

# JONAH SESSION 1: JONAH NEEDS A RESCUE!

Jonah disobeyed God's commands and needed rescuing. We all, like Jonah, have sinned and we all, like Jonah, need a rescuer.

## SESSION OVERVIEW

**Story from Jonah chapter 1 and 2 (parachute)**

**Discussion: Disobedience and rescue**

**Prayer: forgiveness and thanksgiving**

**Parachute games**

**Extra games: Simon says and Sea-shore**

**Whale pop-up craft**

**Extra discussion for older kids:**

**the sailor's saviour**



# STORY



*You will need: a parachute*

*Storyteller begin the story and bring out the parachute when Jonah goes to Tarshish. The parachute will act as the ocean and the big fish.*

## STORY TELLING SCRIPT

In the land of Israel, where God's chosen people lived, there was a prophet named Jonah. Israel were being treated cruelly by the Ninevites and Jonah really REALLY didn't like them. He thought they were the worst of the worst, the absolutely completely awful, most unforgiveable people on the planet. If anyone deserved God's punishment, it was Nineveh.

One day, God told Jonah, "Go to Nineveh and preach against it! Its sins have come up before me! I am taking notice of them."

"Oh no!" thought Jonah. "I don't want to preach to them! Let them die! They deserve it!"

So, Jonah ran the other way, to Joppa on the sea shore. A boat was heading far away to Tarshish.

"Perfect!" thought Jonah. "If I leave Israel, the God of Israel won't follow me far out there to Tarshish!" So, he boarded a boat and went out to sea.

*[Take out the parachute, which will be the sea. Get the children to stand around the edge, holding it.]*

At first, the sea was calm. Gently ripple the parachute. But when they were far out into deep water, God sent a great wind to blow on the sea and a terrible storm suddenly arose! The ship was almost breaking. *[Shake the parachute vigorously.]*

"We're going to drown!" called the sailors. They each prayed to their own gods and threw their belongings overboard, but nothing worked. Meanwhile, Jonah was below deck. After 3, we're going to lift the parachute high in the air and bring it down behind us so that we are all sitting in the dome of the parachute. 1..2..3.. below deck we go!

The storm raged outside, but in the boat, Jonah was in a deep sleep. *[Pretend to snore.]* The captain ran down to find Jonah and shouted "How can you sleep? Wake up and pray to your god! Maybe he will take notice of us and we won't die!" After three we're going to lift up the parachute and come out again. 1...2...3...Up on deck we go! The sea was still raging. *[Make big waves.]*



### THE STORY CONTINUED...

"A god must be against us!" they thought. "Let's cast lots to see whose fault this storm is!"

They cast lots and the lot fell to Jonah, so they asked him.

"Who are you? Where do you come from and who has caused this terrible storm?"

Jonah told them, "I am a Hebrew and I worship Yahweh, the God of Heaven, who made the sea and the land. I am running away from Him."

The sailors were terrified. The sea was getting rougher and rougher. "What should we do with you to make the sea calm down?" they asked Jonah.

"Pick me up and throw me into the sea and it will become calm!" He replied. "It is my fault that this storm has come upon you."

But the men were terrified. They did not want to harm a servant of Yahweh, the Creator of the sea and the land! Instead, they tried to row back to shore. Let's make rowing motion. But it was no good.

The sailors cried out to Yahweh, "Lord! Please do not hold us responsible for killing an innocent man, for you, Lord, have done as you pleased!" Then they threw Jonah overboard. On the count of 3, lift the parachute as high as you can and bring it down in front of you. 1...2...3... Throw him overboard! And the storm became calm. Stop shaking the parachute. The sailors were in awe of Yahweh and worshipped Him.

Into the water Jonah sank. He thought his life was over. He prayed to God as he gulped the water. All seemed lost... Suddenly, out of the black depths of the sea, God sent an enormous fish to swallow Jonah whole! On the count of 3, we are going to lift the parachute into the air and bring the parachute down behind us so we are sitting in it. 1... 2... 3... "Into the fish's belly!" Jonah was inside the fish for 3 days and 3 nights. He prayed to God... "I was drowning, but You rescued me. Seaweed wrapped around my head, but my prayer rose to you. Sorry God, for running away! Salvation belongs to the Lord! I will always worship you, Yahweh. I will do what I promised." After 3 days the Lord commanded the fish and it vomited Jonah out onto dry land! After three, we are going to lift the parachute and come out again. 1...2... 3... "I'm alive!"

God's command came to Jonah a second time. "Go to Nineveh and speak the message I give you. This time, Jonah obeyed. But what will happen next? Find out next week!



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ALL CHILDREN: DISOBEDIENCE AND RESCUE

1. Who or what in the story obeyed the command of the Lord the straight away? The wind, the sea and the fish.

The wind, the sea and the giant creatures of the sea (like whales and crocodiles), in the Bible represent things that are chaotic and wild, but in the story of Jonah, even these wild parts of creation obey the Creator God.

2. What does that show us about Jonah's decision to disobey God? Do you think it is a small matter or a serious matter?

In fact, it is so serious, that it deserves death. When we go against God's good commands, the Bible calls it sin and it leads to death. The sea obeyed God, the fish obeyed God, but Jonah, a human, who knows God and is supposed to represent God on the earth, chose to disobey God. Jonah would have died, had it not been for God mercifully listening to Jonah's prayer and sending a miraculous and surprising rescue.

3. A fish swallowed Jonah up in its belly and on the third day spat him out again. Does this remind you of any story about Jesus?

Jesus was swallowed by death in the tomb for three days and then released. Jesus didn't enter death because of His own sin, but because of ours. We each, like Jonah, have disobeyed God in our lives. God commands us to love others in the same way we would want them to love us and to love God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength. None of us has done this completely.

*[You may wish to use the print out of the ten commandments and ask the kids which one they think is hardest to keep all the time, in order to help them recognise their sin.]*

Jesus is our rescuer! When we turn from our sin, say sorry to God and ask for forgiveness and put our trust in Jesus, we are rescued from eternal death or as Jesus calls it, from hell. Jesus took our sin on the cross and gives us friendship with God forever. When we put our trust in Jesus, we are given new hearts and become children of God.

EXTRA DISCUSSION QUESTION FOR OLDER CHILDREN:  
THE SAILOR'S SAVIOUR

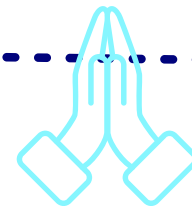


1. What do you think about the sailors on the boat? What happened in their spiritual journey as they crossed paths with God's prophet?

