

## ***God is Merciful!***

**Bible Lesson:** God Shows Mercy to Ninevah – *Jonah 1-4*

**Main Teaching:** God shows His mercy and compassion to you!

**Word Up:** God is Merciful!

### **Supplies:**

- Word Up Booklet – Word Up (Resource Pack)
- Paper and marker for each child – Small Group
- Recording for “Let’s Get Started” and “A God Merciful and Gracious” - Worship (Sing About the King 3 CD)
- Optional Song Visual for “Let’s Get Started” – Worship ([cefpress.com](http://cefpress.com))
- Ice Cube and Paper Towel for Each Child – Object Lesson
- Flashcards for Bible Story “God Shows Mercy to Ninevah” – Bible Lesson
- Fish Point Cards and optional magnetic fishing pole – Review Game (Resource Pack)
- Quiet Time Week 2 handout for each child – Dismissal (Resource Pack)

### **Schedule at a Glance (75 min club):**

15 min – Small Group  
10 min – Worship  
10 min – Object Lesson  
15 min – Bible Lesson  
15 min – Review Game  
10 min – Small Group



## **SMALL GROUP**

### **Say Memory Verse**

Have kids say their memory verse from last week to their small group leader.

### **Favorite Team**

Draw a picture of your favorite sport or team. Share your picture with your small group and say why you like that sport or team.

## **WORSHIP**

To learn songs and motions, go to [cefonline.com/freedemos](http://cefonline.com/freedemos)

**“Let’s Get Started”**

**“A God Merciful and Gracious”**



## **WORD UP!**

### **“God is Merciful!”**

Last week we learned that mercy is not getting a punishment you deserve. God is merciful to us when we ask for forgiveness from our sins. Because we do wrong things, we deserve to be separated from the perfect God who loves us. But God shows us mercy – He sent Jesus down to take the punishment for our sin. When we believe in Jesus, we can have a relationship that starts with God right now and goes on forever and ever. Let's all say our Word Up together – *“God is Merciful!”*

## **OBJECT LESSON**

### **Compassion Ice Cube**

When we have compassion, we feel sympathy for someone and then we get involved. Compassion is more than just feeling sympathy; it also involves doing something that helps someone else. Talk with a partner about a time someone showed compassion to you.

Give each child an ice cube and a paper towel. Have kids clench the ice cube in their hand over the paper towel. As they clench the ice cube, have partners take turns sharing things they're worried about. Have them try and keep the ice cube clenched in the same hand for 5 min.

When time is up, ask:

What was it like to listen compassionately when the ice cube in your hand was uncomfortable and distracting?

How was this experience like or unlike putting aside your daily concerns and showing compassion to others?

Link: Today in our Bible lesson we are going to hear about someone that was put in a very uncomfortable position and needed to show compassion to others, even when he didn't want to.



## **BIBLE LESSON**

“No! I won't do it!” Have you ever said that to an adult? Have you ever thought about saying that to God? (Allow responses.) The man in our story today decided to say no to God.

### **PROGRESSION OF EVENTS**

Last time you learned that God made everyone in His image. Everyone is valuable to God! Yet many people around the world throughout history have treated other groups of people as less than valuable. It's a problem that has been around for thousands of years.

### **Flashcard 1-1**

That's what was happening during the time when a man named Jonah lived. There were a group of people called the Assyrians who were mean and cruel. They had conquered many other people around them. The Assyrians treated people who were not like them as less than valuable. The people of Israel, the group of

people God chose to reveal Himself to in the Old Testament, did not like the Assyrians. The Assyrians were their enemies and they thought the Assyrians were outside of God's love and God's plan. The Israelites were sure the Assyrians weren't valuable. Both groups looked at each other as outcasts.

One of the people of Israel was a prophet named Jonah. Prophets were people who spoke for God. One day God spoke to Jonah and said, (read Jonah 1:2). Jonah was not pleased. Nineveh was the capital city of the Assyrians. The Ninevites were known for being mean and cruel. They were well known for sinning against God.



