



OVERVIEW

Youth	Dock 1	Dock 2	Dock 3	Dock 4	Dock 5
Title	Overboard: Jonah Runs from God	In the Sea: Jonah Thanks God	On the Lifeboat: Nineveh Receives God's Mercy	Against the Wind: Jonah Is Angry at God	From the Lighthouse: Jesus Shows God's Mercy
References	Jonah 1:1–16	Jonah 1:17—2:10	Jonah 3:1–10	Jonah 4:1–11	Luke 23:33–46; 24:1–12
Focus	God's leading is always best for us.	God's rescuing work is the answer to our greatest needs.	God's compassion and mercy are worth sharing.	God's desires should be our desires.	God offers us His mercy through Jesus' death and resurrection.
Bible Verse	"Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful" (Luke 6:36).	"The LORD is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works. All Your works shall praise You" (Ps. 145:9, 10).	"You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You" (Ps. 86:5).	"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21).	"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:5).
Games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where's Jonah? • Splash! • Jonah Overboard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upside Down Thankfulness • Pour-n-Pass • Bay Balloon Catch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seashell Toss • Life Preserver Ring Toss • Slippery Fish • Rocks and Ships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fish out of Water • Flying Fish • Beach Ball Baseball 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighthouse Relay • Swiftest Sailors • Good News Soccer • Following in His Footsteps
Snacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apple-n-Cheese Boats • "O" Is for Obedience • Jonah Overboard! • Stormy Waves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big Fish Banana • God's Love and Mercy Cookies • In the Sea Cups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jonah on the Beach • Hit the Trail, Jonah! • Fruit Folks • Pretzel Fishing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crab Croissants • Cookie Clams and Pearls • Jonah's Shelter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graham Cracker Good News • Celery Boats • Mercy for You and Me Cookies • Mercy Meltaways
Crafts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sail Your Own Ship • Nautical Anchor • Fun Sailboat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wyatt the Whale • Colorful Sea Turtle • Happy Whale • Good News Bracelet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dolphin Sand Art Keychain • Hermit Crab • Life Preserver Plaque 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ceramic Shark Bank • Crab Pet • Keepsakes in a Can 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandy Beach Lighthouse • 3-D Tall Ship • Sea Snail Magnet • Lighthouse on a Beach

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YOUTH TEACHER BOOK



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OVERBOARD JONAH RUNS FROM GOD