They went from praying to false gods to worshipping the true God, despite meeting Jonah when he was disobeying God.

2. What does this tell you about God's ability and desire to save people?

God can use even broken, disobedient people like Jonah, to spread His good news. In the story, it was when Jonah confessed his sin that the sailors were able to understand who the Creator God was.



PRAYER RESPONSE:

Say sorry to God for the times when we have not followed God's commands completely. Ask for forgiveness and thank Him for sending Jesus, our rescuer, who saves us from death and punishment and gives us eternal life.



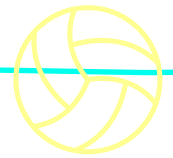
## THE 10 COMMANDMENTS:

The 10 commandments, or “10 words” as the Bible refers to them, were 10 commands that God gave Moses when He made a covenant with Israel (the family that Jonah and Jesus were part of) many years before Jonah was alive. They can be summed up by what Jesus describes as the greatest commandment:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Love him with all your mind and with all your strength.’ And here is the second one. ‘Love your neighbour as you love yourself.’ There is no commandment more important than these.” Matthew 12:30-31

This is a paraphrase of the 10 commandments (Exodus 20):

1. I AM THE GOD WHO RESCUED YOU. DO NOT WORSHIP ANY OTHER GODS IN PLACE OF ME.
2. DO NOT MAKE FOR YOURSELF STATUES OF GODS THAT LOOK LIKE ANYTHING IN THE SKY, EARTH OR SEA. DO NOT WORSHIP THEM.
3. DO NOT MISUSE THE NAME OF THE LORD YOUR GOD.
4. REMEMBER TO KEEP THE SABBATH DAY HOLY.
5. HONOUR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.
6. DO NOT MURDER. (JESUS SAID, IF YOU HATE ANYONE IN YOUR HEART, THIS IS LIKE MURDER)
7. DO NOT BE UNFAITHFUL IN MARRIAGE OR RUIN SOMEONE ELSE'S MARRIAGE.
8. DO NOT STEAL.
9. DO NOT LIE TO GET SOMEONE ELSE INTO TROUBLE.
10. DO NOT WANT WHAT BELONGS TO SOMEONE ELSE. BE CONTENT WITH WHAT YOU HAVE.



## PARACHUTE GAMES

### KEEP IT UP

Bounce a ball on the parachute and see how many bounces you can do until it falls off.

### WHALE SALAD

Label the kids around the circle: Krill, Seaweed, Jonah. 1...2...3...lift the parachute and shout an item of whale salad. When you shout "Krill", all the children labelled krill cross paths under the parachute and find another spot. When you shout "Seaweed" those labelled seaweed cross. When you shout "Jonah", likewise the ones labelled Jonah.

When you shout "whale salad!" everyone crosses paths.

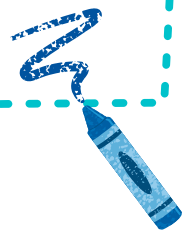


## CRAFT

### BIG FISH POP-UP

Colour in the picture. Cut out the fish mouth. Each child will need two mouth pieces. Fold the picture in half along the dotted line. Fold the mouth pieces along the dotted lines.

Glue the mouth onto the picture, folding the tabs so that the mouth opens and closes as you move the paper.



