

301.1: Fish Stories (OT Gospel Doctrine Lesson 33, Updated)

Sharing the Gospel with the World

Productive Sunday School

1. Reading Review
2. Lesson: Steadfast, covenantal love
 - a. Love your enemies... Is God serious? (Insider/outsider love and caring)
 - b. Like unto Jonah... admitting our shortcomings and prejudices
 - c. In the “belly of the whale” inevitably, we all have our moments where we DO run away from what we should be doing. And often it is only the “belly of the whale” moments, when the consequences hit, that we come to ourselves and get on a better track. (but it is striking and depressing that Jonah’s attitude didn’t change even after this experience! Do we let difficult, rock bottom or whale belly moments change us?)
 - d. Practicing “chesed” (steadfast, covenantal love)

Reading:

Jonah 1 It is absolutely essential to understand what type of story Jonah is to properly engage with it. Jonah is literally a joke. Specifically, it is *satire*. Jonah is an anti-hero, an anti-prophet, who does the opposite of what he is supposed to. When we read about his comical engagement with God and his calling, we better appreciate the central message of the book—that God’s love and concern transcends small-minded human prejudices. Ninevah was the capital of the Assyrian empire, so the big bad guys. Jonah is called to preach repentance to what is seen as the wickedest part of the world. Like a mission call to Las Vegas or Amsterdam. Instead of obeying, Jonah runs away. God sends a huge storm, Jonah admits the storm is his fault, and tells his fellow sailors to throw him into the ocean. A big fish (not a whale) swallows him.

2 Jonah gives a psalm of lament, then the fish pukes him up

3 Jonah’s missionary efforts are wildly successful. After his first warning, every single living creature, from the king to the cows, repents.

4 Jonah pouts and gets angry with God that God is no longer angry with Ninevah. Jonah wanted divine fireworks, darnitall. God sends Jonah an object lesson and the book ends with a provocative, question: “You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. ¹¹And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?” We are left without Jonah’s response.

Micah 2 God condemns those who get rich by taking advantage of and oppressing others

4 A Millennial prophecy is pronounced, that all will go to the “mountain of the Lord” and all nations will be peaceful, the same prophecy found in Isaiah 2. Exile and torment are prophesied, but gathering and peace are prophesied as well.

5 A ruler born in Bethlehem is predicted, as well as widespread destruction that will leave only a small portion of Judah, a “remnant”.

6 God calls his people to court and declares what he has done for them and predicts destruction. We have the marvelous verse 8: “what is good;

and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,^[b]

and to walk humbly with your God?” “love mercy” or “love kindness” is translated from that powerful word “chesed” which means steadfast, covenantal love.

7 Micah laments that society has broken down and all do terrible things. Micah can’t trust humans, but seeks comfort and vindication with God and puts trust in God’s steadfast love (chesed, which we humans are commanded to emulate in Micah 6:8).

301.2: Fish Stories (OT Gospel Doctrine Lesson 33, Sunday School)

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We all know Jonah as a fish story, but a close reading informed by literary and historical details reveals a profound, inspiring, and challenging message. This little book asks us foundational questions about the goodness of God and our responsibility to serve, love, and forgive beyond our prejudices.

301.3: Fish Stories (OT Gospel Doctrine Lesson 33, Study Notes)

[Sharing the Gospel with the World](#)

This section explains how the literary and historical contexts illuminate the central message of the story and applications for our culture and lives.