Jonah 1:1-16

Extra Credit Verses: Prov. 3:3; Zech. 7:9; Col. 3:12, 13; Jude 22, 23

DOCK
1

TOPIC

Following God's direction

DESIRED STUDENT RESPONSE

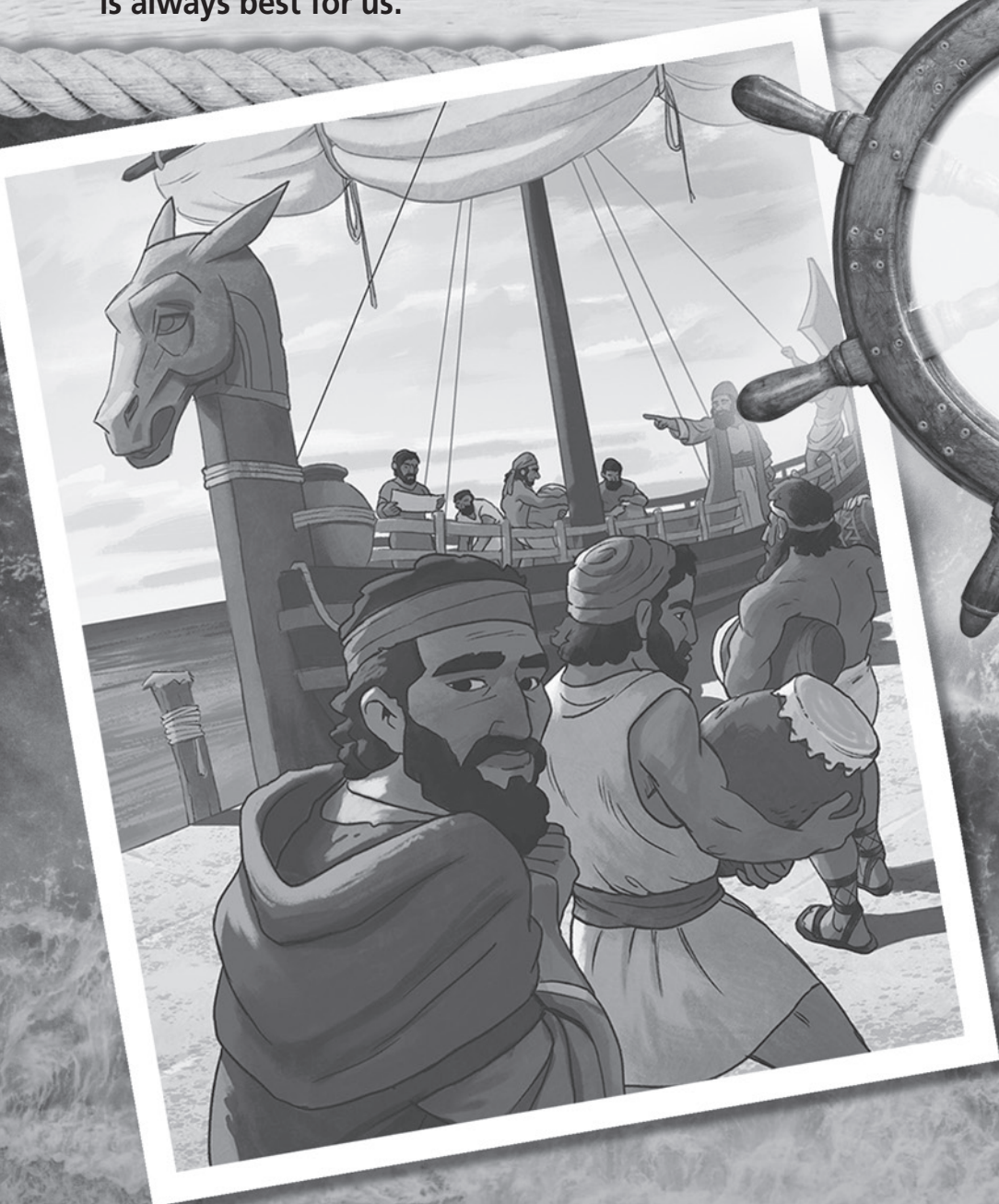
Students will realize that God's direction is best, so they need to follow Him.

THEME

God's leading is always best for us.

BIBLE VERSE

"Be merciful,
just as your
Father also is
merciful"
(Luke 6:36).



- Greet students with enthusiasm. Get to know each student.
- Make sure you have a completed registration card (30208) for each student.
- Distribute nametags (32433) and Big Fish Bay passes (32434).
- Introduce yourself and other VBS leaders.
- Open the class time with prayer.



Option 1: Safe Voyage

Materials

- Blindfold for each student; bike helmets (1 per team); obstacles; tape.

Before class: Set up the classroom as an obstacle course using chairs, tables, cones, etc. Leave several paths for students to navigate. Pathways can zigzag, spiral, or even form a maze. On one side of the room, form two squares with tape on the floor as the starting point. On the other side, place tape as a harbor's boundary.

A crew on a ship must be able to use navigational equipment correctly. Following navigational equipment is like following directions. If a ship's crew don't follow directions, they will find themselves in danger.

ACTIVITY: Organize students into two teams. Each team will start in a square. The students pretend to be ships that will be sent one at a time to the harbor. When sent out, each ship must be blindfolded, put on the bike helmet, and crawl to the harbor without touching any obstacles. Teams will call out verbal directions to guide their ships around the obstacles. If a ship touches an obstacle while crawling, it will be sent back to its starting point. After completing the course, each student will give the bike helmet to the next ship in line. The first team to have all its ships reach the harbor wins.

ASK: Was it easy to follow the directions? Why or why not?

Even though directions can be difficult, failing to follow them can have serious consequences. God has put the directions we need for life in the Bible. Through these instructions, He will guide us toward safety.

Option 2: Shipwright

Materials

- Colored pencils; blank paper; boat-design directions.

Before class: Create a numbered list of at least 20 boat-design directions. The first direction should say "Read all directions before you begin." Near the end, include a direction that states, "When you read this, ignore all other directions. Your boat is already built. Draw a picture of your choice instead. Raise your hand to indicate you have finished." Make a copy for each student and provide a blank sheet of paper and colored pencils.