## EXTRA GAMES

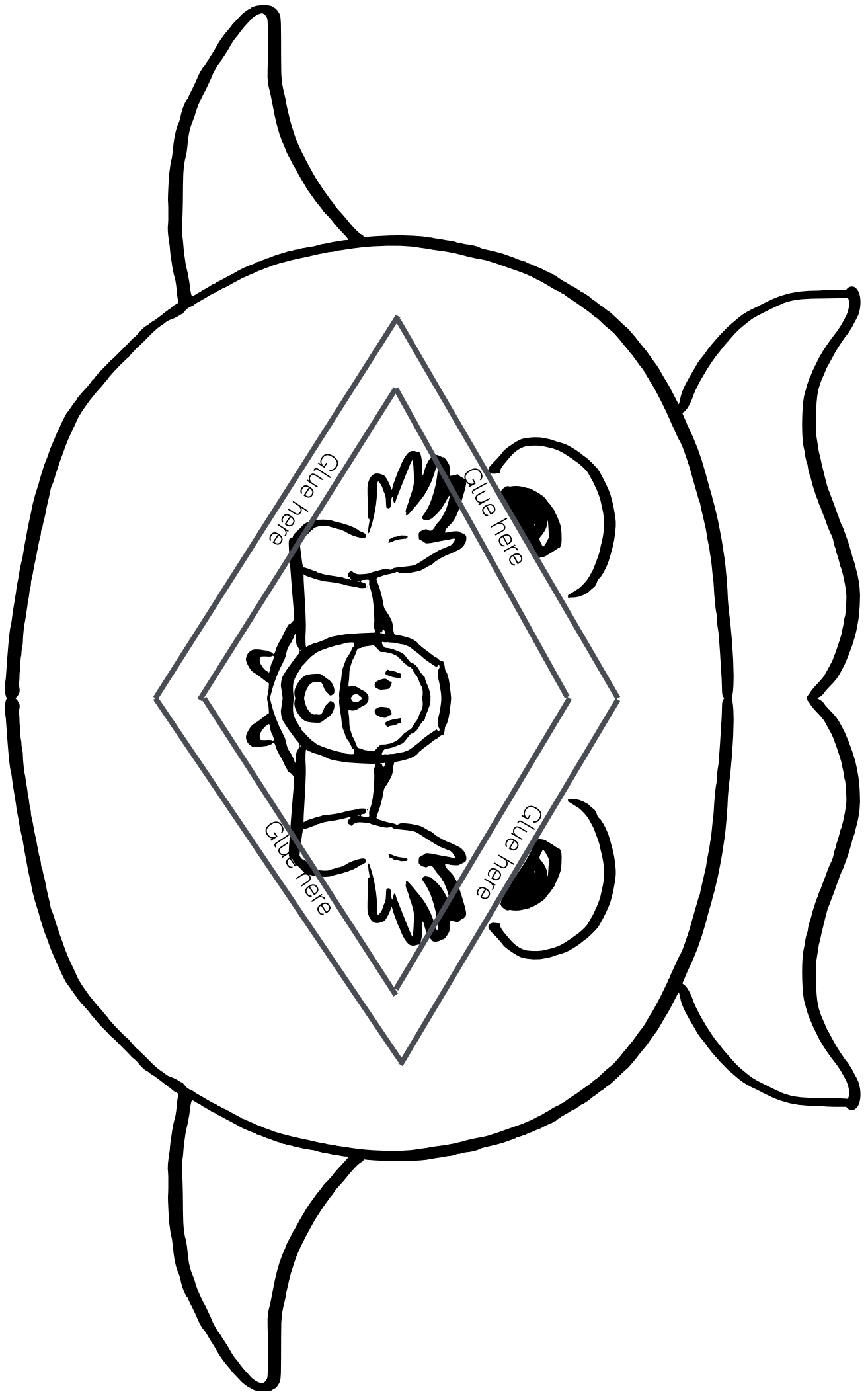
### SIMON SAYS

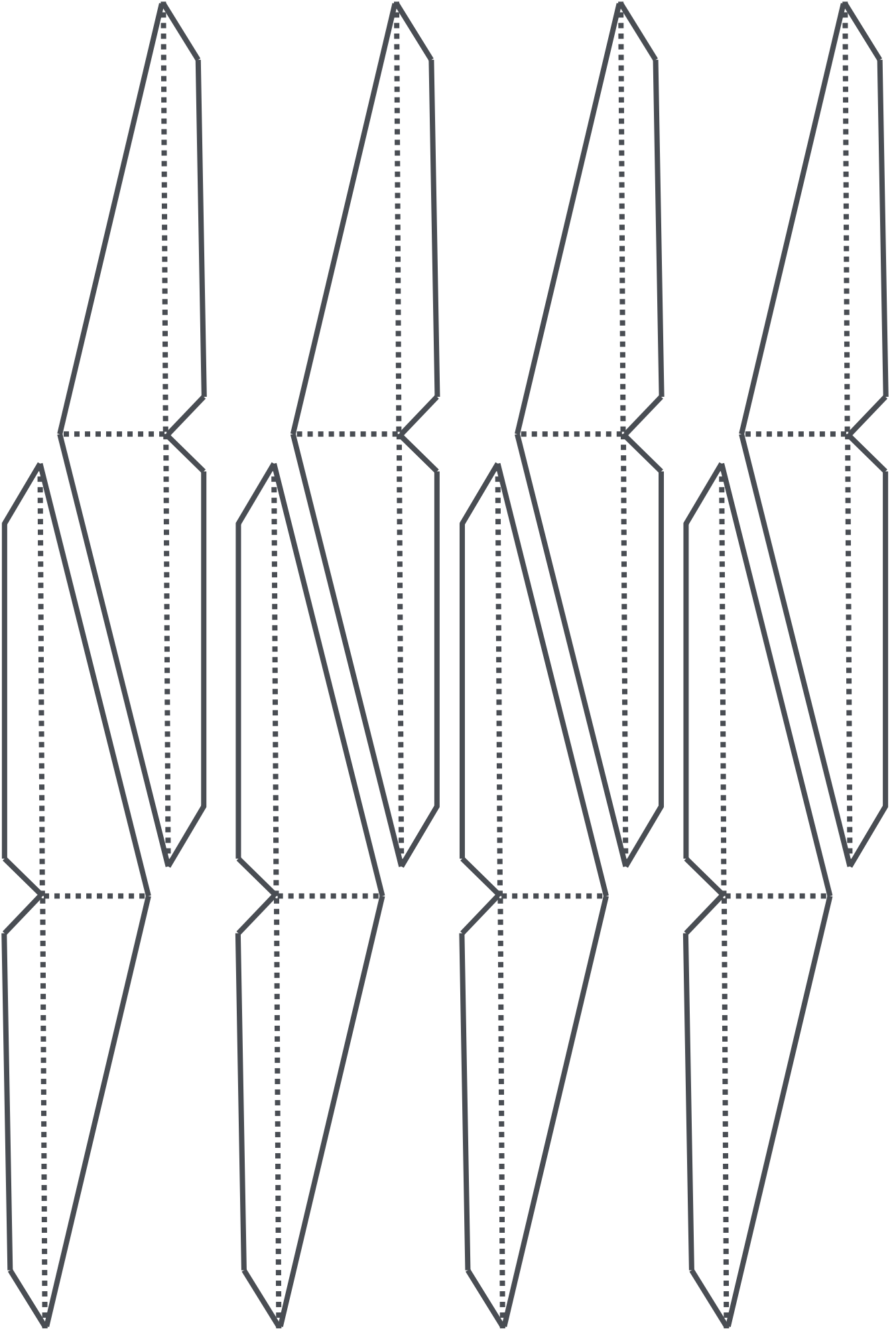
When "Simon says..." an action, the children must obey it. When you say an action without saying "Simon says..." first, the children must NOT obey it.

### SEA SHORE

Have a line of tape on the floor. One side of the line is the sea, the other is the shore. When you call "sea" the kids must jump onto the "sea" side of the line. When you shout "shore" they must jump onto the "shore" side. Quickly shout a combination of "sea" and "shore". When a child makes a mistake, they sit down or they lose a life.









# JONAH SESSION 2: WRESTLING WITH FORGIVENESS

Having experienced the grace of God, Jonah struggles to extend that grace and mercy to others. God's forgiveness is far greater than our own.

## SESSION OVERVIEW

**Story from Jonah chapter 3 and 4 (suggested storytelling method: small world figures e.g. duplo, playmobil, etc.)**

**Discussion: Spot the difference**

**Prayer: transformation to be more like Jesus**

**Extra discussion for older children: Understanding God's character**

**Game: Time to repent!**

**Extra games: Stuck in the mud and Duck duck goose**

**Craft: Spot the difference**





# STORY

*You will need a playmobil/duplo/similar figure and tree to represent Jonah and the vine. If you also have a fortress and other figures, perhaps including a king, to be the people of Nineveh, that would be even better. You could even use an up turned bowl or plant pot to be the hill outside Nineveh.*

*Storyteller, set up Nineveh and the hill (if using) and keep the tree hidden, ready to appear when the vine grows. As you tell the story, move Jonah around the city and up the hill.*

## STORY TELLING SCRIPT

Jonah had been called by God to take a message to the people of Nineveh. Jonah hated the Ninevites and did not want to take the message, but after running from God, being almost drowned in the sea, swallowed by a fish and spat out again, the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time. God repeated, "Go to Nineveh and preach against it, because their sins have come to my attention."

This time, Jonah obeyed and went throughout Nineveh prophesying "40 days and the city will be destroyed! Yahweh is bringing judgement on your sin!"

It took Jonah three days to walk through the city, because it was very large. His voice became hoarse with shouting, but he did not stop until he had finished the job.

