

Nineveh Repents

Jonah 3:1-10

MEMORY VERSE

JONAH 3:9

“Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A “Thank You Letter to Jonah “ template copy for each child in your class, markers and stamps (optional).

ATTENTION GETTER!

Three-Day Rally

We are going to learn today that Nineveh was a large city. It may have taken three days just to walk around it. Just for fun we are going to have a three-day rally. Divide the room into two even groups. Have the children all stand in a line. One group should be on each side of the room. Have them stand enough toward the center of the room so that someone could walk between them and the wall.

When you say, “go” the first child in each line will go counter clockwise. They should keep their hand touching the wall at all times and go as fast as they can without running. They need to go around the classroom three times and return to their line and sit down. The next child in line will go and do the same thing. Everyone must have a turn and the first team who has all of their children sitting down wins.

LESSON TIME!

One day as I went into the city, I saw a group standing on a street corner. It was obvious they were up to no good. They were heckling and making bad remarks to people as they passed by. They looked as though they could be gang members by the way they acted and dressed. I thought to myself that there was no hope

for them. If someone tried to talk to them about the way they lived I just knew they would never listen.

Then down the street a man started preaching about God. A crowd started to gather around him. He did not seem to belong in this neighborhood. He looked and was dressed differently than they, but something about what he was saying about God caught their attention. He was telling them that God loved them. No one had ever cared about them before. He said that if they would repent and ask God for forgiveness, they could be saved. I looked around the crowd and discovered that they really were listening. I realized then that all things are possible with God. He is not willing that anyone would perish and go to hell. God is love. **God wants the whole world to come to Him.**

We have been studying about the prophet Jonah. You will remember from our last lesson that God had called Jonah to Nineveh to preach to them about their need to turn from their sin and turn to God. Jonah did not want to do that so he decided to go the other way. Well God sent a great fish who swallowed Jonah and then he decided to obey God.

In today's lesson we are going to see the city of Nineveh and what happens when Jonah obeys God. God loves all people everywhere. The people of Nineveh were very evil. They were mean to each other and did not care about anyone but themselves. This is one of the reasons that Jonah probably did not want to go to them, but God loved the people of Nineveh just like He loves people in cities all over the world today. **God wants the whole world to come to Him.**

JONAH 3:1-3

Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying,

"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you."

So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent.

Nineveh was a large city that was located about where Iraq is located today. The population was about 120,000 to 170,000 people. The city was a very evil city that was filled with crime. It was not safe to live there. The Ninevites were Assyrians and were enemies of Israel. The nations hated each other. For Jonah to go into this city could very well be putting his life in danger. The important thing to remember is that God was with Jonah.

The people of Nineveh needed to hear God's message and people in cities today need to hear God's message of hope. The thing that we need to remember is that if God calls any of us to go into the city that He will be with us and protect us from any harm.

Jonah was a prophet of God. A prophet was dressed in a special cloak that identified them as a messenger from God. A prophet would walk from town to town and communicate God's messages to the people. God had just finished teaching Jonah a very valuable lesson. Now He called on Jonah again to go to Nineveh.

What a blessing for Jonah that God gave him another chance to obey. When we disobey and realize that we have sinned we can ask forgiveness from the Lord. The wonderful thing is that God will give us second chances to obey Him. He does not get mad at us and tell us that He will never use us again. He did not do that in Jonah's life and He will not do that in our life. God is full of grace and mercy towards His children.

God told Jonah again to go to Nineveh and preach to the people. He told Jonah that he would tell him what to say. So Jonah obeyed and arrived in three days. **God wants the whole world to come to Him.**

JONAH 3:4

And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

As Jonah entered the city, he started to cry out over and over, "Nineveh is going to be conquered in battle in 40 days." The people knew that they were guilty of sin and listened to Jonah's message. They understood that he was prophesying against them because of their many sins.

It is interesting how simple this message was. Jonah did not go into a lot of detail. He simply declared the Word that God had given him to tell the people. God's message is pretty simple, is it not? We are all dead because of our sin. We too will die one day and be judged for our sin if we do not turn away from it and believe in Jesus.

