



# Jonah and the Big Fish

(Jonah 1-4)

Tell

LARGE  
GROUP  
GATHERING

## Big Picture Overview

BIG PICTURE OVERVIEW

### Gather

Kids are introduced to the story Jonah and the Big Fish through an interactive skit.

**SPARK RESOURCES:** None

**SUPPLIES:** Fishing pole, booth, paper heart, paper fish, toy boat

### Open the Bible

**INTRODUCE THE STORY:** Kids read facts about the Jonah and the Big Fish story and answer questions related to those facts.

**SPARK RESOURCES:** Jonah Fish Facts (pages 13-17)

**SUPPLIES:** Scissors

**SPARK STORY BIBLE STORYTELLING:** Kids experience the story as a PowerPoint presentation and review it with questions.

**SPARK RESOURCES:** Spark Story Bible PowerPoint slides

**SUPPLIES:** Laptop, projector

**CREATIVE DRAMA STORYTELLING:** Kids perform and watch a news broadcast performance telling about Jonah and the Big Fish and answer questions about the story.

**SPARK RESOURCES:** Bible Storytelling Script (pages 9-12)

**SUPPLIES:** CD of *Jaws* music and DVD player, cardboard shark fin, video camera, blanket, glass of water, jogging clothes, two-way radio, raincoat, umbrella

### Activate Faith

**OFFERING:** Kids collect canned fish for a food shelf.

**SPARK RESOURCES:** None

**SUPPLIES:** Fishing net (optional)

### Send

Kids do actions and say a prayer about Jonah.

**SPARK RESOURCES:** None

**SUPPLIES:** None



# Jonah and the Big Fish

(Jonah 1-4)

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## Gather

Welcome to the Large Group Gathering for Jonah and the Big Fish. Enjoy your time with kids and leaders as you sing, learn, and pray together. This Gathering gives you choices for music and storytelling. Choose a few songs to sing from the music recommendations on pages 6-8. You can display the PowerPoint slides to retell the story from the Spark Story Bible, or use the Bible Storytelling Script on pages 9-12 to tell the story.

**Set Up:** Set up a fishing booth. This might be a large appliance box with a “window” cut in it, a blanket or sheet strung across a clothesline, or a combination of shelving units/tables/rolling white boards positioned so that kids cannot see what is happening behind the “booth.” The goal is to fish over or into something large enough that kids will not be able to see what is placed on the fishing line until the line is reeled in. An attendant inside or behind the fishing booth will place the toy boat, cardboard fish, and paper heart on the line. A practice cast or two is a good idea; when the line goes into the booth, the attendant attaches the item named in the script and then jerks the line so it can be reeled in. If you are telling the story with the Spark Story Bible, check your projector, laptop, and screen to make sure everything is working. If you are telling the story with the Bible Storytelling Script, make sure all props are in place and all actors briefed.

Appear in front of the group with a fishing pole over your shoulder. **Hello! Say, did you come to go fishing with me? Thank you! Fishing can be so boring if you're all by yourself. I've heard this is THE PLACE to fish. Some real whoppers have been caught here! Should we see what we can catch?** Cast a line into the fishing booth. Make conversation about the size of fish you hope to catch while the attendant attaches the paper heart. Reel in with great excitement that quickly changes to disappointment. **A big ol' heart?! I wanted a fish that big! At least that big. What's with the heart? . . . Hey. What's it say on here?** Let kids read both sides of the heart. **Tell Go? Go Tell? What could that mean?** Shrug and give the heart to a kid near the front. **Let's try this again!** Cast again. Reel in a toy boat. **A toy boat? I thought I'd get a big fish! This fishing trip isn't going very well. Nobody told me there was all this other stuff in this fishing spot.** Give the toy boat to another kid to hold. Cast again. **Let's try one more time. Think big fish, big fish, big fish!** Encourage participatory chanting as the attendant attaches the large fish. Pull it out with lots of drama, straining under the weight. **Finally! A giant fish!** Wild cheering! Pose for a fake picture. Pause until things have calmed down. **Hmmm, there's something familiar about these three things all together.** Bring the three things up front so everyone can see. **A boat . . . a big heart that says "Go Tell!" . . . a giant fish. I feel like these things remind me of something . . . a song maybe? A story?** The attendant holds up a Spark Story Bible from behind the fishing booth, dancing it around until the kids begin to call out “A Bible story!” or “Jonah!” Have a great time overacting this. **What could it be? Ah, yes! That's it! The story of Jonah and**

### Spark Resources

None

### Supplies

Fishing pole  
Fishing booth (like the carnival game in which kids fish for prizes)  
Toy boat  
Big paper or cardboard fish  
Large paper heart with the word *Go!* on one side and *Tell!* on the other

**the Big Fish! It's one of my favorites! How could I have forgotten?** Prompt the kids to tell the condensed story to you, holding up the giant heart, the toy boat and the big fish at the appropriate times.