As he preached against the city, the people believed Jonah. Word reached the king of Nineveh and when he heard the news, he was very sorry. He was so sorry for all the evil that he and everyone in his city was doing, that he took off his soft royal robes and covered himself in scratchy sackcloth. He stepped down from his comfortable throne and sat in the dust. The king made a decree saying, "Everyone from the greatest to the least and all the animals must not eat or drink. We must turn from our evil ways, stop doing violence, and show Yahweh how sorry they were. Perhaps then God will have compassion on us and we will not die!"

All the people listened to the king. They turned from their evil ways, which is what we call "repentance", and said sorry to God. God was compassionate and forgave them.



## THE STORY CONTINUED...

*How do you think Jonah might have felt about this? Who thinks happy? Who thinks angry? [You could use an emotion chart to help the children answer the question]*

Jonah stomped out of the city very angrily. He did not want the people to repent. He did not want God to forgive them. He wanted Nineveh to be punished. He stomped up a hill to the East of the city, sat down and watched, hoping that God would destroy the city.

“God, I knew this would happen!” Jonah prayed angrily. “This is why I tried to run away to Tarshish! I know you are gracious, compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. If you won’t kill the people of Nineveh, then kill me! I want to die!”

Jonah made a shelter for himself on the hill and he sat and sulked. God kindly provided a leafy vine to grow up and shade Jonah. *Do you think Jonah deserved the vine?*

Jonah was very happy about the plant. But the next morning, God provided a worm to eat the plant so it shrivelled and died. In the middle of the day, God provided a scorching east wind that blazed on Jonah, so that he felt sick with sun stroke. Jonah was angry about the plant and furious with God.

“It would be better for me to die!” Jonah said again.

Then God spoke to Jonah, “is it right for you to be angry about the plant?”

What do you think?

“Yes!” said Jonah. “I’m furious about it!”

“You are concerned about this plant, though you did not plant it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and was gone in the morning. Should I not be concerned about Nineveh, where there are more than one hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left and thousands of animals too?”

God loved Nineveh, much more than Jonah did. Jonah did not recognise how kind and gracious God had been with him and he wanted the Ninevites punished, not forgiven. *Do you think Jonah repented in the end?*

The truth is, we don’t know the end of the story! We’re not told if he ever turned around and loved like God loved.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ALL CHILDREN:  
SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Use the picture prompts to aid your discussion

1. In what ways were Jonah and God different in this story? [Show the picture of Jonah grumpy under vine and God's love shining on Nineveh]
2. In what ways were Jonah and the Ninevites different in this story? [Show the picture of Jonah in boat and king sat in dust and sackcloth]

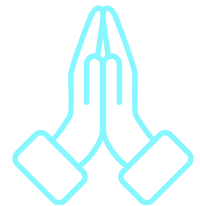
Jonah was God's prophet. He should have represented God well to the nations.

3. In what ways did Jonah represent God and in what ways did He not represent God? [Explain what we mean by "represent" to younger groups]

We can also represent God well one moment and not represent Him well the next.

4. Can you think of any examples in school/clubs/at home?

PRAYER RESPONSE:



Representing God is a high calling. It is an important job that God gives us, His royal priesthood! We need His help to do it well. We all make mistakes sometimes, but are there any times or situations when you repeatedly struggle to represent God well? Confess these to God and ask for the Holy Spirit's help to become more and more like Jesus and represent God well to others.



## EXTRA DISCUSSION QUESTION FOR OLDER CHILDREN: UNDERSTANDING GOD'S CHARACTER

What we do reveals what we believe.

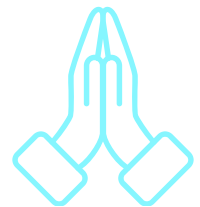
1. How would you describe the character of God? [You could use Exodus 34:6 as a guide]
2. Who in the story seemed to understand God's character most accurately and why do you say that?

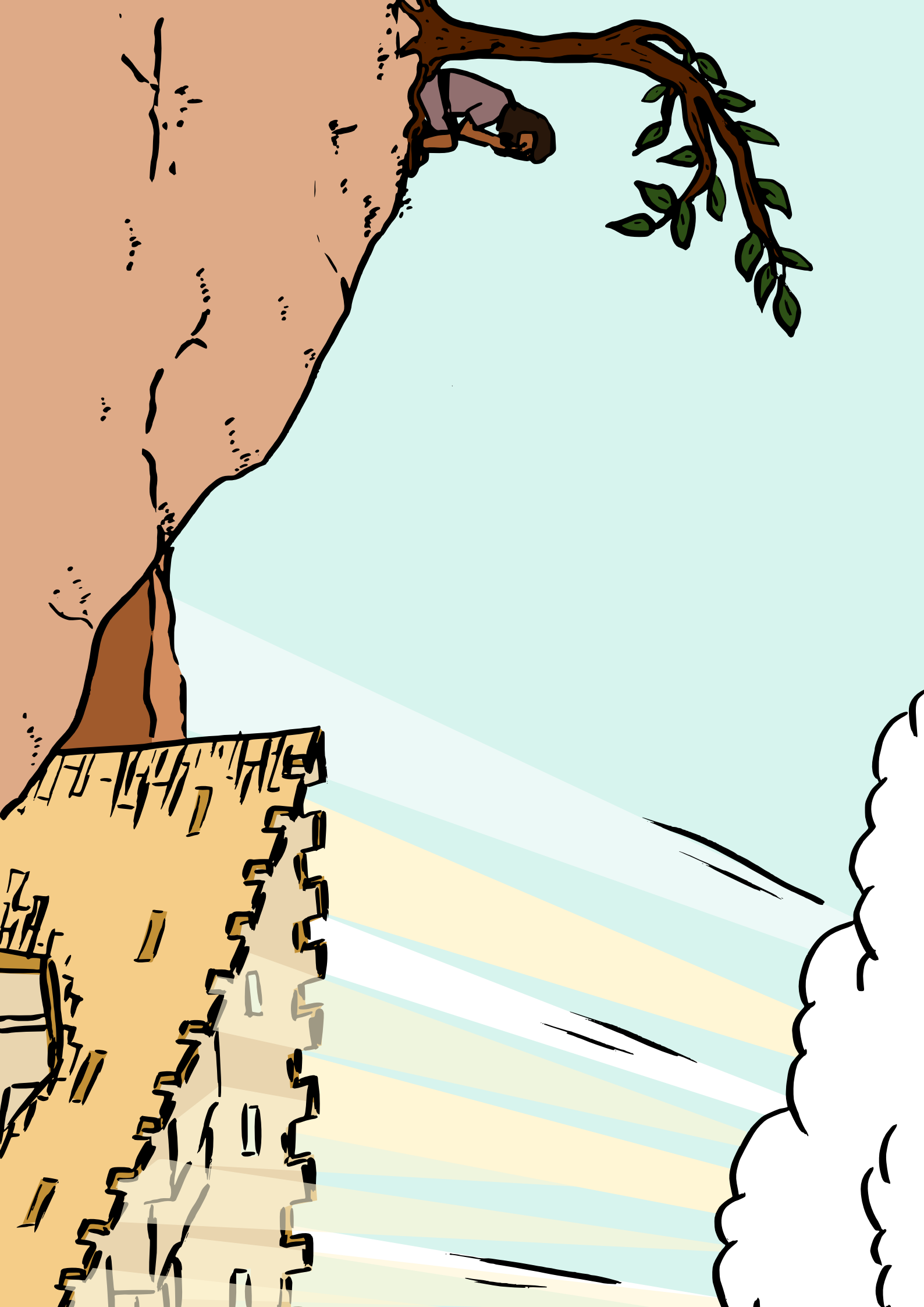
As we learn and grow, we understand God more fully and get to know Him better.