God desires that no one would perish. In contrast, we need to know that we will die without Jesus. We need to know that we can spend eternity in hell without Jesus. His desire is to save us. In order to be saved we need to know what we are to be saved from. So, it is an act of love to warn us about our condition and then to give us the way out--Jesus! **God wants the whole world to come to Him.**

Pass It On!

Have the children get in a large circle. This is a game similar to the old game of “telephone.” The object is to whisper into a child’s ear and see if everyone can pass the message on without missing a word.

Think of a phrase or something from today’s lesson to pass around. Whisper the message into the child next to you. Have them pass it around by whispering until it returns all the way around. The last child should then shout the message. It will be fun to see how much it changes by going through the circle. Keep playing with new phrases until the class gets it right or they tire of the game.

Jonah had a message from the Lord. It spread around Nineveh like wild fire. How important do you think it was for that message to remain the same wherever it went?

JONAH 3:5-6

So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them.

Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes.

The people of Nineveh believed God and everyone in the city repented from their sins. They proclaimed a fast, going without food, and humbled themselves by putting on old clothing and sitting in the ashes from their campfires. This was how they showed they were sorry for their sins. Even the king came down from his throne and took part.

The whole city turns to God. What a wonderful blessing it is that they would be saved. The people realized their sin and turned away from it. Once we are told that we are sinners, we need to then take the next step. We need to ask God for forgiveness and turn to Him. We will then find forgiveness. That is what the people of Nineveh did. **God wants the whole world to come to Him.**

JONAH 3:7-8

And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water.

But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands.

The king and his rulers made it a law that no man or animal was to have anything to eat. Everyone was to humble themselves and repent from their evil ways and from the violence that they were responsible for. They were to cry out loudly to God for forgiveness. They took the warning very seriously and were acting on trying to be forgiven. **God wants the whole world to come to Him.**

JONAH 3:9

Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?

The king and the rulers were hoping that if they did repent, then God would forgive them and decide not to destroy their nation. They put their faith and trust in the Lord. They knew they were guilty, but looked to God for the answer and hope. When we look to God it is the best thing that we can do.

JONAH 3:10

Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

When God saw that they were truly sorry and were turning from their evil ways, He relented and did not bring the disaster upon them. God never wants to punish us for our sins. He is holy and just and cannot overlook evil. He will forgive us when we repent of our sins.

God has two very important lessons to teach us in this lesson. If God is speaking to you today about something you are doing wrong, repent (turn from your sin) and ask for His forgiveness. In 1 John 1:9 He tells us, "If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." God loves us and wants what is best for us.

If you have never asked Jesus into your heart as Savior, you need to do this today. What you need to do is to pray to Him, "I'm sorry for my sins, please come into my heart as Savior and Lord," and He will. You'll never regret the decision. Jesus loves you and wants you to become a child of God.

If you are a Christian and are doing something that is wrong you need to turn away from your sin and ask for God's forgiveness. Sin can destroy our lives, and it is not worth it. If we ask for God's forgiveness, He has promised to forgive us. We are His beloved children.

We also need to be willing and not be afraid to share our belief in God with those around us. We never know whose heart God has prepared. We cannot judge. Only God knows what a person feels inside. Sometimes the least likely person will accept Jesus into their heart and will become a Christian.

One last thing we can learn from this lesson is the lesson that Jonah learned. He was used greatly by God just by being obedient. His part was pretty simple. God protected him and blessed His Word, which Jonah declared. How we need to be obedient to the Lord and open to whatever He may call us to in life. **God wants the whole world to come to Him.**

