

Welcome to Sunday School!

Today is the 2nd in our 3-part series on uncovering the Hidden Blessings in the Strange, Gross and Weird stories in the Bible.

As we know, the Bible is made up of 66 books and that means that there are LOTS of different stories in the Bible. And some that are just plain odd. Before we give up on trying to understand some of the odd ones, let's take a deeper look and see if we can find a Hidden Blessing in these stories – something that makes sense out of the weirdness that we can learn from and apply to our life.

A BIG FISH SWALLOWS JONAH:

Our second strange story comes from the Old Testament, 750 years before Jesus was born, from the book of Jonah - a short book - only 4 chapters long and easy to read in one sitting.

God told the prophet Jonah to go and preach a warning to the people of Nineveh. But that was a job Jonah didn't want to do. He didn't particularly care what happened to the people of Nineveh. They were mean people and Israel's enemy. Jonah boarded a boat headed to Tarshish (far away from Nineveh) to get away from what God was calling him to do. When God started a storm, sailors on the boat tossed Jonah into the sea thinking he was the reason for the storm because he had told them that he was not following what God had asked him to do. A great fish swallowed the prophet and he stayed in the belly of the fish (for 3 days!) until he told God that he changed his mind and would go to Nineveh. The big fish spit (vomited) Jonah out and he made his way to Nineveh and preached to the people and they changed their evil ways. Jonah was a peace maker! God was glad the people changed after hearing Jonah but Jonah was upset that God hadn't punished them. Jonah discovered that God is a merciful and compassionate God, very patient, full of faithful love, and willing not to destroy. This book shows us that God is eager to forgive. God wants people everywhere to believe in God and live their lives doing good and treating each other well.

HIDDEN BLESSING:

Is this story really about being stuck inside the smelly, gross belly of a fish for 3 days? No. It is most likely a parable - which is a short story that teaches an important lesson. The book of Jonah is a story about how God can work through humans, even ones who don't always agree with the way God works. We need to trust God and listen to what he is asking of us. God loves us and only wants the best for us - even if it sometimes comes in some strange ways.

SCRIPTURE:

Meanwhile, the Lord provided a great fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights.

—Jonah 1:17

ACTIVITIES:

Family Discussion:

1. God gave Jonah a do-over. Have you ever been given a second chance?
2. Why do you think it is important that we give people second chances?
3. Jonah was stubborn and even though he did what God asked - he still wasn't happy. What would you say to Jonah to cheer him up?

Be Jonah - Activity:

Find a small cramped dark place and lift up your prayers and concerns to God. Make notes of what you talked to God about and tuck them away and revisit them in a year.

Did You Know?:

- Fish can recognize faces!
- The biggest fish (fish are cold blooded) in the world is the **whale shark** - around 32 feet long and can weigh 9 tons. They are very calm and docile creatures.
- Whales are not fish - but warm blooded mammals. The **blue whale** can be as big as 98 feet long and weigh 190 tons!

Do Word Search on next page:

PRAYER:

Dear God,

Help me to be a peace maker, and listen to you, even if it is hard sometimes. Help me to remember that you love me and always want the best for me. Thank you for helping me uncover hidden blessings in weird stories. And bless all of the fish in the ocean - even the really big ones.

Let's pray the Lord's Prayer together:

Our Creator,
who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those
who trespass against us. Lead us not
into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom and the
power and the glory forever.
Amen

JONAH AND THE BIG FISH

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

VOMITED	THRONE	GOD	PREACHING
ARISE	DECREE	AFRAID	HEAVEN
COUNTRY	WILL	NEVERTHELESS	WORSHIP
HEBREW	PRAY	SLEEPER	SAILORS
WRECKED	TARSHISH	JERUSALEM	LORD
OLD TESTAMENT	NINEVEH	FISH	JONAH