



Jonah the Groaner

Jonah was a groaner.

That's right—a groaner.

So when God told him to go to Nineveh and tell the people who lived there to change their evil ways, what did Jonah do?

Jonah groaned.

'Not Nineveh!' he groaned. 'Anywhere but Nineveh. The people who live there are our enemies!'

And when he had stopped groaning, Jonah bought himself a ticket. A ticket for a boat ride. A boat ride that would take him far away from Nineveh.

God listened to Jonah groan. God watched him buy his ticket. But God still wanted Jonah to go to Nineveh.

So when the boat reached the deepest part of the sea, God sent a storm.

'God, help us!' cried a sailor. 'We're sinking!'

'God, save us!' cried another. 'We're tipping over!'

'God must be very angry,' cried the captain, 'with someone here on board.'

And what did Jonah do? Jonah groaned.

'It's me,' Jonah groaned. 'I'm the one God's angry with. He told me to go to Nineveh, and here I am, sailing in the

opposite direction. Throw me into the sea and your troubles will be over.'

'God, forgive us!' the sailors cried as they tossed Jonah into the water. And almost at once, the sea grew calm.

'Oh dear,' Jonah groaned, 'I'm sinking.'

'Oh no,' Jonah groaned, 'I'm going to drown.'

'Oh my,' Jonah groaned, 'that's the biggest fish I've ever seen!'

And before he could groan another groan, the fish opened its mouth and swallowed Jonah up!

It was God who sent the fish—to rescue Jonah, and to give him time to think. He had plenty to groan about, of course—the fish's slimy stomach, the seaweed, the smell. But Jonah was still alive—and that was something to cheer about! So Jonah stopped his groaning and prayed a prayer:

'I was sinking, Lord. I was drowning. But you saved me. So now I will do whatever you want.'

Three days later, the fish spat Jonah up on a beach. And Jonah kept his promise—he went straight to Nineveh and told the people that God wanted them to change their evil ways.

'Forty days is all you've got,' he warned them. 'And if you haven't changed by then, God will destroy your city.'

The people of Nineveh listened. The people of Nineveh wept. Then the people of Nineveh changed! From the king right down to the poorest slave, they decided to do what was right.

And what did Jonah do? Jonah groaned. He sat himself down in the shadow of a tree, and he groaned.

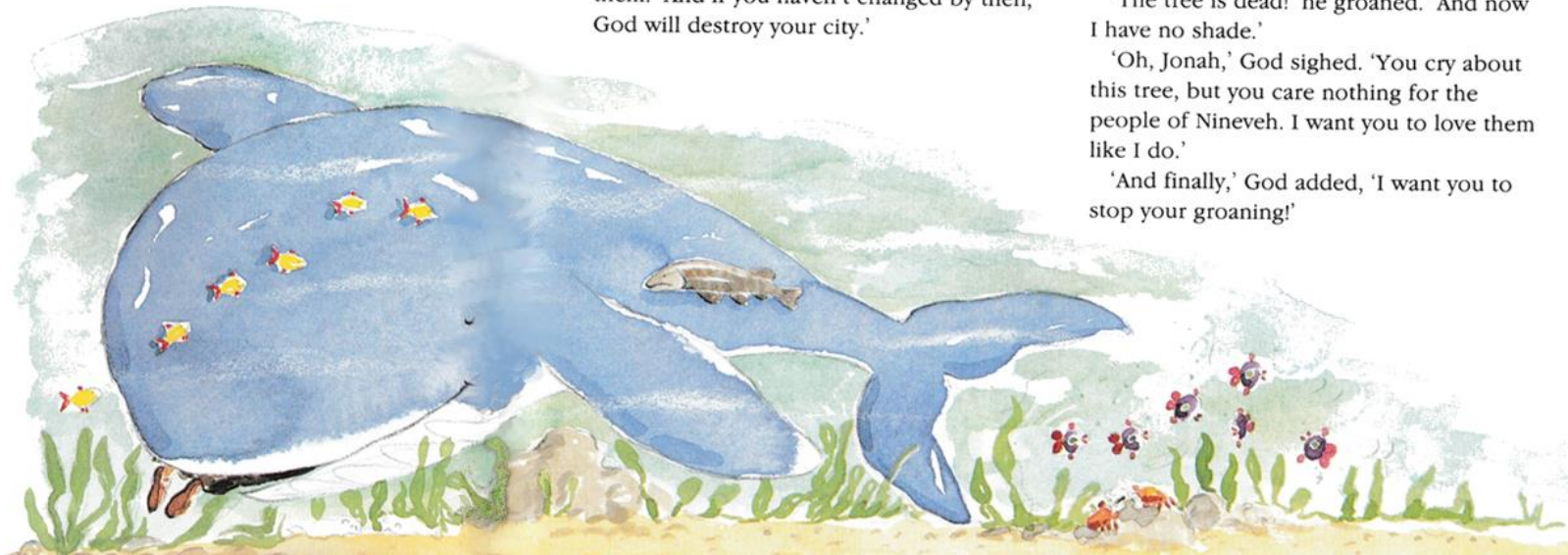
'I knew this would happen,' he groaned. 'You are a loving God who loves to forgive. But I still don't like the people of Nineveh and I wish they had been destroyed.'