While almost any person could build a boat, if the shipwright who built the boat did not craft it carefully, the boat might not be able to float. In this

Teacher Tip ►

Directions can instruct students to draw the hull, mast, sail, rudder, hatch, etc. Instructions may include color, size, shape, etc.

(Examples: (2) Draw a large hull that is shaped like a rectangle.

(3) Color the hull with a dark shade of brown.)

activity, you have been hired as a shipwright. Follow the directions to complete your boat first.

ACTIVITY: Start with the boat-design directions facedown. Instruct students to begin at the same time. Students must draw a boat according to the boat-design directions. The first to correctly complete this activity wins.

If you followed the first direction for designing your boat, you saved yourself time. Those who ignored the first direction spent time working on an activity they didn't need to do. The directions in the Bible are far more important than any others. As with your boats, following God's directions leads to success. A shipwright builds a safe boat, and God can guide us safely through life and into eternity.

INTRODUCTION

Materials

- Chair.

SAY: Nod your head if you played Simon Says when you were younger. The goal was to follow the directions and only obey commands that started with the phrase “Simon says.” This activity follows the same idea, but it's called Captain Commands.

ACTIVITY: Place a chair at the front of the class for the leader to stand on. Instruct students to only follow directions given in the form of “captain commands . . .” Use varying tempo and difficulty, frequently omitting the words “captain commands.” Whenever a student fails to follow directions, he or she is eliminated. The last student remaining wins.

Unlike this game, which tries to make us fail to follow the directions, God has done everything to help us follow His directions in the Bible. If we fail to follow His directions, there will be consequences.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE!

Materials

- Bible; map from the lesson visual poster set (32435), or map of the Mediterranean Sea showing Joppa, Nineveh, and Tarshish; faux smartphone, as realistic-looking as possible. If desired, print the smartphone from the Resource CD (32402) and adhere it to thick cardboard that is cut to shape.

Before class: Ask an adult helper to play the role of someone who intentionally breaks your smartphone.



◀ Teacher Tip

For greater difficulty, perform the actions, but occasionally perform the wrong command (e.g., scratch your head when you say “scratch your elbow”). For more fun, use commands that would be given on a ship (e.g., “throw the net,” “raise the sail,” or “swab the deck”).

◀ Teacher Tip

Open in prayer and teach with an open Bible.

- God's Direction Is Mercy (Jonah 1:1–3)

The account of Jonah begins in Israel in the city of Gath Hepher. Jonah was a prophet during a time when Israel was divided into two kingdoms, the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and Southern Kingdom (Judah).

DISPLAY: Use the map. Identify the regions of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. The Northern Kingdom is by the word “Joppa” on the map, and the Southern Kingdom is where the crosses are located. Show the location of Gath Hepher (near the upper right side of the large red dot labeled “Joppa”).

As a prophet, Jonah’s job was to take God’s messages to the Northern Kingdom. The book of Jonah opens with God giving Jonah some surprising directions.

READ: Jonah 1:1, 2.

God’s directions were clear. He told Jonah, “Go to Nineveh.” Nineveh was one of the largest cities in the world, with a population of more than 120,000 people. Later it became the capital of the Assyrian Empire. God also told Jonah what to do—preach against Nineveh. Nineveh stood out as a horribly violent and cruel city. But the people who lived in Nineveh desperately needed God, and God wanted to show them His mercy.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read Jonah 1:3. **ASK:** What did Jonah do instead of following God’s directions? (*He fled to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.*)

Jonah intentionally disobeyed God’s directions. He didn’t want God to show Nineveh mercy. To show mercy means that even though someone deserves punishment for wrongdoing, the person in charge spares that person from being punished. If Jonah obeyed God’s directions, he would be participating in showing mercy to this evil Gentile city that was constantly mistreating Jonah’s people.

SAY: Let’s try to understand how Jonah felt. **ACTIVITY:** Show faux smartphone to students. **SAY:** Let’s pretend I just got a new smartphone. I had been saving and saving to buy this phone, and finally I had enough money! But one day, I’m outside and my phone is sitting beside me, just for a minute. Suddenly, someone comes up to me (the adult helper), picks up the phone, and smashes it on the ground! (*Helper pretends to smash the phone.*) Then the person runs away before I can do anything. (*Helper runs out of the classroom.*) **ASK:** How do you think I would feel about this? (*Really mad! Wanting justice.*) **SAY:** It’s easy to be hard on Jonah, but this would have been a difficult task for many people.