3. If you were to understand the character of God more fully and believed it more deeply in your heart, what do you think would be different in how you live? Give examples

## PRAYER RESPONSE:

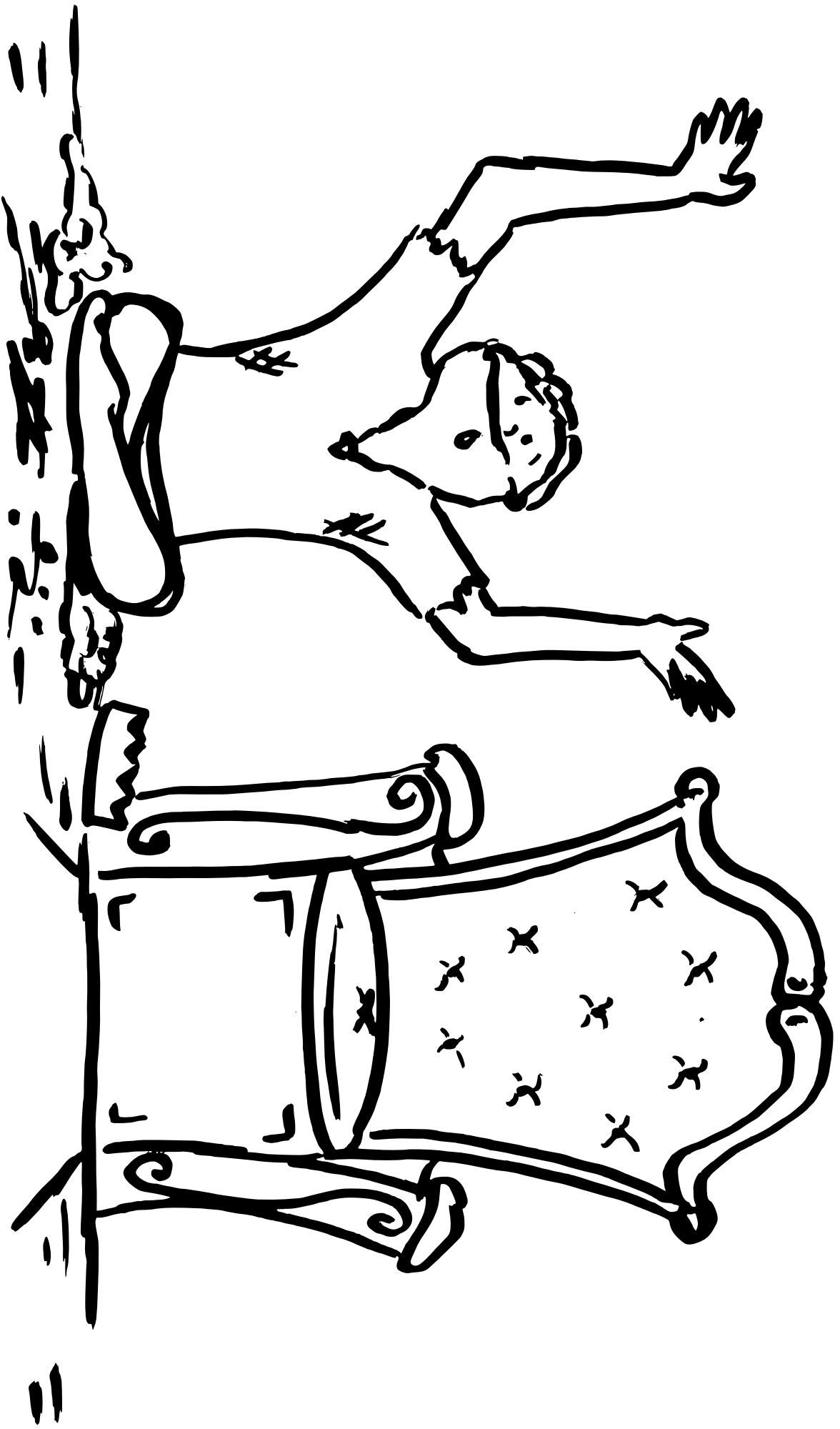
Pray that God would help you understand His character more.







JONAH'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD



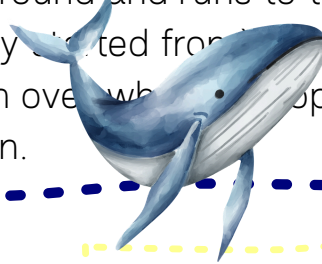
KING OF NINEVEH'S INITIAL RESPONSE TO  
GOD'S WORD

## TIME TO REPENT



This game is based on “What’s the time Mr Wolf?”. The children line up at one end of the room except for one child (the prophet) who stands with their back to the others at the opposite end. The kids ask “What’s the time Mr Prophet?” The prophet shouts a number between 1 and 12. For example “3 o’clock!” Then all the children step forwards three spaces.

They call again, “What’s the time Mr Prophet?” If he/she shouts “4 o’clock”, the kids move forward 4 spaces. After a few goes of this, the prophet may respond “Time to repent!” at which point everyone turns around and runs to the opposite end of the room (were they started from) trying not to be caught by the prophet. Switch over who the prophet is and go again.



## CRAFT

### SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

How many differences can you spot between the two pictures? Colour in the pictures when you have found them.