They aren't the only ones who sin against God. You and I have sinned against God too. Sin is anything that is against God. God is good and right all the time. Things that are not good or right are against Him, like treating people as if they are not valuable or being mean to others. The Bible calls these things sin. It is a sin to say no to God and do what you want to do instead. (Read Ecclesiastes 7:20.) No one who lives on Earth is without sin. Everyone has sinned, including you and me. We are born knowing how and wanting to sin. This wanting to sin is called your sin nature. Sin separates you from God both now and forever. Because of your sin, you deserve to be separated from God forever in a place of punishment. You and I deserve this punishment because we have sinned against God. We aren't the only ones who sin against God.

The people of Nineveh were known for sinning against God. Jonah knew this and didn't want to have any part of giving them God's warning. Jonah knew if God was warning the Ninevites about their sin, God was also giving them a chance to change and turn away from their sin. Jonah thought the Ninevites were so bad that they didn't deserve that chance. God was offering to the Ninevites mercy (not punishing them for what they deserved) and compassion (sorrow for others and the desire to help). God is full of mercy and compassion—even for people who have done really bad things.

But Jonah wanted none of it. He didn't want the people of Nineveh to have a chance at God's mercy and compassion. Instead of saying yes to God and going to Nineveh, he found a ship that was travelling as far as possible in the opposite direction, to a place called Tarshish.

Jonah thought he was getting away from obeying God. But can anyone run away from God without God knowing? (Allow response.) You can never go somewhere that God doesn't know about. But Jonah was going to try and get away from God.

### **Flashcard 2-2**

God knew exactly where Jonah was and what he was doing. God sent a huge storm that tossed the ship in the waves. The sailors thought the ship was going to break to pieces and they would all drown. They were very afraid! They started throwing things overboard to make the ship lighter. Let's pretend to throw things overboard to lighten the ship. (Do with children.) Where was Jonah during all of this? He was in the bottom of the ship sleeping! The captain of the ship had to wake him up.

After throwing things overboard didn't work, the sailors decided to cast lots (like throwing dice or drawing straws) to see who was responsible for the storm. The sailors cast lots because they were superstitious and afraid, but God used the lot to show them that the storm was because of Jonah.

They asked Jonah, "Who are you? Where did you come from?"

Jonah said, (read Jonah 1:9). That made the sailors even more afraid. The sailors believed in many false gods but they had heard about the one true God. Jonah told them he was running away from God and that's why God sent the storm. They said, "What are we going to do?" Let's say that together like the sailors might have, with a worried face and voice. (Do with children.)

Jonah had an answer. He said, "Throw me overboard and the storm will stop—the storm is here because of me."

The sailors didn't want to do that, because that would mean Jonah would definitely die. They tried everything they could think of to save everyone but nothing worked. Finally they got so desperate that they were willing to consider Jonah's idea.

**Flashcard 2-3**

They asked Jonah's God to forgive them, then took Jonah and threw him into the raging sea!

The Bible says as soon as they did, the storm stopped! The sailors were amazed and worshiped the one true God.

But what about Jonah? He would certainly drown! But God was about to show mercy and compassion to Jonah. The Bible says God had prepared a great fish to be there when Jonah was thrown overboard.

The giant fish came and swallowed Jonah whole!

Can you imagine being swallowed by a giant fish?! What do you think the inside of the fish was like? (Allow responses.) It was probably very dark and really smelly. Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights.

**Flashcard 2-4**

While there, Jonah had a lot of time to think. He may have wondered if he would live or die. But during that time he chose to praise God and remember who God is.

After three days, God caused the fish to vomit Jonah up onto the dry ground. God had made the fish travel where Jonah needed to go in the first place.

Then Jonah heard a voice. It was God! God said, (read Jonah 3:2). God was showing Jonah mercy and compassion by giving Jonah a second chance to obey Him. What do you think Jonah decided to do this time? Put your thumbs up if you think Jonah obeyed. Put your thumbs down if you think Jonah did not obey. (Allow response.) This time Jonah obeyed! He knew now he couldn't run from God, no matter how hard he tried.