So instead of making the 550-mile journey northeast to Nineveh, Jonah boarded a ship in Joppa. His goal was the coastal city of Tarshish, about 2,500 miles west.

DISPLAY: Use the map. Show the distance from Joppa to Tarshish.

Teacher Tip ►

Don’t call on specific students to read, especially if you do not know them or their reading ability. If no one volunteers to read the verses, simply read them yourself.

- Background: Because the Abrahamic Covenant belonged to Israel and would be the means by which God would bless all people, God required the people of Israel to separate themselves from the Gentiles. Misunderstanding this, the people of Israel sometimes believed they were superior to Gentiles.

Jonah's actions displeased God, because God cared for the Ninevites. God wanted Jonah to obey His directions and bring His mercy to the Ninevites.

God also wants us to share His mercy with others. But before we can share His mercy, we must first receive His mercy ourselves. God offers His mercy through Jesus Christ. Once we have received it, we can take His mercy to others. That is the direction, or instruction, God has for us.

By choosing to disobey God's directions and board the ship, Jonah brought severe consequences on himself. God was not going to let Jonah stand in the way of bringing God's mercy to Nineveh.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read Jonah 1:4. **SAY:** There were consequences for Jonah's disobedience!

When Jonah stepped onto that ship, he brought God's discipline with him in the form of a terrible storm. People in ancient times thought the sea was a place of chaos. Getting caught in a storm at sea was frightening. It would have been one thing if Jonah's disobedience had only affected him, but it affected everyone on the ship. In fact, before Jonah ever had to face his consequences, the ship's crew were dealing with the results of Jonah's bad decision.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read Jonah 1:5. **ASK:** What did the sailors do?
(*They called to their gods and dumped the cargo.*)

As the sailors called out to their false gods, their circumstances only worsened. It was not until they woke Jonah that they learned the truth.

READ: Jonah 1:7.

Casting lots was a common practice in the ancient Near East. This may have involved throwing small, marked stones to the ground and drawing conclusions based on the way they landed—somewhat like a coin toss or rolling dice today. God allowed this casting of lots to reveal the truth that Jonah was responsible for bringing harm on the ship. Now Jonah would have to answer for what he had done.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read Jonah 1:9. **SAY:** Jonah told the sailors that he feared the Lord.

Jonah confessed who he was: a Hebrew. When the sailors realized they were dealing with the God of the Hebrews, they were terrified.

They knew their superstitious rituals could not save them from this terrible situation. Their only hope was that maybe Jonah knew what to do. They asked Jonah—and his answer shocked them.

READ: Jonah 1:12. **ASK:** Is Jonah's answer surprising? He told the sailors to cast him into the sea.



- God Will Deliver Mercy (Jonah 1:4–16)

- Unlike the pantheon of false gods in whom the Phoenicians and other Gentiles believed, Jonah stated that his God is the ultimate God — God of heaven, sea, and land. He controls all Creation.

Jonah realized the seriousness of his disobedience. He knew he would face certain death in the violent waters, but Jonah told the sailors to throw him into the sea. However, these sailors did not want to anger God further by casting His prophet into the sea, so they tried a different solution.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read Jonah 1:13. **SAY:** The sailors tried as hard as they could to row to land—but it was no use.

The sailors could do nothing more about the situation. Their options had run out. The only thing left was to throw Jonah overboard. But before they did that, they begged God for mercy. Having already experienced God's fierce power, the last thing they wanted to do was make their situation worse. So, after calling on God, they threw Jonah overboard.

READ: Read Jonah 1:15. **ASK:** What did God do after the sailors cast Jonah into the sea? (*He made the storm stop.*)

Once Jonah hit the water, God calmed the sea and spared the sailors' lives. Now they knew that the Hebrew God was true and powerful. Jonah, on the other hand, was in the sea because he had chosen to resist God's plan. But God was not done with Jonah!



Materials

- Bible; lesson 1 of the student book (32464); and salvation poster (32436).

Before class: Pray for students who have not yet trusted in Christ for salvation. Pray that those who are saved would choose to follow God's Word.

Jonah was directed to bring a message of mercy to the Ninevites. God cares for those who don't know Him and freely offers it to those who haven't received it. We receive God's mercy through Jesus Christ.