## Open the Bible

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### Introduce the Story

**Set Up:** Photocopy and cut out the five fish on Jonah Fish Facts (pages 13-17). Have the five paper fish fanned out like cards in your hand.

**Nothing gets in the way of God's plans. That's what the story of Jonah is about. God wants everyone, EVERYONE!, to know how much she or he is loved by God. When Jonah doesn't cooperate with God's plan to go tell the Ninevites, God helps him do the right thing.**

**Let's look at few fish facts I have here about Jonah's story. Could I have a volunteer come pick a fish, please?** Invite different kids to come up and each pick a fish, and have fun with this! You might say things like, "Do you *really* want to pick that one? Are you sure?" to make it a little silly and fun. If the kid is a reader she or he might read the Jonah fish fact; if not another reader can. Then pose each question below.

FACT: Some people call the great big fish in Jonah's story a whale.

**What is the difference between a fish and a whale?**

FACT: Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. Assyria had a huge army.

**Why do you think Jonah didn't want to go there?**

FACT: When Jonah was on the ship and the storm started, he went down in the ship's hold, a large lower deck where cargo was stored.

**Has anybody here ever ridden in a ship's hold? What do you think it feels like down there?**

FACT: Jonah's dad's name was Amittai.

**Good to know! What do you think his mom's name was?**

FACT: God loves everyone, even the Ninevites, who were doing terrible, terrible things when God told Jonah to go tell them to change their ways.

**Who does God love anyway? How many people?**

**Okay. Now you know your fish facts! Let's open the Bible and read the story of Jonah! It's a story that tells us pretty much what the whole Bible is about!**

### Spark Resources

Jonah Fish Facts (pages 13-17)

### Supplies

Scissors

## Spark Story Bible Storytelling

If you are going to use the Spark Story Bible PowerPoint slides to tell the story of Jonah and the Big Fish, display the title slide. Then begin the storytelling.

To get kids talking about the story, ask some of the questions below. If your group is a manageable size, you can have this conversation about the details in the story together. If your group is too large for that, have the kids talk about the story in their small groups with their Shepherd and bring their answers back to the big group.

- **Where did God want Jonah to go?**
- **What was he supposed to do there?**
- **Where did Jonah go instead?**
- **I wonder what it is like to be in the belly of a fish—FOR THREE DAYS!**
- **What do you think Jonah thought about while he was in the fish's belly?**
- **How do you think Jonah prayed while he was in the fish's belly?**
- **Why did the fish spit Jonah out on the beach?**

## Creative Drama Storytelling

If you are going to use the Bible Storytelling Script to tell the story of Jonah and the Big Fish, invite your actors to join you onstage and then begin the show.

After the drama, ask some of the questions below to get a little conversation and reflection going. If your group is a manageable size, you might do this as a large group. If your group is too large for that, have kids talk about the story in their small groups with their Shepherds and bring their answers and reflections back to share with the big group.

- **How did God help Jonah?**
- **How did Jonah make his own problems?**
- **Why is it hard to listen sometimes?**
- **What would you have done if you were Jonah?**
- **What's it like to pray when you're really scared?**
- **What one thing do you think God wants us to tell people?**

### Spark Resources

Spark Story Bible PowerPoint slides

### Supplies

Laptop  
Projector

### Spark Resources

Bible Storytelling Script  
(pages 9-12)

### Supplies

CD of *Jaws* music and DVD player  
Cardboard shark fin  
Video camera  
Blanket  
Glass of water  
Jogging clothes  
Two-way radio  
Raincoat  
Umbrella

# Activate Faith

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## Offering

If your group is collecting an offering, collect it at this time.

*Suggested Offering:* Canned fish for a food shelf

Collecting canned goods for your local food shelf is a great, concrete service opportunity for kids. In keeping with the day's fish theme, offerings might be collected in fishing nets or placed in or near a fish pond or aquarium. Fun songs could be sung as the collection takes place. If the offering is not immediately packed up for delivery, it could be displayed around the fishing booth.