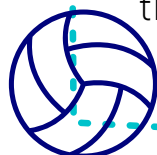
## EXTRA GAMES

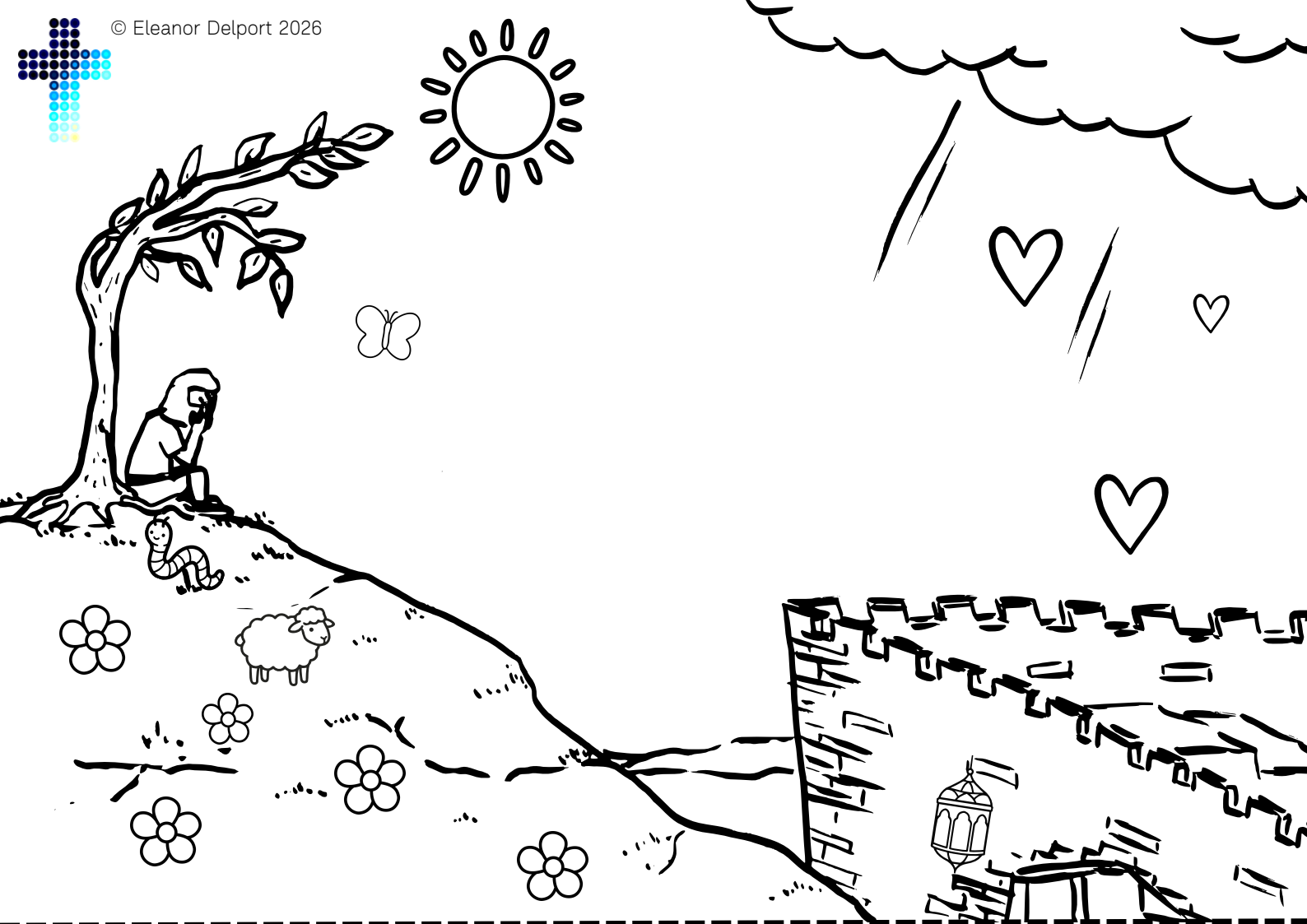
### DUCK DUCK GOOSE

Sit the children in a circle with enough space to run around the outside. One child starts walking around the outside of the circle tapping each child’s head in turn and saying “duck” until he/she says “goose”. Then the goose stands up and chases the first child around the circle. The first child tries to run once around the circle and sit in the second child’s space without being caught by the “goose”.

## STUCK IN THE MUD

Choose a tagger or two who chase the other children. When a child is tagged, they stand still with their arms out wide. They can not move again until one of their teammates taps their arm and says “free!”







# JONAH SESSION 3: JESUS

Jonah points to the greater prophet to come: Jesus. Jesus is the obedient servant, the One who went through the waters of death for us and the Creator God who

commands creation.  
**SESSION OVERVIEW**

**Story from Matthew 8:18-27 (suggested storytelling method: parachute)**

**Discussion: Jonah points to Jesus**

**Prayer: Praise**

**Extra discussion for older children: Understanding Jesus' character**

**Game: Time to repent!**

**Extra games: Parachute games**

**Craft: Moving picture**



# STORY



*You will need a parachute.*

*Storyteller, You can read the story from Matthew 8:18-27 from a children's Bible. Or you could read it and then, using the parachute, paraphrase the story, emphasising the waves growing stormy (shaking the parachute), Jesus sleeping (snoring) and the sudden stillness at the command of Jesus (holding the parachute still)*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ALL CHILDREN: JONAH POINTS TO JESUS



1. What parts of the story were the same as Jonah's story? What were different?
2. Who commanded the wind in Jonah's story and why?
3. Who commanded the wind in Jesus' story and why?
4. Why were the disciples amazed by Jesus? What kind of a man is Jesus?

The disciples were so amazed by Jesus calming the storm, because they were beginning to understand that Jesus is Creator God.

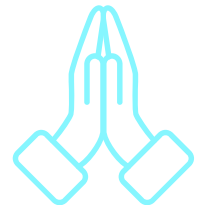
Jesus, Creator God, chose to enter into human history, taking on the form of a man and lived among us. Unlike Jonah, Jesus obeyed God's commands perfectly and did not deserve to be thrown into the waters of death. Just like in Jonah's story, God could have condemned humanity to death and bring judgement, but instead He mercifully calmed the storm and brought rescue for the human race. This is a picture of what Jesus achieved by dying on the cross and being rising from the dead.



### EXTRA DISCUSSION QUESTION FOR OLDER CHILDREN: UNDERSTANDING GOD'S CHARACTER

Through Jonah's story, we learnt some important things about the character of God.

1. What was God's character that we saw demonstrated in Jonah's story?
2. Considering this, what do you think Jesus' character is like?