**Flashcard 2-5**

Jonah traveled until he got to the dreaded city of Nineveh—the city of evil and wicked people. When he got there, he obeyed God.

"In 40 days God will destroy Nineveh!" he shouted to anyone who would listen. He was delivering God's message to the people of Nineveh. God was showing Nineveh His mercy and compassion by giving them a chance to turn to Him.



God gives you that same chance too. Your sin separates you from God, but because God is full of compassion and mercy, He gives you the chance to come to Him. That's why Jesus came to Earth. Jesus is God's perfect Son who loved you so much He died a horrible death for you. He allowed men to take Him, hurt Him, and nail Him to a cross. This was necessary because someone perfect needed to die for sin. (Read 1 Peter 3:18a.) Jesus is perfect (just) and He died for those who are not perfect (the unjust) so we could be close to God. When Jesus suffered and died on the cross, He was showing you God's great mercy and compassion.

### **Word Up Visual**

Word up! Say with me, **"God is merciful!"** (Say with children.) Jesus proved He is stronger than sin and death by coming alive again on the third day! Right now Jesus is alive in Heaven ruling as King. He wants you to come to God and turn from living your own way. God has shown you compassion and mercy by giving you a chance to turn to Him.

God was showing mercy and compassion to the people of Nineveh by giving them the chance to turn to Him and away from their sinfulness.

### **Flashcard 2-6**

And the people of Nineveh listened to Jonah's message! Instead of ignoring or not believing God's message, the people of Nineveh believed in the one true God! They showed how serious they were about turning to God and away from their sin by praying to God and putting on sackcloth and ashes (a sign in their culture that they were very sad).

The Bible says God saw they had turned from their sin and had come to Him, and He chose not to destroy their city as He had said. He was showing them His great mercy and compassion.



**God shows His great mercy and compassion to you** too. He shows you mercy and compassion because that is who He is. (Quote Psalm 86:15 with children.) He loves you and wants you to come to Him. You are valuable to Him. He made you and everything else in the whole universe—the giant fish, the tiny bugs, and the enormous galaxies. God is also perfectly good and right all the time. He is full of mercy and compassion and He shows that to you.

God was showing His mercy and compassion to the people of Nineveh. They chose to believe God and come to Him instead of continuing to sin and be away from God.

### **CLIMAX**

God did not punish the people of Nineveh. He is an amazing God of mercy and compassion!

### **CONCLUSION**

The people of Nineveh were thankful God had shown them mercy and compassion, even though they didn't deserve it.

### **Flashcard 2-7**

But not everyone was happy. Can you guess who wasn't happy? (Allow response.) Jonah was not pleased that God had shown mercy to people who were wicked. Jonah didn't think the Ninevites were good enough to receive God's mercy and compassion.

Jonah went outside the city and felt sorry for himself. Can you show me what you look like when you are feeling sorry for yourself? (Do with children.) While Jonah was sitting there feeling sorry for himself in the hot sun, God made a plant grow to give Jonah shade. Jonah loved the plant. But the next day a worm came and ate the plant, taking it away from Jonah.

This made Jonah angry! Why would God take away the plant Jonah had loved?

God spoke to Jonah again and said, "You have more compassion for that plant than you have for the people I created." God used the plant to help Jonah see that his heart was not right. Jonah couldn't see that the people of Nineveh needed mercy and compassion.



God's heart is full of compassion and mercy. If you have believed on Jesus as your Savior, He wants you to show His compassion and mercy too, even to those who are mean to you. (Read Matthew 5:44.) It's really hard to show love to those who are mean to you, but in this verse Jesus says to pray for those who hurt you and are mean to you. Maybe there's someone at school who picks on you all the time. Or maybe someone has hurt one of your friends and you feel angry at that person. Jesus can save people who are mean and cruel, just like the Ninevites. God can help give you a heart of mercy and compassion even toward mean people. That doesn't mean it is okay to let people be mean though. Talk to an adult you trust and help them understand what is happening. Sometimes the best way you can show love is by getting help that stops the mean person from hurting others and teaches him how to live the right way. God can give you the strength to pray for the mean people in your life. God can help you be happy for them if they believe on Jesus as their Savior someday. It can be hard, but **God can help you show His mercy and compassion to those who are mean to you.** His heart is full of mercy and compassion.