### Spark Resources

None

### Supplies

Fishing nets (optional)

## Send

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**The story of Jonah shows us that no matter what we do, God loves us. No matter what Jonah did or didn't do, God loved him. "Go tell the Ninevites!" God said. When Jonah decided he didn't really want to go to Nineveh, God insisted. God needed Jonah to go to Nineveh. So God sent a great big fish to help Jonah do the right thing. God made sure Jonah told the Ninevites what they needed to know. God does not ask us to do something without helping us to do it. God sticks with us, even when we go the wrong way.**

### Spark Resources

None

### Supplies

None

**Let's pray this prayer with words and actions.**

**Dear God,** *(reach hands high over head and bring them down into folded praying hands over heart)*

**Way down deep in the belly of the fish,** *(crouch down)*

**Jonah got scared and made a great big wish.** *(make frightened face, still crouched)*

**He hoped God would forgive him for running away.**

**Jonah was sad, so he began to pray.** *(reach hands high over head and bring them down into folded praying hands over heart again)*

**God heard Jonah and things turned around.**

**The fish spit him out with a loud fishy sound—BLECH!!!** *(open mouth with tongue out)*

**Then Jonah rose up** *(jump up)* **with a wiggle and a swish!** *(wiggle whole body)*

**Love us, God.** *(cross arms over heart)* **Help us do what you wish! AMEN!**

Make sure kids know which workshops to attend. If your group is large, dismiss by small groups or grade levels.



# Jonah and the Big Fish

(Jonah 1-4)

Tell

LARGE  
GROUP  
GATHERING

MUSIC GUIDE

Make sure you have the supplies (CD player, musical instruments) you need each day to lead music. Several Spark resources can support your musical leadership. When you lead songs from the Spark Song CD and Songbook, you can also use the Spark Song Lyrics and Spark Song PowerPoint Slides.

## "Who Did Swallow Jonah?"

Sunday school/camp song

Traditional/Public Domain. An arrangement by Nylea Butler-Moore appears in *Sing a New Song*, published by Abingdon Press.

Form two groups—one will echo the other. Have each group stand when they sing and sit when the other group sings. The song should be sung at a lively tempo. The first two verses are about Jonah. Other verses can tell of other biblical heroes. Let's TELL about the heroes of our faith!

Who did, who did, who did, who did, who did swallow Jo, Jo, Jo, Jo?  
Who did, who did, who did, who did, who did swallow Jo, Jo, Jo, Jo?  
Who did, who did, who did, who did, who did swallow Jo, Jo, Jo, Jo?  
Who did swallow Jonah? Who did swallow Jonah? Who did swallow Jonah down?

Whale did, whale did, whale did, whale did, whale did swallow Jo, Jo, Jo, Jo,  
Whale did, whale did, whale did, whale did, whale did swallow Jo, Jo, Jo, Jo,  
Whale did, whale did, whale did, whale did, whale did swallow Jo, Jo, Jo, Jo,  
Whale did swallow Jonah, whale did swallow Jonah, whale did swallow Jonah down!

Noah, Noah, Noah, Noah, Noah in the arky, arky, (repeat 3 times)  
Noah in the arky bailed.

## "This Little Light of Mine"

Sunday school song

Traditional. *LifeSongs*, page 32; Spark Song CD, track 16; Spark Songbook, page 90.

If your church subscribes to [sundaysandseasons.com](http://sundaysandseasons.com), find it in the Hymns & Songs section of the website.

God told Jonah to "take the light" of God's word to the Ninevites. We are also told to take our light into the world to share God's message of love for all people. Add claps, finger snaps, or jazz hands to the second and fourth beats of the measure.

# "Go into the World"

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Hymn/anthem

Natalie Sleeth. *LifeSongs*, page 110. A longer version is published in *The Faith We Sing* 2239; Choristers Guild (CGA209). If your church subscribes to [sundaysandseasons.com](http://sundaysandseasons.com), search "Go into the World" under the Hymns & Songs section of the website.

This chorus is taken from a children's choir anthem. It can be sung in a round. Its message to us is the same as God's message to Jonah: "Go into the world and tell the story to ALL." Encourage kids to sing to each other and to other audience members. We can encourage one another to go into the world and tell God's story.

# "You Are the Seed"

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Global (Hispanic) hymn

Cesireo Gabarain, copyright © The United Methodist Publishing House. *LifeSongs*, page 139. *United Methodist Hymnal* 583; *With One Voice* 753; *This Far by Faith* 226; or do an Internet search for "Sois la semilla Song" or "You Are the Seed song."