Jonah fell asleep, groaning. And during the night, God sent a worm to kill the tree. When Jonah awoke, he groaned more than ever.

'The tree is dead!' he groaned. 'And now I have no shade.'

'Oh, Jonah,' God sighed. 'You cry about this tree, but you care nothing for the people of Nineveh. I want you to love them like I do.'

'And finally,' God added, 'I want you to stop your groaning!'



Jonah the Groaner

Taken from **The Lion Storyteller Bible**
Bob Hartman



Running Away

Jonah 1

- ? What do you least like doing? Perhaps you could make a list. What could happen if you never did any of those things?
- ? I wonder why Jonah thought that he could run away from God?
- ? Talk about how it feels when you are found out for doing something wrong.

REFLECT: We cannot hide from God.

ACTIVITY: Using simple props to hand, build a boat and act out what happened on board Jonah's boat. Which part of the story do you think is the most important part?

PRAY: Please forgive us for the times we choose not to do as you would like us to.

Inside the Fish

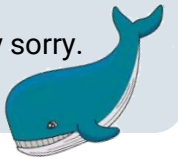
Jonah 2

- ? Do you think Jonah was being a hero offering to be thrown overboard or was he just trying to run away again?
- ? Why do you think Jonah thanked and praised God inside the fish?
- ? I wonder what it must have been like inside the fish.

REFLECT: God always provides for us.

ACTIVITY: To imagine what it might have felt like inside the fish, collect a variety of different objects that feel slippery, slimy, cold, smelly, and horrible!

PRAY: Thank you God for the opportunities you give us to say sorry.



Spat Out



Jonah 3

- ? How does it make you feel when you think you have been treated unfairly?
- ? The people of Nineveh kept doing wrong, but God gave them a chance to be sorry. How do you think Jonah felt about this?
- ? Did you expect the people of Nineveh to react in the way they did? Why or why not?

REFLECT: God treats everyone equally and forgives **all** who are sorry.

ACTIVITY: Write or draw something(s) you have done wrong on a scrap of paper, say a prayer to say sorry to God, then tear it up - the wrong thing(s) are forgiven and forgotten.

PRAY: Thank you God that you treat us all fairly.

Under the Tree

Jonah 4

- ? What do you think was Jonah's biggest mistake?
- ? In what ways, do you think, might we sometimes be like Jonah?

REFLECT: God wants us to tell others about His love and forgiveness, not keep it to ourselves.

ACTIVITY: Talk about who you could share this with.

PRAY: Please help us to see everyone like you do and to love them like you do.



Jonah knew what it was like to be loved and forgiven by God... he had to pass that good news on – so should we!



The Big Spender

The people who thought they were good were still not happy with Jesus. They moaned. They grumbled. They frowned.

'It's not fair,' they complained. 'Jesus spends all his time with the bad people.'

Jesus heard this and told them one more story:

'Once upon a time there was a man who had two sons. He loved them both, very much. But one day, the younger son came to him with a sad request.

"Father," the younger son said, "when you die, I will get part of your money and part of your land. The problem is, I don't want to wait. I want my money now!"

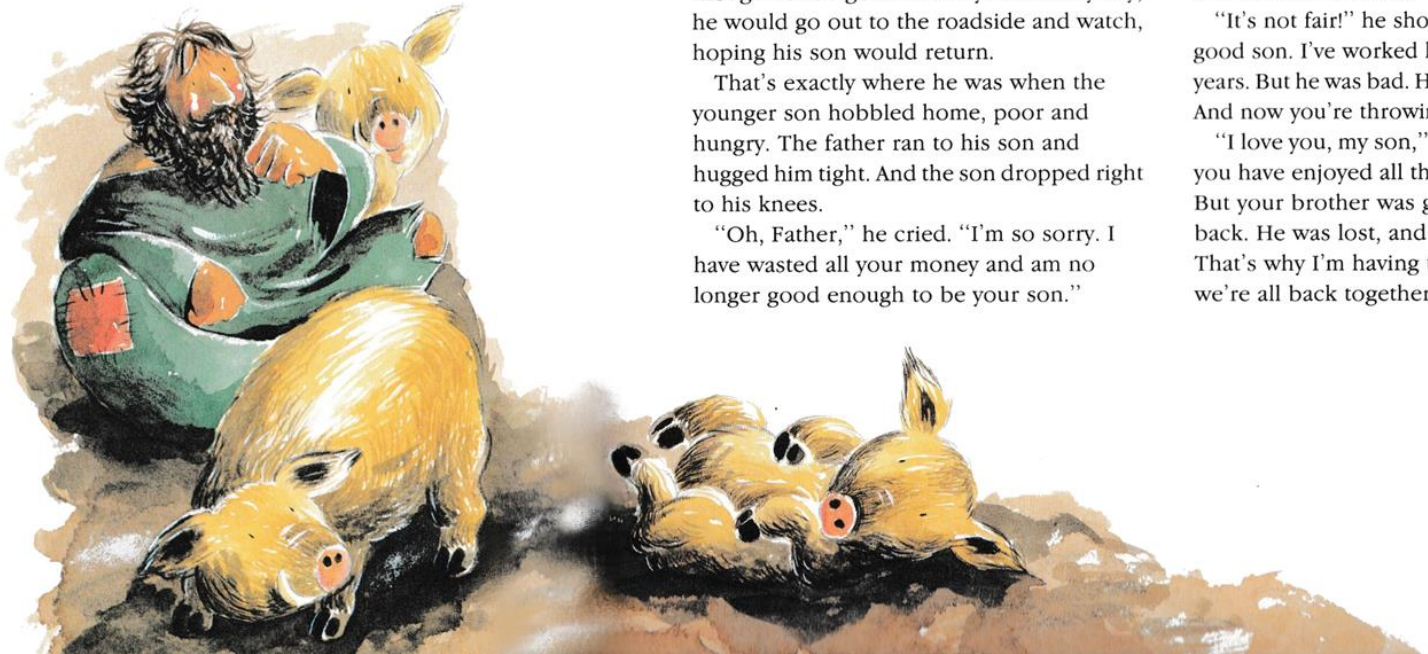
It was all the father could do to hold back his tears. But because he loved his son, he agreed, and gave him his share of the money.

