

SESSION TWELVE

THE LESSON ON **OBEDIENCE**

HERE'S THE POINT ▲

Sometimes we simply say no to God.

Sometimes, even though we know what God wants us to do, for some reason—peer pressure, fear, lack of incentive—we go the other way. But when we just say no to God, we are the losers. Jonah learned this lesson well.

Through Jonah's story we see how far we can go to try to get away from God. And more amazingly, we see how far God goes to bring us back.

JONAH **THE LONG WAY HOME**



Jonah (the whole book!)

INTRO

Simon says

This oldie but goodie is an instant lesson in obedience.

Have your students stand up, and tell them to do everything you say

You'll need...

- *no materials*

when you begin the instructions with the phrase "Simon says." (For example: "Simon says, stand on your right foot.") If you don't say "Simon says," no one should do what you say. Those who act on the instructions are out and must sit down. Move through your commands quickly, trying to trick students. (If you're no good at thinking on your feet, write out some of your commands.) Play as many rounds as it takes to get most of your students out.

Segue into your Bible lesson by saying—

The way to win this game was to do what Simon says. The way we win at life is to do what God says. Yet sometimes (for what ever reason), we don't do what God says—and usually we pay a price.

The story of Jonah shows us what can happen when we don't follow God's directions. As we talk about Jonah's experience, think about the times in your life when you've chosen not to follow God. From Jonah's life, learn that you're not automatically out of the game if you disobey; you just need to know to come back to God.

BIBLE LESSON


He ran, but he couldn't hide


Your talk covers the passages in Jonah that express his lesson of obedience. Here's a suggested outline:

JONAH'S CALL


 Jonah 1:1-3


 Go over God's directions to Jonah and tell how Jonah responded.


 Talk about some of the reasons we don't do what God asks us to do.


 Give an illustration about a time you didn't do something you felt God was asking you to do—and what happened.


JONAH'S FIRST RESPONSE


 Jonah 1:4-15

 Explain what happened to Jonah (and the people around him) when he didn't obey.

 Point out that the things that happened to Jonah were part of how God disciplined Jonah for not obeying him.

 Sometimes the bad things that happen in our lives are our own fault (though not always, as in the case of Job).


 God created the storm to guide Jonah back on track—a demonstration that God's discipline is motivated by love and grace, not petty revenge nor sheer meanness.


 As an additional gift of grace, the sailors came to recognize God as more powerful than their own gods.

 Sometimes God acts in spite of our disobedience.


JONAH'S FINAL RESPONSE

 Jonah 1:17


 God provided a big fish to swallow Jonah to give Jonah some time to think and pray about his situation.


 Jonah chapter 2


 Contrast Jonah's response this time with his response at the beginning (1:3).


 Prayer is our best response when God asks us to do something we don't want to do.

 Jonah chapter 3

 Jonah ultimately obeyed God. As a result of listening to Jonah's proclamation, the Ninevites repented.

 Jonah chapter 4

 Jonah's own heart had to be changed, too. He didn't think the Ninevites ought to get God's grace.

 Through Jonah, God reminds us that he loves every person and desires all people to come to him.

CUSTOM FIT

Use *My Journey* on a retreat. Send the kids outside to find a place where they can reflect quietly and individually and ask them to write out some of their own story.

SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION

AND

APPLICATION

Obeying God

You'll need...

- copies of *Jonah: Obeying God—Small Group Q's 12.2*
- copies of *My Journey—Making Connections 12.3*
- pencils
- extra Bibles

Hand out copies of both worksheets to your small groups. Following the discussion time, ask the kids to write out answers to the questions about their personal spiritual journeys. If you're short on time, send them home with *My Journey* for them to complete.



JONAH

OBEYING GOD

Read aloud or skim the following Scriptures.
Use what you learn to discuss the related questions.

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Jonah 1:1-3
.....

- 1 What did Jonah do when God told him to go to Ninevah?
- 2 Can you relate to his response.
- 3 Have you ever done that to God?

.....
Jonah 1:4
.....

- 4 What did God do to Jonah?
- 5 Have you ever experienced God's storm in your life when you didn't obey him? If so, what was your storm like?

.....
Jonah 1:5
.....

- 6 What did Jonah do during the storm?
- 7 Have you ever tried to ignore God when he was speaking to you? What happened?

.....
Jonah 1:7-16
.....

- 8 How did God use the storm to bring the sailors to himself?
- 9 What does this tell you about the way God works—even when we're being disobedient?

.....
Jonah 2
.....

- 10 Have you ever felt what Jonah said he felt in his prayer?
- 11 What part of his prayer can you relate to the most? Why?

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Jonah 3:1
.....

- 12 What does this statement tell you about the way God works in our lives to get us to do what he wants us to do?

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Jonah 2:4-5
.....

- 13 Have you ever shared your faith with others? If so, what was their response?

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Jonah 4:1-3
.....

- 14 Have you ever been with someone who deserved to get punished and didn't? How did it make you feel?
- 15 Can you relate to Jonah's feelings in this passage?

.....
Jonah 4:4-11
.....

- 16 How did God teach Jonah a lesson in this chapter?
- 17 Has God ever used something to teach you a lesson? If so, what was it?
- 18 Is there anything he's been teaching you lately?

MY JOURNEY

Follow the map, answering the questions at each destination.
Reflect on your own journey with God.

God's call

Where are you in your relationship with God?

- I always try to listen to God and do what he wants.
- Sometimes God tells me to do something, and I don't do it.
- Most of the time I don't do what God wants me to do.
- I don't hear much from God at all.

The storm

What is the most difficult thing you've ever been through?

The big fish

At what time in your life have you experienced the greatest change?

The Ninevites

What relationships or people are most challenging for you right now? How might God want to use you in their lives?

Your shipmates

Who are some of the people who accompany you through tough times (friends, family, etc.)?

The lesson

What is the most significant lesson God has taught you recently? How did he teach it to you?

