

Lesson:

Jonah was a prophet who had a lot to overcome, namely his feelings about the Ninevites. He did not like them!! They had captured many Israelites and tortured them, killing them in horrible ways. Jonah could not forgive them for those people who were lost because of their sins. But all people are God's children. We are all sinners, and God cries for the sins of the people. God wanted Jonah to go there and preach to them. But there was an even greater plan for the future: No longer would Israelites be captured by them. No longer would Jonah's people be harmed by the Ninevites! And so the future would be better. An enemy would be turned into a friend. That's what God's love does.

Who is the most powerful person or people you can think of?? Jonah was sent on a special mission to spread the word to powerful people that God will have justice if they don't repent. This was the only way to reach them. They thought they were so powerful, and they were, but there is One in heaven Who is more powerful. And so they recognized the power of God. They wished to avoid the punishments of justice and so they repented, from the king to the peasant, and even down to every last animal. Everyone fasted. Everyone was saved by the fear of God, and it was all because Jonah obeyed the Lord. Let's say our memory verse:

Memory Verse:

"Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. " Jonah 3:3

Jonah was great because he obeyed even though he did not understand God's plan. He hadn't even overcome his dislike of the Ninevites. He did what God asked without really wanting to. The result was incredible!!! Every single person in Nineveh was saved from death and from a life of sin! Jonah was so successful! He was grumpy too. The Bible doesn't say whether he ever overcame his grumpiness, to forgive the Ninevites and have joy in the outcome of his work efforts. But what really matters is that Jonah obeyed God and changed the world. Let's say our memory verse again:

Memory Verse:

"Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. " Jonah 3:3

Jonah is a great example to us. He had faith in God and loved God. He learned to sacrifice for others, even when it didn't feel good, for the sake

of God's plan. He faced his fear that he might be killed by the Ninevites, and when Jonah decided to trust God, he found that the Ninevites did not want to kill him at all. They listened to the message.

Jesus said, "Love your enemies." Is this something you try to do? Pray for your enemies and you will see that it changes the situation and can sometimes even turn it around! Jonah had a tough time doing this, but he was after all human. He wasn't perfect. He was merely obedient, and it was enough. God uses imperfect people. God uses love to defeat our enemies. If we love God, it is enough to make us obey the words of Jesus and love our enemies.

Jonah obeyed God's plan to sow seed everywhere. We never know who will accept the message, but we just keep giving the message to everyone everywhere. Some people may appear as unlikely people to become Christians, but they might end up being first in line asking to hear more. That's why we need God. God will direct us to speak the message that person needs to hear. The Ninevites would not have responded to a message of God's love. They only responded to a message of God's power and justice. This is why God directed Jonah to say: "Forty days and Nineveh will be destroyed." It was a loud and clear message and it caught the attention of everyone, all the way up to the king! And the seed was sown. They were seeds that broke every heart and created all new people, transformed. Jonah was God's seed-sowing servant. I hope we all want to be successful servants like Jonah.

Last time: **Memory Verse:**

"Jonah obeyed the word of the Lord and went to Nineveh. " Jonah 3:3

Let's be like Jonah and be obedient to God. God's wonders will unfold through us. Amen!!