Jonah couldn't see that the people of Nineveh needed God's mercy and compassion just as much as he did. Do you think Jonah realized he was wrong? (Allow response.) We don't know! The book of Jonah ends with God talking to Jonah and we never find out if Jonah's heart changed or not. I hope that it did, and that he saw how amazing God's mercy and compassion are.

### INVITATION



**God showed His great mercy and compassion to you** when Jesus came to die and come alive again to take away your sin. (Read John 3:36a.) To believe is to trust completely on Jesus. It is trusting that there is no other way to have your sins forgiven. It is knowing you have done wrong things that deserve to be punished but that God's mercy is greater. It is trusting that Jesus came to Earth to show you God's mercy and compassion by taking the punishment you deserve and coming back to life again. When you believe on Jesus, not only are your sins forgiven but you will also have everlasting life. This is special life with God that starts here on Earth and continues forever, even after you die. You will be close to God and He will help you live His way. Will you believe on Jesus today? Please bow your head and close your eyes. If you want to believe on Jesus, show me by looking up at me. (Acknowledge responses.) If you just looked up at me, meet me by (designate time and location) and I will show you from God's Word what it means to believe on Jesus and have everlasting life.

## REVIEW GAME

### Ice Fishing

Cut fish out from the Resource pack (or cut from different colors of paper). Make a secret list of how many points each color is worth. Ask questions, alternating between the teams. When a child answers correctly, let him choose a fish of any color, but don't reveal how many points each color is worth. At the end of the game reveal the point value for each color and total the points for each team. Could use paper clips attached to the fish paper and a magnet attached to a string and stick to "fish".

#### Review Questions:

1. Why didn't the Israelites like the people who lived in Nineveh? *(Because they were mean and cruel people; they were their enemies.)*
2. Why do you need God's mercy and compassion? *(I have sinned against God; I deserve to be separated from God.)*
3. What did Jonah do when God told him to warn Nineveh that God was going to destroy them? *(Jonah didn't obey; he got on a ship headed in the opposite direction.)*
4. What did God do when Jonah was on the ship? *(He sent a violent storm.)*
5. When the lot showed that Jonah was the cause of the storm, what did he tell the sailors to do? *(Throw him overboard.)*
6. How did God show mercy and compassion to Jonah after he was thrown overboard? *(He sent a great fish to swallow Jonah.)*
7. What does "mercy" mean? *(Not getting the punishment that is deserved.)*
8. After the fish vomited Jonah out, what did Jonah do? *(He went to Nineveh and told them God's message.)*
9. When the people of Nineveh heard Jonah's message, what did they do? *(They prayed for mercy; they put on sackcloth and ashes; they turned to God and away from their sin.)*
10. How did God show mercy and compassion to you because of your sin? *(He sent Jesus to take my sin's punishment.)*
11. Why wasn't Jonah happy when the people of Nineveh turned to God? *(He didn't think they deserved God's mercy and compassion.)*
12. How can you show mercy and compassion to those who are mean to you? *(Answers will vary.)*



## SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

### What We Deserve vs. Mercy

Talk through some scenarios with your kids about what we deserve looks like in different situations, and what mercy would look like. For example: Your mom asked you to get dressed for the day and pack your swim bag for swim lessons after school. You go to your room and get dressed, but then you start playing with your toys. Mom says "time to go" and you remember your swim bag and quickly stuff your suit in a bag, but forget your goggles and a comb. When you get to swim lessons unprepared, what would you deserve? (to swim without goggles and come home with messy hair) What would mercy look like? (Mom buys you another pair of goggles from the rec center.)

## DISMISSAL

Hand out a Quiet Time Sheet – God is Merciful! (Week 2 in the Resource Pack) to each child. Encourage them to show mercy to someone in their family this week.