

## Jonah and the Whale

### Characters:

Narrators (A, B, and C)

God

Jonah

Shipmaster

Mariners

### NARRATOR A

God spoke to Jonah, the son of Amittai and She told him to go to a really important city, Nineveh.

### GOD

Jonah!!! WAKE UP! Here's the deal. I need you to help me out. My people in Nineveh are out of line. They're gambling and cheating, stealing, and lying—all sorts of wickedness. Go there and tell them I know what they're doing. Yell at them. Help them to see the error of their ways.

### NARRATOR B

Jonah didn't want to go.

### JONAH

(Thinking to himself)

Nineveh? Seriously? That place is shady! I'm a good guy, I don't belong there. Nope, not going. Not this time.

### NARRATOR B

He decided to go in the opposite direction to Tarshish.

### JONAH

Tarshish. Ahhh, now that sounds more like it. I'll go there instead.

### NARRATOR B

Maybe Jonah hoped God wouldn't find him in Tarshish. At any rate, in Joppa he found a ship on its way to Tarshish and he hopped on board.

NARRATOR A

God wasn't fooled. She rocked the seas with a storm so fierce that the ship was in danger of breaking apart.

NARRATOR C

The mariners were so nervous that they turned to their gods—and they tossed whatever they didn't need out of the ship to lighten their load as insurance.

NARRATOR B

Meanwhile, the shipmaster found Jonah sleeping somewhere on the ship.

SHIPMASTER

What are you doing??? How can you be sleeping at a time like this? Get up! Do something, anything. Pray! Ask your God to help us, anything to save our lives.

NARRATOR C

It's worth knowing, the people at this time believed in chance and superstition. So everyone on board decided to draw straws to determine whose fault the whole mess was. Jonah drew the short straw. And the questions spilled out:

MARINER A

What's your deal?

MARINER B

Where are you from?

MARINER C

What did you do to deserve this?

NARRATOR B

Jonah fessed up.

JONAH

I am Jewish and my God is the true God of heaven. She told me to go to Nineveh, but I didn't want to. So I ran away to Tarshish instead, and here I am, stuck in this mess—and now I've gotten you all involved with me.

NARRATOR C

The mariners thought about their options.

MARINER A

Well what can we do about it? You got us into this, so tell us—how do we get out of it??

JONAH

Toss me overboard. It's my fault, as soon as you throw me over board the storm will end. Go ahead, just do it.

NARRATOR C

The mariners weren't so sure about that plan. So they tried to get to shore first. They tried hard, too, but the storm was too strong. They were left with no choice. Out Jonah went.

NARRATOR A

God had kindly sent a nice big whale to pick up Jonah. The ride wasn't your typical ride, though. The fish swallowed Jonah right up!

NARRATOR B

It wasn't too pleasant in that whale's belly. The smell? The décor? It left a lot to be desired. In fact, Jonah thought of it as the "belly of hell." But when you're trapped in a whale's belly, you have a lot of time to think. And that Jonah did. He realized his mistake, and finally got down to praying.

JONAH

God, I really messed up this time. I was selfish and disobedient. I thought I could get away from you, find my own fun. And instead, I'm whale-food. But you've helped me to see the error of my ways. I'm sorry God. I should have listened to you the first time. From here on out, I'm yours. I'll do what you ask, and I'll be happy while I do it.

NARRATOR A

At that point, God told that fish to spit Jonah out, and he did...right onto dry land! And again, God said:

GOD

Get to Nineveh! I need you there. My people need you. Help them to see the errors of their ways. Help them to clean up their acts!

#### NARRATOR B

This time, Jonah was obedient. It was a long journey, but after three days, he finally reached Nineveh. Just as God told him to do, Jonah preached to all the citizens of Nineveh saying:

#### JONAH

Listen, you haven't been living the good life, the Godlike life. It's time to clean up your act. Quit your wrong-doing. In forty days, this city will be under God's control.

#### NARRATOR C

The people of Nineveh listened. They fasted. Even their animals fasted. The fast wasn't about just not eating; even more important, it was about changing their actions. They stopped their gambling and cheating, they stopped their reckless behavior. They realized the joy and safety that came with listening to God and being good, honest, and pure.

#### NARRATOR A

God was happy. She forgave the people of Nineveh, and decided not to carry out Her original plan.

#### NARRATOR B

Jonah couldn't believe it!

#### JONAH

I knew this would happen! I knew you were just Ms. Nice God, all gracious and kind. You *always* do this! You say You're angry and You need my help. You send me all this way, but after all I've been through, You just forgive them. These people were messing up—they were a disaster. But all they have to do is see their mistake and change their ways, and that's it? They're off scot-free? Where's the justice in that? That's it. If that's the way it's going to be, I don't want to be a part of it. I'd rather be dead than live like this, no punishment, no responsibility, no justice.

#### GOD

How's that anger working out for you, Jonah? Are you feeling better now that you've gotten that off your chest?

NARRATOR B

That only made Jonah angrier. So he pouted. He left the city, but only barely. Guess he was still curious about what was going to happen there. So he built himself a shelter, the best he could, and sat there watching, waiting to see what would happen.

NARRATOR A

Jonah had some long days watching though. His shelter was no 5 star hotel. Some days it was hot, and the sun beat down on him. Other days, it would rain and he'd get soaking wet. Pretty miserable existence, if you ask me. Without Jonah knowing, God caused a plant nearby to grow tall, to spread its leaves over Jonah, and to cover him. Jonah was grateful for the plant—it made his day a lot more comfortable, that's for sure.

NARRATOR B

But the next day, God sent a worm to eat through the stem of that plant. The plant withered up, and no longer provided Jonah with any comfort. He felt sad for the poor plant, and he felt sad for himself. As soon as the morning came, the hot sun beat down on Jonah. Even worse, God sent a fierce wind. It was hot, windy and miserable. Jonah couldn't take it anymore. He fainted right there in the sun.

JONAH

It would be better to be dead than to live like this.

NARRATOR B

...Jonah thought to himself...

GOD

Jonah, what good is it doing you to be sad and angry about that tree dying? Is that really getting you anywhere?

JONAH

Hey, I have a right to be sad about that plant. My life depended on it. I needed it.

GOD

Interesting. You're taking pity on that plant, but you didn't have anything to do with it. You didn't work for it. You didn't plant it or take care of it. It wasn't even a part of your life for that long. Yet you fault

### GOD (CONT'D)

Me for taking pity on my people in Nineveh? And you're the one talking about justice?!? If you can care that much about a mere plant, which you had no part in creating or taking care of, then surely I can care that much about my own children. They might not know that much, but they're mine. I created them. I watched them grow. They've made a living for themselves—they've got a lot of cattle, and a great land. Sure, they've made their mistakes. But so did you. And just as I've cared for you, removed you from the whale's belly, and protected you when you changed your ways, I owe it to them too. They've changed their ways. They've learned their lessons. They're worthy of my love. That, my dear one, is the true meaning of justice and grace.

### NARRATOR A

And that my friends, is the famous story of Jonah. Most people know about Jonah and the whale, but the real story here is about forgiveness, redemption, and true justice.