partner and “swim” together. When the song says, “Out came Jonah,” have children separate again.

After the game, help children review the story of Jonah.

Make to Take: Big Fish Puppet

Distribute business-sized envelopes, and have children seal the envelopes shut. Help each child cut one end off the envelope, about ½-inch from the edge. Then help each one cut out a triangle mouth from the other end. Let children decorate their fish with crayons, glitter, or other art supplies. Encourage them to add eyes, teeth, scales, and fins.

Show each child how to put one hand and arm in the envelope to make the fish come alive. Then show each child how the fish puppet can “swallow” the fingers of his or her other hand. Let children use their fish puppets to act out portions of Jonah’s story. As they’re telling the story, remind them that God wants us to obey him even when we’re in trouble.

Treat to Eat: Fish Sandwich Roll-Ups

Have children clean their hands with baby wipes or at a nearby sink. Give each child a flour tortilla, a paper plate, and a plastic knife or craft stick.

Set out bowls of tuna salad, and help children spread tuna on their tortillas. Have butter or jelly on hand for those who don’t want tuna salad. Next, show each child how to roll up the tortilla and pretend that it’s a fish. Let children make the fish “swim” and then enjoy the snack.

As children are eating, talk about Jonah and the big fish. Remind children that God wants us to obey him even when we’re in trouble.

Story Picture: Jonah Is Swallowed by a Fish

Give each child a copy of the “Today I Learned…” handout. Set out crayons, glue, and fish-shaped crackers. Have children glue the fish crackers in the picture inside the big fish and in the sea. Review the story of Jonah with children as they work.
Today I learned...

God wants us to obey him even when we’re in trouble.

Help me learn this:

“We must obey God” (Acts 5:29b).

Ask me:

■ What did Jonah learn by being inside the giant fish?
■ Tell me about a time when you were in trouble. How did you make things better?
■ What can our family do this week to help each other obey God?

Family Fun

■ Purchase two sheets of clear acetate from an art supply store. Hold the sheets together and cut two identical fish shapes. Staple the fish shapes together, leaving an opening across the top. Cut strips of colored tissue paper or gift wrap, and help your child stuff the fish shape. Then staple the top shut, add a colorful ribbon hanger, and hang the fish in your child’s room. Remind your child that God used a giant fish to teach Jonah to obey. God wants us to obey him when we’re in trouble, too.

Jonah Is Swallowed by a Big Fish

(Jonah 1:13-17)