If possible, accompany this with guitar and maracas, and teach the chorus in Spanish to be true to the song's origins. Guitar chords appear in the Leader/Accompanist version of *LifeSongs*. Teach the chorus first; younger children may find that the verses have too many words to learn. The chorus sums up the message, "We are to be God's messengers to ALL of the people in the world."

# "Jonah Ran"

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Piggyback song

Text by Erin Moore. Music traditional.  
(sung to the tune, "Camptown Races")

God wanted Jonah to tell the word to the people of Nineveh, but Jonah ran away from his call. God sent obstacles to teach Jonah that you can't run away from God's will! God wants us to be brave and to tell everybody we meet all about God's love.

God told Jonah, "Here's my plan,  
Jonah, Jonah."

When he heard it, Jonah ran,  
Jonah ran away!

Jonah ran all night.  
Jonah ran all day.  
Should have gone to Nineveh,  
But Jonah ran away.

Jonah caught a passing ship,  
Jonah, Jonah.  
God sent wind, and the boat did tip.  
So Jonah swam away.

Jonah swam all night.  
Jonah swam all day.  
Till he was swallowed by a great big fish  
That God had sent for him.

In the belly, Jonah was,  
Jonah, Jonah.  
Prayed for freedom from the guts,  
Jonah prayed to God!

Jonah prayed all night.  
Jonah prayed all day.  
The fish spit him out in Nineveh.  
Jonah preached God's word!  
(spoken) Hooray!

## "Spark My World" New Lyrics

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Text by Erin Moore. Music Aaron David Miller.  
(sung to the tune, "Spark My World")

Go and tell the stories of God.  
Go and tell the stories of faith.  
Make new disciples. Share God's love with them all.  
God will go with you.

God gave Jonah one command,  
"Go tell my word in a distant land."  
Jonah denied God's call and wish,  
So he was swallowed by a great big fish!

T-E-double L, TELL!  
T-E-double L, TELL!



# Jonah and the Big Fish

(Jonah 1–4)

Tell

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BIBLE STORYTELLING SCRIPT

*(Anchor desk)*

*(Two news reporters are seated at a desk. Broadcast news music plays.)*

**Camera Operator:** *(holding camera)* And you're on in three, two, one . . .

*(speaking to the camera)*

**Reporter 1:** *(cheery)* Good morning, everyone. I'm Suzi Sharpe.

**Reporter 2:** And I'm Ron Bradley, and this is station TGN, your source for The Good News of Jesus Christ.

**Reporter 1:** At the top of our broadcast, in spite of high levels of pollution in our area lakes, local fishermen report a recent, unexpected bumper crop of fish. A representative from the Department of Natural Resources says there isn't an exact explanation for such an occurrence. Rather, he said it was more like a miracle.

**Reporter 2:** In other news, the findings of a recent study in family systems further confirm that parents of large families who favor some children over others will likely experience strained relationships between those siblings. Dr. Smart of the Thinker Institute said, "Siblings have a hard time getting along, especially when one is singled out as being the favorite. Parents only makes things worse when they lavish that child with gifts such as fancy clothing."

**Reporter 1:** And now for our lead story. *(hand to ear pretending to listen for instructions in an ear mic.)* Oh, viewers. We are being told of some breaking news occurring down at the local beach. Apparently, a man has washed up on shore with quite a tale to tell. Our very own Chase Jones is on the scene to give us a report. Chase, are you there?  
*(looking at the camera, pretending to talk to Chase through a monitor)*

*(On location)*

**Roving Reporter:** Yes, Suzi, I'm here.

**Reporter 1:** What's happening down there?

*(Throughout the beach scene, rescue workers can periodically walk behind the reporter to add to the action of the scene. Also, stage a separate scene with Jonah and rescue workers. Jonah could be wrapped in a rescue blanket. The rescue workers could pretend to check him out, give him water, etc. Basically, they are tending to him.)*

**Roving Reporter:** Well, it looks as if a rescue team was called out to help with what appeared to be a near-drowning victim. And with me today is Mary Jorgensen, a resident of our town and local running enthusiast. Mary was the first to find the man and call the rescue team. Good morning, Mary. Thank you for being with us this morning.