### PRAYER RESPONSE:

Praise God for His commitment to rescue the human race! Praise Him for who He is and what He is like.

As a group, you might like to make a mind map together of what God is like and why He is worthy of praise. Then use those ideas to help you pray

## TIME TO REPENT



This game is based on "What's the time Mr Wolf?". The children line up at one end of the room except for one child (the prophet) who stands with their back to the others at the opposite end. The kids ask "What's the time Mr Prophet?" The prophet shouts a number between 1 and 12. For example "3 o'clock!" Then all the children step forwards three spaces. They call again, "What's the time Mr Prophet?" If he/she shouts "4 o'clock", the kids move forward 4 spaces. After a few goes of this, the prophet may respond "Time to repent!" at which point everyone turns around and runs to the opposite end of the room (where they started from) trying not to be caught by the prophet. Switch over who the prophet is and go again.

## CRAFT

### FLAP PICTURE

Colour in the picture and the flap. Cut out the stormy flap, fold along the dotted line and glue the tab to the picture.

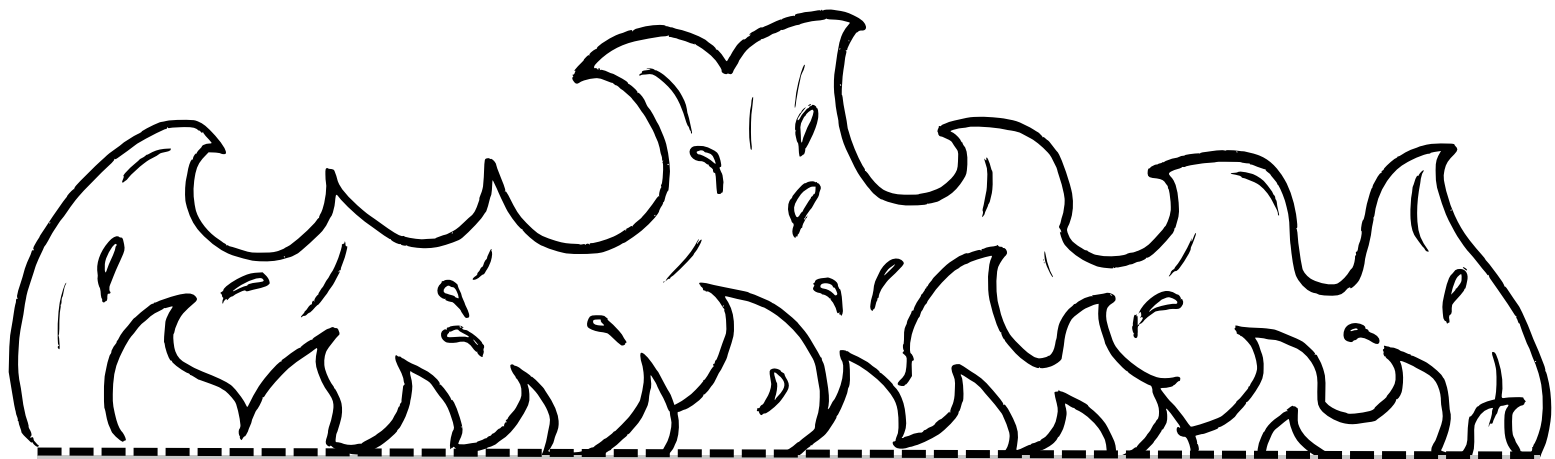
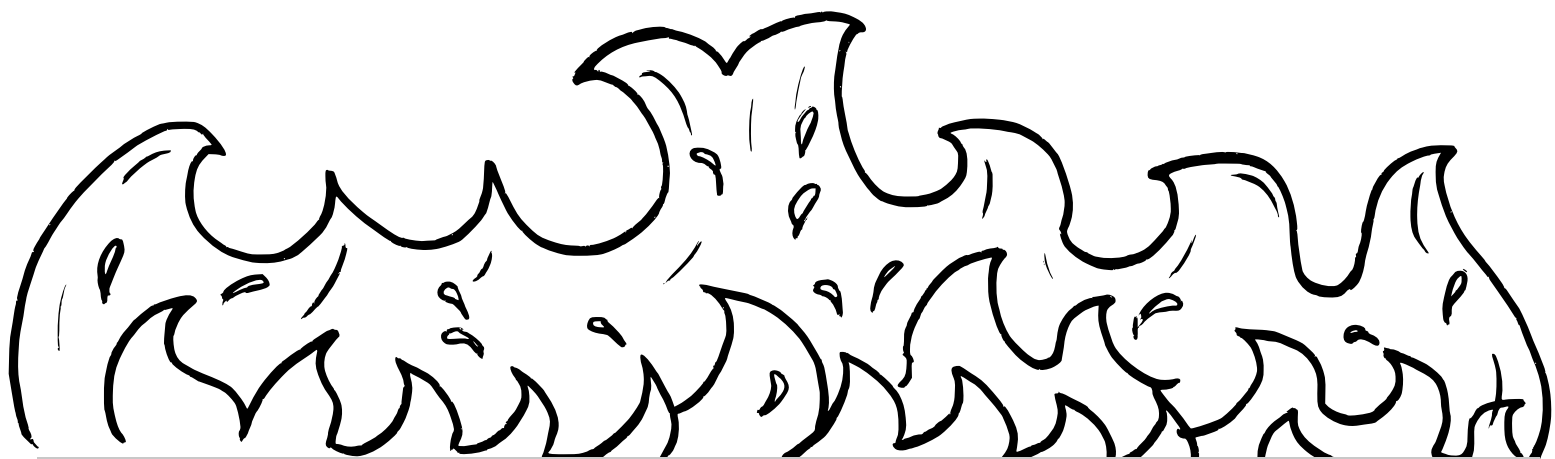
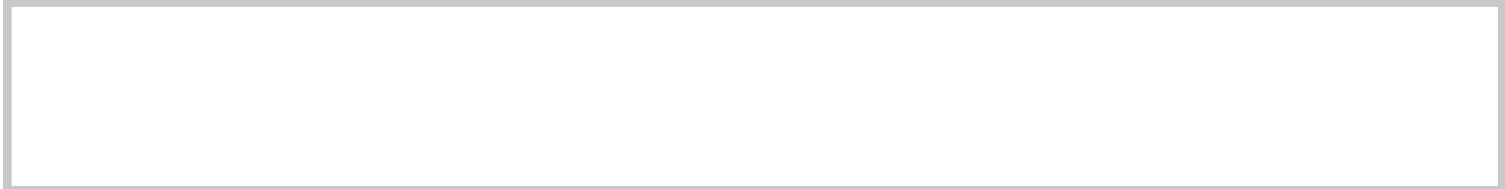
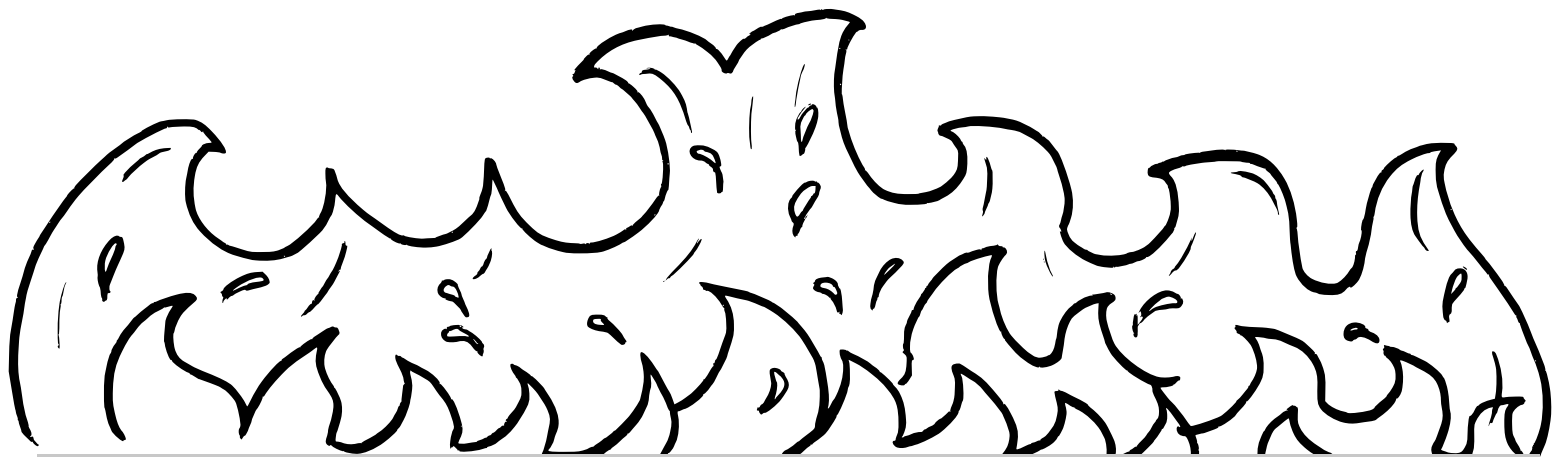


