

# Jonah The Groaner

## A story about justice.

Not far from Israel there was another country called Assyria. Assyria was very mean to Israel. Soldiers would often come and fight. The Assyrians wanted to take the land away from Israel and make slaves out of the people. Jonah was a prophet of the Lord who lived in the country of Israel. He did not like Assyria one bit!

Jonah often gave messages from God to the people but this time God had a different kind of job for Jonah. God had a message for the people of Nineveh. He told Jonah to go and tell the people of Nineveh that he would destroy their city if they did not follow him.

Jonah could not believe it! Not Nineveh! Nineveh was a city in Assyria. How could God send him to those bad people? Jonah didn't even like those people. He decided that he would ignore God. Nineveh was to the north of Israel so Jonah travelled south. Maybe God would forget about it if he travelled far enough away.

After the ship was out to sea, a huge wind began to blow. The ship was tossed about until it began to break apart. All of the sailors were afraid of what might happen to them. What was causing this terrible storm?

Jonah knew what was causing the storm. He knew that the Lord was punishing him for trying to run away from his important job. Jonah told the sailors to throw him overboard into the sea. Then the storm would stop.

The sailors were frightened. They did not want to throw Jonah overboard. He would drown. No one could survive the terrible storm! The soldiers tried to row back to shore but the storm was too strong. Finally, they tossed Jonah overboard into to the rolling waves. They just knew Jonah would die.

But Jonah did not die. Instead, the Lord saved him. The Lord caused a big fish to come and swallow Jonah. The fish did not chew him up - it just swallowed him and Jonah was safe inside. Meanwhile, as soon as Jonah was thrown from the ship, the storm stopped and the water became calm again.

Jonah was inside the fish for three days. What do you think that Jonah did in there? Well, there isn't much to do inside a big fish so Jonah prayed to God. Jonah told God that he was sorry for running away. Jonah said that he was ready to obey the Lord now.

Then an amazing thing happened. The big fish spit Jonah out of its mouth onto dry land! Jonah knew that God had saved him for a special reason. God spoke to Jonah and told him again to go to Nineveh. What do you think Jonah did this time? He obeyed God! He went to Nineveh and taught the people about God.

Jonah preached about God but he didn't think anyone would really listen. After all, these were enemies of Israel. But Jonah preached anyway. He told the people of Nineveh that God would destroy their city. Then the people did something that Jonah did not expect. They listened! They were sorry for all of the bad things that they had done. They prayed to God and said that they wanted to obey him. When the Lord heard the prayers of the people of Nineveh, he decided not to destroy their city.

Jonah could not believe it! He didn't even like these people and now God was forgiving them. Jonah was not happy. In fact, he became angry. He went outside the city and built a little shelter to keep the hot sun from giving him sunburn. Jonah thought that maybe God

would change his mind. He kept watching the city of Nineveh to see if it would be destroyed.

Jonah got very hot. Then he noticed something. A little vine began to grow on his shelter. The vine got bigger and bigger until it made a nice shade for Jonah. Now Jonah was cool and comfortable and he went to sleep for the night.

The next day Jonah noticed something else. A worm began eating the vine. Soon the worm had eaten the whole vine. Now Jonah was hot again! The Lord caused a hot wind to come up. Jonah was so miserable he just wanted to die.

Then the Lord spoke to Jonah, "Jonah, you sure are worried about the vine and the worm. Did you make the vine? Did you destroy the vine? No, you did not. I did. If you worry so much about a vine then why don't you worry about the 120,000 people in Nineveh? I made them and I want them to hear about me. It is not for you to decide who gets to hear about me!"

Jonah now knew that everyone - even the people of Nineveh - deserved to hear about God.

Coullouring page for you to print.