Thank You Letter to Jonah

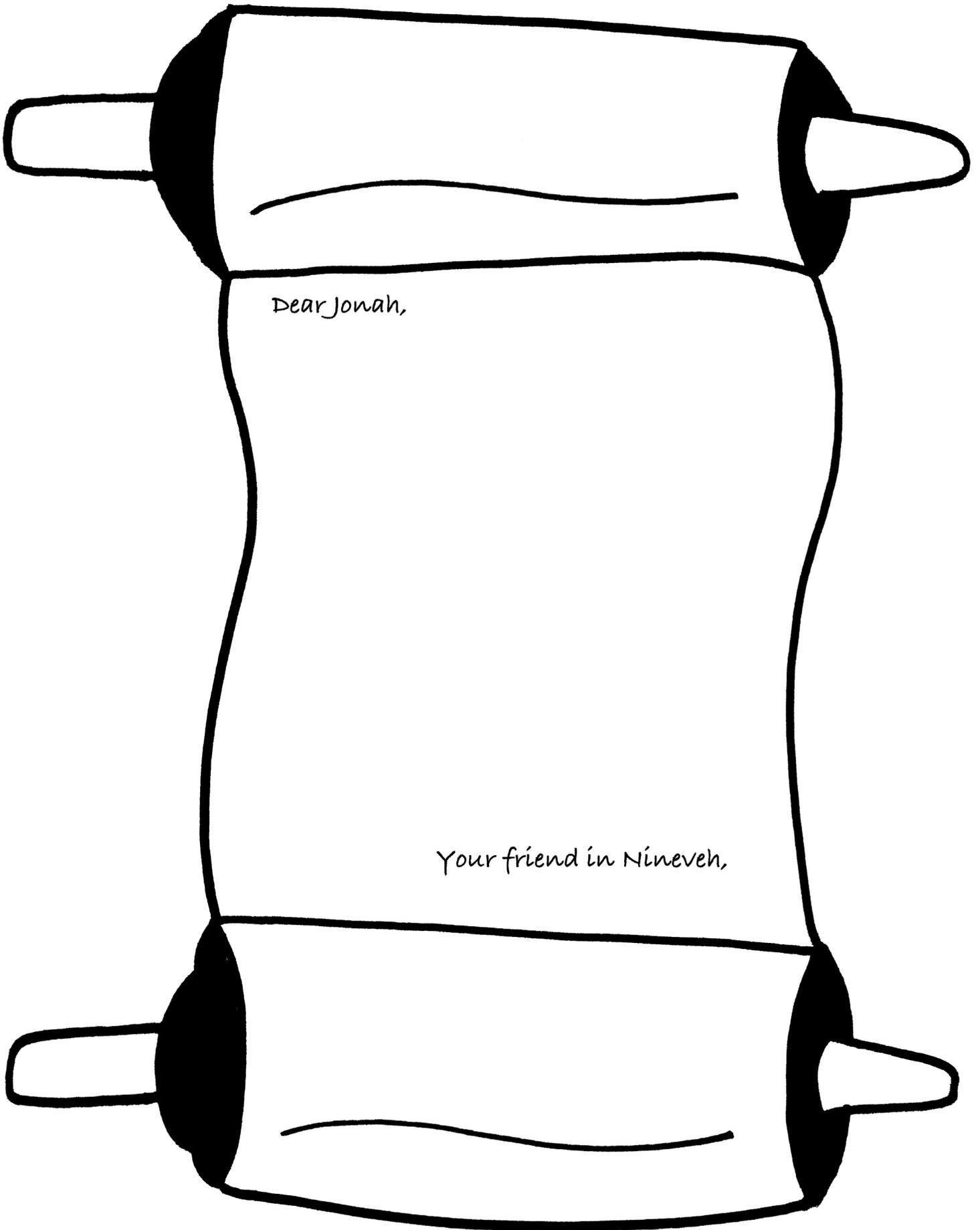
Imagine that you are a resident of Nineveh. Jonah has come and the whole city has repented and turned to God. What do you suppose were some of the things that may have changed in Nineveh? Take a few moments and write a thank you letter to Jonah as a resident of Nineveh. For younger children perhaps they could draw a picture about what they think the people from Nineveh were thankful for.

Teachers, use this activity to reinforce today's lesson. Allow the children to color the letters or make envelopes. You could use stickers for stamps.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving for our salvation in Jesus and commitment to obey God so that He can use us to the fullest. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.

Template - Thank You Letter to Jonah



Dear Jonah,

Your friend in Nineveh,