**Mary:** *(dressed in running gear)* Good morning to you.

**Roving Reporter:** Now, Mary, I understand that you were on your morning run when you found the victim. Can you tell us a little bit about what is going on here at the scene?

**Mary:** That's right, Chase. Every morning I run by this beach, and it is usually very quiet. But today, I saw this man lying on the beach. So, I ran up to him to see if he needed help.

**Roving Reporter:** And what was he like when you got there?

**Mary:** Well, he was shaking a bit, but he seemed to be okay. In fact, he was almost smiling, maybe even laughing. He kept mumbling, "It worked! It worked! God listened to my prayer and I made it!" I had no idea what he was talking about. It was actually a little hard to help him because he kinda stunk like fish. *(waving hand in front of nose)*

**Roving Reporter:** *(scrunching his nose)* I see . . .

**Rescue Worker 1:** *(interrupting scene, talking on a two-way radio)* Everything seems to be checking out okay. Let's load up. *(starting to pack up supplies)*

**Roving Reporter:** It looks as if the rescue team is finished. Let's see if we can speak with the man. *(moving toward man)* Excuse me, sir. Can we have a few words with you?

**Jonah:** *(waterlogged, but cheery)* Certainly!

**Roving Reporter:** Sir, can you tell us who you are and how you got washed up on the beach this morning? Were you in a boating accident?

**Jonah:** Not exactly. Actually, my name is Jonah and . . .

**Roving Reporter:** Wait a minute! Did you say you are Jonah . . . *the* Jonah, the famous prophet of the Lord?

**Jonah:** Yes, that's me.

**Roving Reporter:** *(to audience)* Ladies and gentlemen, this is a rare and chance encounter with one of God's special messengers. *(to Jonah)* Jonah, what a pleasure to meet you.

**Jonah:** Thank you, I guess.

**Roving Reporter:** Jonah, I understand that you often bring the good news of the Lord to many people. So why are you here? What happened? How did you get so . . . wet?

**Jonah:** Well, I have to tell you, *this* is one time I'm not exactly thrilled about the message I have to send. You see, God wants me to go talk to the people in the community of Nineveh.

**Roving Reporter:** *(excitement fades a bit)* Oh, Nineveh. I *do* see.

**Jonah:** Since I would rather do just about anything else than go to Nineveh, I started to run in the opposite direction of where I was supposed to go.

**Roving Reporter:** Let me get this straight. You decided NOT to follow God's command?

**Jonah:** That's right.

**Roving Reporter:** That's not exactly a good plan.

**Jonah:** You're telling me! Next thing I knew I was sailing on a boat with a one-way ticket to Tarshish when suddenly, a huge storm came up. At that point I knew I was in big trouble.

**Roving Reporter:** So what happened?

**Jonah:** I had the crew throw me overboard because I realized I wasn't going to get out of this one!

**Roving Reporter:** What? You told them to throw you overboard? That's a little crazy, don't you think?

**Jonah:** Maybe, but you have to remember, we're dealing with the Lord here.

**Roving Reporter:** Well, what happened next?

**Jonah:** Well then, everything went dark and . . .

**Roving Reporter:** And . . .

**Jonah:** You won't believe me when I tell you.

**Roving Reporter:** Try me.

**Jonah:** Okay, you asked. I was swallowed by a big fish.

**Roving Reporter:** I'm sorry. What did you say?

**Jonah:** I was swallowed by a big fish. You know . . . a big fish . . . gulp . . . right up.

**Roving Reporter:** Wait a minute. (*surprised*) You're trying to tell me that that you tried to run from God in a boat only to get thrown overboard and then swallowed by . . . by a fish?

**Jonah:** That's right.

**Roving Reporter:** (*chuckling*) I suppose that next you are going to tell me something even more crazy such as God felt sorry for you so God had the fish just spit you right back up on land.

**Jonah:** Well, you're right. That is what happened.

**Roving Reporter:** Ladies and gentlemen, this is a tale of epic proportions! And remember, you heard it first right here on station TGN, where we *always* tell the good news of the Lord. Back to you, Ron and Suzi.

(*Back to the anchor desk*)

**Reporter 1:** Thank you, Chase. Whew, what a story! You know, Ron, I can't believe Jonah didn't follow God's commands.

**Reporter 2:** Yeah, but . . .

**Reporter 1:** I suppose it must have seemed easier to just do something else.

**Reporter 2:** I suppose, but . . .

**Reporter 1:** I guess when it seems like a job or a task is difficult, we don't trust that God will help us through it.