ACTIVITY: Encourage students to take notes on the Mercy for Me activity as you discuss. **SAY:** Our sin separated us from God, but God loves us and provided a way across that separation through Jesus Christ's death on the cross. Jesus rose from the dead to guarantee a way for us to have eternal life through His resurrection. **ASK:** How can a person receive Christ's payment for sin and gain eternal life? **DISPLAY:** Use the salvation poster to explain how to be saved. Ask students to bow their heads and close their eyes. Then ask students who wish to talk more about salvation to look up at you. Assign workers to students who respond.

If you are already a member of God's family, you should be assured that God accepts you based on Christ's death and resurrection. Nothing will ever separate you from eternal life with God. As a result, God wants you to follow His

directions, especially His direction to share the message of Jesus Christ with those who don't know Him. God will help you follow His directions and share His message.



God's Direction

Materials

- Bible; colored pencils; lesson 1 of the student book (32464).

Jonah chose to disobey the direction God clearly gave to him—the direction to show mercy to a threatening group of people, the Ninevites.

ACTIVITY: Refer students to their God's Direction activity pages to complete.

How we treat others is important to God. God wants us to be merciful, kind, loving, forgiving, selfless, and peaceful toward others. Even when people do wrong against us, it is important that we choose God's direction. The human direction says we should get even and look out for ourselves. God's direction says we should forgive and show mercy. We must choose to follow God's direction instead of the human direction.



"Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful" (Luke 6:36).

God created us in His image. This means we reflect Him. While we sometimes choose not to reflect God in our actions, He wants Christians to always faithfully reflect Him. Since God is merciful, our actions as Christians should reflect His mercy. Whether that is forgiving those who wrong us or sharing the message of Jesus Christ with others, God wants us to reflect His mercy.

Option 1: Memory Verse Volley

Materials

- Beach ball.

ACTIVITY: Arrange chairs in a circle. Before the volley, recite the verse together at least twice. Use the beachball to volley around the circle. Each time the ball is hit, all students must say the next word of the verse. If the ball hits the ground, the last person to touch it must move his chair back one foot. Repeat this exercise until the whole class has memorized the verse.



◀ Teacher Tip

Hold your Bible open as you teach the verse, emphasizing that the verse is from the Bible.

Option 2: Color-Coded

Materials

- Colored pencils; 3" x 5" index cards; scissors.

ACTIVITY: Instruct students to cut their index cards into 12 even squares. Have students write one word of Luke 6:36 on each square. Next, have students turn the squares over and color the back with a different color for each square. Once the squares are colored, students can mix them up. Using only the colored sides, students rearrange the squares back into the correct order. After all the squares have been rearranged, students can recite the verse, turning over each square and saying the word on it. Repeat until all students have memorized the verse.



Option 1: Safe Harbor

Materials

- Bible; colored pencils; lesson 1 of the student book (32464).

God's mercy is like a safe harbor that protects us from the punishment we deserve. Through Jesus Christ, we are eternally protected from ever suffering the penalty of sin. As part of God's directions in the Bible, He wants us to bring others to the safe harbor of His mercy.

READ: Ask a student to read Jude 21–23. **ASK:** What are Christians supposed to do to show mercy to others? (*Rescue them from destruction.*)

ACTIVITY: Refer students to the Safe Harbor activity page in their student book to complete.

As we learn to follow God's directions more every day, we should be leading others to the safe harbor of salvation. That is the most merciful and loving thing we can do for another person. That is really following God's directions.

Option 2: The Ultimate Direction

Materials

- Bible; pencils; 3" x 5" index cards.

ACTIVITY: On one side of the card, instruct students to write down as many of God's directions from the Bible as they can. **ASK:** After giving time to write, ask students to share several of the directions they found.

It is good to identify the Bible's clear directions from God. But before any of those directions are meaningful for a person, he or she must first follow God's ultimate direction.

Teacher Tip ►

For students who are less familiar with the Bible, refer them to one of the following passages: Galatians 5—6; Ephesians 4—6; Philippians 4; Colossians 3—4. Help them identify verses that apply to us today.

ACTIVITY: Instruct students to turn the card over and write down God's ultimate direction from the Bible. Suggest passages to students such as John 3:16; 20:31; Acts 16:31; and Ephesians 2:8, 9.

When we follow God's ultimate direction—receiving Jesus as our Savior—God will help us follow His other directions, which include sharing His ultimate direction of salvation with others.