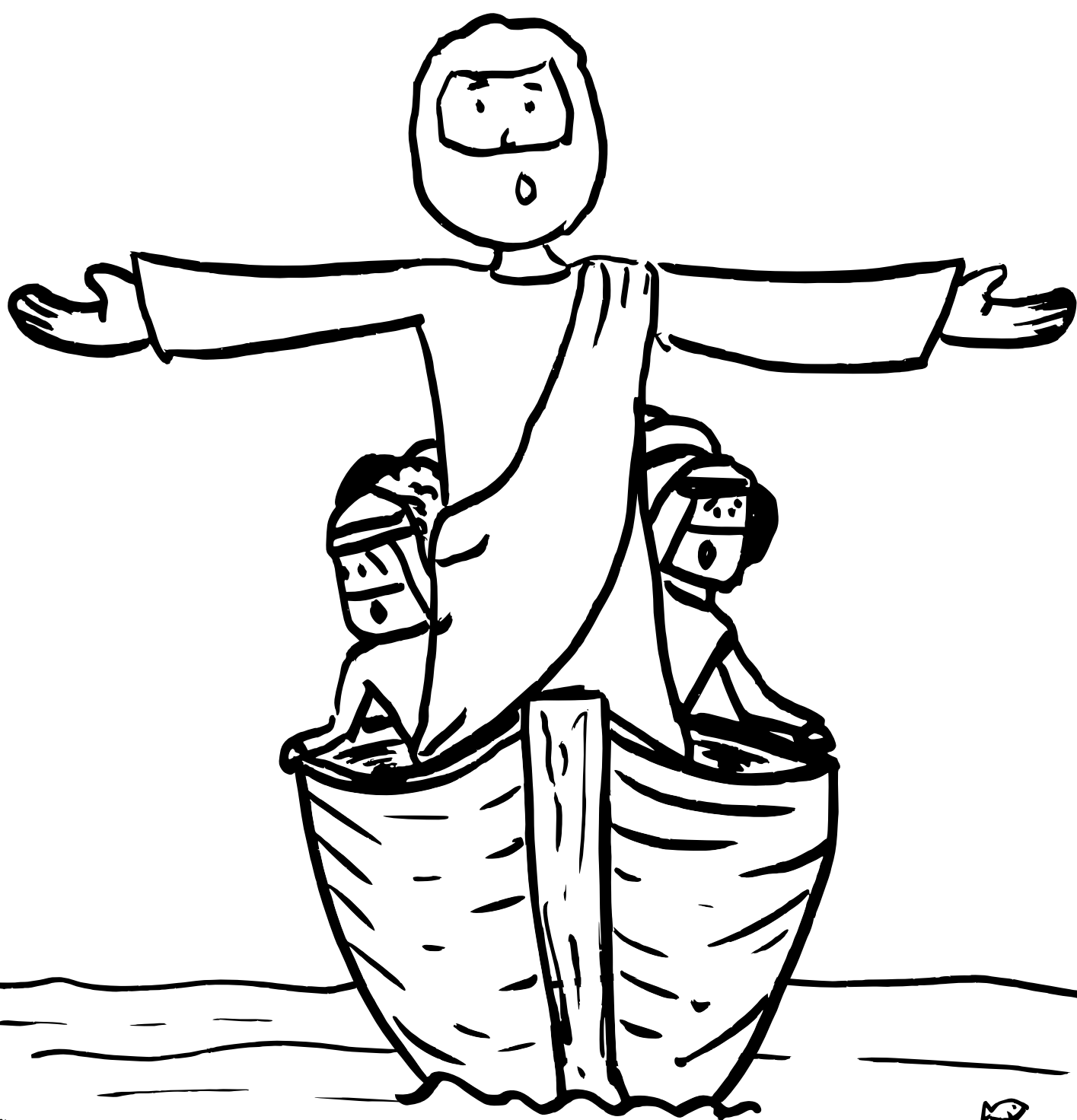
## EXTRA GAMES

### PARACHUTE GAMES

See session 1 instructions







Glue Here