**Reporter 2:** That's true, but . . .

**Reporter 1:** After all, there isn't much that is more important than telling people about the good news of the Lord.

**Reporter 2:** Suzi!

**Reporter 1:** What, Ron?

**Reporter 2:** All those things are true, but I think there is something even more important.

**Reporter 1:** What's that, Ron?

**Reporter 2:** Don't ever have someone throw you in the water! Especially when there are big fish around. (*Jaws theme music starts to play briefly or someone can hum it.*)

**Reporter 1:** (*cautious*) Ah, Ron . . . good point. Let's go to Cassie Dean for our daily weather report.

(*Cut to outdoors*)

**Weather Reporter:** (*wearing a raincoat and holding a closed umbrella*) Good morning, everyone. Looks like the stormy weather is behind us, at least for the moment. Even with all this sun, local authorities are cautioning beachgoers to stay away from the water. There have been recent sightings of some large fish activity. (*Jaws theme music starts to play again or someone can hum it. For added effect, someone can move a paper shark fin just below the reporter. Hide the holder with a blue cloth.*) Ah . . . ah . . . back to you, Ron and Suzi.

**Reporter 2:** (*amazed*) Well, Suzi, I think we survived today's show.

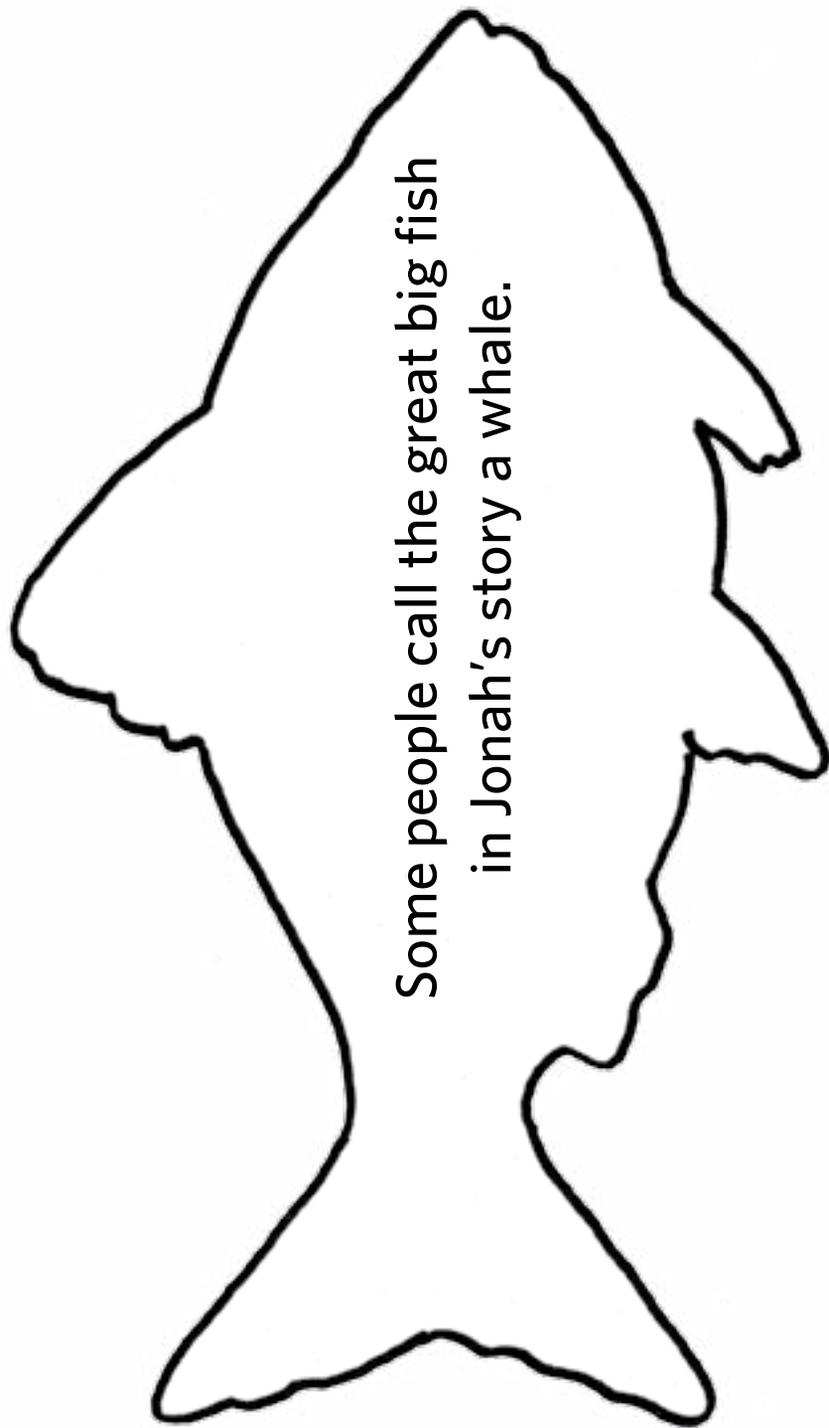
**Reporter 1:** You know, Ron, I think you're right.