That very day the son left home, money in his pocket and a big smile on his face. He didn't even say goodbye. The father just watched, wiped away a tear, and hoped that one day he would see his son again.

The son travelled to a country far, far away and spent his money just as fast as he could. He drank. He gambled. He used his money

to do many bad things—until finally the money was gone.

The son looked for a job, but the only work he could find was taking care of pigs! It was hard, dirty work, and he was so hungry sometimes that he thought about taking the pigs' food for himself. He was miserable, lonely, and sad. And then one day, he had an idea.



"The servants who take care of my father's animals are much happier than me. I'll go home, that's what I'll do. I'll tell my father how sorry I am for wasting his money. And maybe, just maybe, he'll let me become a servant and work for him."

Now what do you think the father had been doing all this time? Did he say to himself, "I have my eldest son at home with me. Who cares if my younger son is gone?" Of course not! He loved his son, even though he had gone far away. And every day, he would go out to the roadside and watch, hoping his son would return.

That's exactly where he was when the younger son hobbled home, poor and hungry. The father ran to his son and hugged him tight. And the son dropped right to his knees.

"Oh, Father," he cried. "I'm so sorry. I have wasted all your money and am no longer good enough to be your son."

"Don't be silly," said the father. "You are my son. You will always be my son. And I am so glad to have you back!" Then the father lifted his son to his feet and walked him home. He dressed him in beautiful clothes. He put gold rings on his fingers. And he threw him a big welcome home party.

When the elder son came home from work that night, he heard the party noise.

"What's happening?" he asked. And when a servant told him, he was filled with anger and ran to his father.

"It's not fair!" he shouted. "I've been a good son. I've worked hard for you all these years. But he was bad. He wasted your money. And now you're throwing him a party."

"I love you, my son," the father said. "And you have enjoyed all the good things I have. But your brother was gone, and now he's back. He was lost, and now he's found. That's why I'm having this party, because we're all back together again."

The Big Spender

Taken from **The Lion Storyteller Bible**

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The Younger Son



Luke 15

- ? Think about the last time you made a mistake. Did you find it hard to own up?
- ? What is it that finally prompts the younger son to go home?
- ? Do you think he got the welcome he expected?

REFLECT: Whatever we have done, God will always welcome us.

ACTIVITY: Make a heart out of cardboard and decorate it. Hang it somewhere where you can see it to remind you of God's love for you.

PRAY: Please help us not to wander away from your love. And to help us to remember that you are always there waiting for us.

The Older Son

Luke 15

- ? I wonder how the older son felt when his younger brother took the money and left home.
- ? Why, do you think, the older son is so upset that his younger brother's return is celebrated?
- ? Would you have joined in the celebrations for the younger brother's return?

REFLECT: Do we sometimes forget that God's love is for everyone?

ACTIVITY: Discuss ways in which we might share God's love with others. Perhaps you could try some of your ideas out.

PRAY: Please help us to share your love with those around us.

The Father

Luke 15

- ? Why do you think the father never gives up on his lost son?
- ? Does this remind you of anything?
- ? Do you think the father treated the two sons fairly?

REFLECT: Think about God's never-ending love for you.

ACTIVITY: How do you like to celebrate? Catch the excitement of the father's joy that his son is back home, by having your own celebration.

PRAY: Thank you God that you will never give up on us and will always welcome us back into your arms.



I wonder what emotions and feelings you experience when you hear of the Father's love ? How do you want to respond?