



Lesson 24

God, Have Mercy!

Large Group Lesson & Games

Bible Story

Jonah Receives God's Mercy

John 4:1-34

Bible Verse

"People who conceal their sins will not prosper, but if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy."

Proverbs 28:13, New Living Translation

Key Teaching Point

Those who receive mercy, show mercy.

Materials

- A Bible
- Four or five sheets of newspaper



Large Group Lesson

(15 Minutes)

Teach the motions listed below. As you read through the story, have the students act out the parts.

- ONE: Jonah ran from God → Jog in place.
- TWO: Wind and waves blew → Wave arms back and forth.
- THREE: Sailors cried out to God → Kneel down and pray.
- FOUR: Jonah sleeping → Fold hands and close eyes.
- FIVE: Sailors blame Jonah → Wag finger in a blaming motion.
- SIX: Jonah is thrown overboard → Hold nose, wiggle body downward like going underwater.
- SEVEN: Jonah is swallowed by the fish → Put hands together and wiggle in a swimming motion, puff cheeks and make fish lips, gulp and swallow.

The LORD gave this message to Jonah: “Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are.”

But Jonah got up and went in the opposite direction to run away from the LORD. (ONE) He went down to the nearest seaport, where he found a ship leaving in the opposite direction of Nineveh. He bought a ticket and went on board, hoping to escape from the LORD.

But the LORD hurled a powerful wind over the sea, causing a violent storm that threatened to break the ship apart. (TWO) Fearing for their lives, the desperate sailors cried out to God for help (THREE) and even threw the cargo overboard to lighten the ship.

But all this time Jonah was sound asleep, so the captain went down after him. (FOUR) “How can you sleep at a time like this?” he shouted. “Get up and pray to your god! Maybe he will pay attention to us and spare our lives.”

Then the crew cast lots to see which of them had caused the terrible storm. When they did this, the lots identified Jonah as the culprit. (FIVE) “Why has this awful storm come down on us?” they demanded. “Who are you? What is your line of work? What country are you from? What is your nationality?” Jonah answered, “I am a Hebrew, and I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land.”

The sailors were terrified when they heard this, for he had already told them he was running away from the LORD. “Oh, why did you do it?” they groaned. And since the storm was getting worse all the time, they asked him, “What should we do to you to stop this storm?”



“Throw me into the sea,” Jonah said, “and it will become calm again. I know that this terrible storm is all my fault.”

Instead, the sailors rowed even harder to get the ship to the land. But the stormy sea was too violent for them, and they couldn’t make it. Then they cried out to the LORD, Jonah’s God. “O LORD,” they pleaded, “don’t make us die for this man’s sin. And don’t hold us responsible for his death. O LORD, you have sent this storm upon him for your own good reasons.”

Then the sailors picked Jonah up and threw him into the raging sea, and the storm stopped at once! (SIX) The sailors were awestruck by the LORD’s great power, and they offered him a sacrifice and vowed to serve him.

Now the LORD had arranged for a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights. (SEVEN)

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The next verses in the Book of Jonah go on to record a long prayer that Jonah prayed while he was in the belly of the fish. He felt miserable, and he repented to God for his disobedience. He knew that he had gotten himself in this mess because he had tried to run from God and go his own way.

God showed grace to Jonah by giving him a second chance. Jonah thought he was as good as dead in the belly of the fish, but God made the fish spit him up on shore. God, in his mercy, was giving Jonah another chance to obey him.

This time, Jonah chose to obey. He went to Nineveh to preach God’s message to the Ninevites. And the Ninevites repented from their wickedness and turned to God, and God relented from the disaster he was going to pour out on the city. Just as Jonah received God’s mercy, the Ninevites also were able to experience God’s mercy and love.

Later, it is revealed that Jonah didn’t want to go to Nineveh because he didn’t want the people to experience God’s mercy and forgiveness. He wanted justice, judgment and condemnation: he wanted Nineveh to suffer for their sins and be dealt with according to their wickedness. Do we not feel the same way toward people who hurt or harm us? Yet God asks us to extend his mercy to others, the same mercy we ourselves have received.

We’ll talk about this more in our small groups today.

Dismiss children to their small groups.



Large Group Games

(20-25 Minutes)

STORM CHASERS

Materials: Four or five sheets of newspaper (may substitute with sheets of posterboard)

Before the game begins, spread out four or five sheets of newspaper around the playing area. The sheets of newspaper will be boats. Choose two students to be the “storm” (IT), and all the rest of the students will try to stay safe from the storm. The storm will chase everyone and try to tag them. If a player tagged, they have “fallen into the sea” and must lie down on their back with arms and legs extended into the air doing swimming motions. When a player has fallen into the sea, four other safe players may rescue them. Each of the safe players will grab an arm or a leg and drag the player onto a boat. As soon as four safe players grab onto the drowning player, all five players are safe from being tagged by the storm. Once the five players make it to the boat, the drowning player is saved, and all five players may stay safely on the boat for no longer than five seconds. The game ends when all the players have been tagged. At this point, choose two new players to be the storm (IT) and play again.

SHIP TO SHORE

No materials needed.

Designate one side of the gym as “ship” and the other side as “shore.” When you call “ship” all the students need to get to that side as fast as possible. The last one there is called out. The same applies when you call “shore.” You may also call the following things, and the last person or group to do the action indicated will be out:

- *Captain’s Coming* → Students must stand at attention and salute. They must stay this way until you say “at ease.” If they move before you say “at ease” they are “out.”
- *Hit the Deck* → Students must lie down on their stomachs.
- *Captain’s Table* → Students must get in a group of four, sit down in a circle, and pretend to eat.
- *Crow’s Nest* → Students must get in a group of three students and stand back-to-back with arms linked.
- *Man Overboard* → Students must find a partner. One partner goes down on his or her hands and knees. The other partner puts one foot on the first person’s back.

Play continues until there is only one person left in the game.