**Reporter 2:** And we hope that you have a wonderful day. Oh, and I do recommend that you do as God says. You never know . . . (*music and fin behind the reporters this time*)

**Reporters 1 and 2:** AHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

(*Broadcast news music plays again.*)

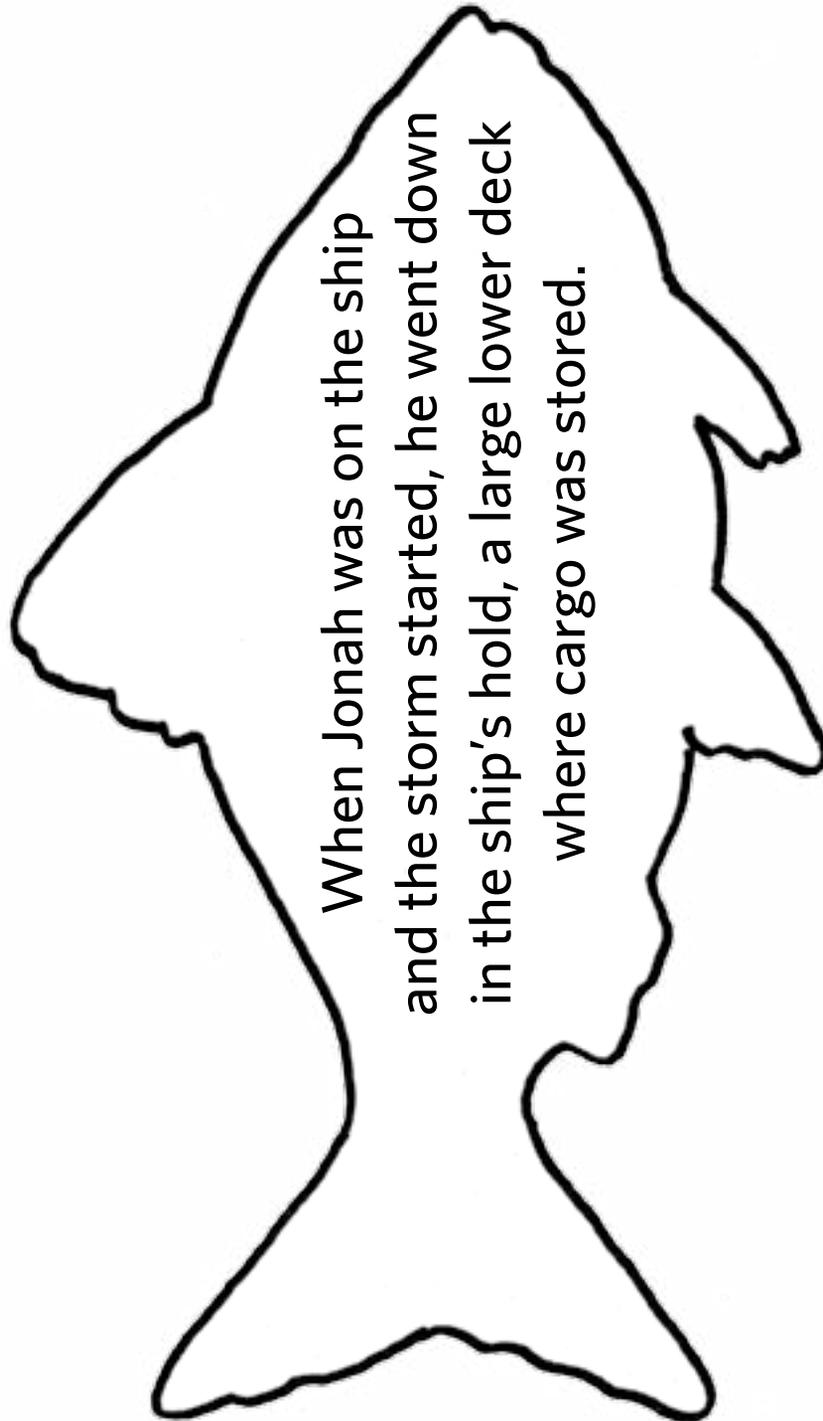
# Jonah Fish Facts



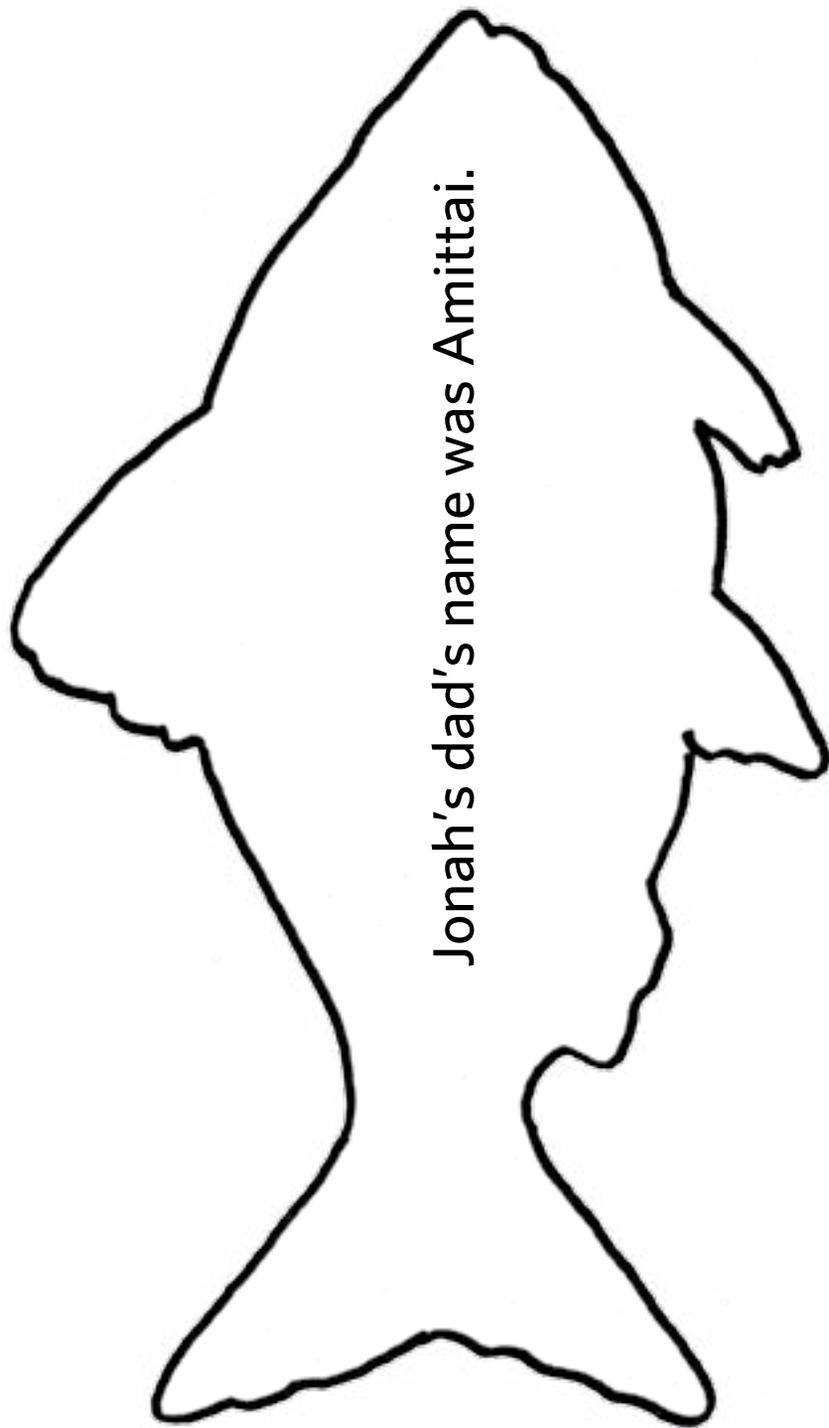
# Jonah Fish Facts



# Jonah Fish Facts



# Jonah Fish Facts



Jonah's dad's name was Amittai.

# Jonah Fish Facts

