

FAMILY SERVICE

So you've used **SPLASH!** and you're looking at what to do next. This document will outline one way that you could follow this up - with a family service reflecting on the story of Jonah. Doing this could have many benefits:

- Continue to engage with children and their families
- Involve members of your congregation who were unable to be a part of **SPLASH!**
- Explore the remaining chapter of Jonah's story

The action in **SPLASH!** Concludes with the people of Nineveh turning from their wicked ways and worshipping God, however the book of Jonah continues beyond this. Whilst chapter 4 of the book is not so easy to cover in an action packed musical it does lead us to an important lesson. The content of this family service will focus on exploring chapter 4 and what it means to us in our day to day relationships with others.

This is not a paint-by-numbers style service plan, but instead some suggestions, thoughts and ideas which may help you to plan a service which will work well in your local setting. Feel free to take the content here at face value, or to adapt it as you feel is necessary.

Ensure that all of the children who took part in **SPLASH!** and their families are invited back to the family service (there is space on your performance programmes to include details of upcoming events). In doing to it may encourage them to attend if they know that the children will be included - why not recap one or two songs from the show, interview a few children about their experiences and what they learnt, and display crafts that children have made throughout the week?

Song from **SPLASH!** you could include:

Then You Spoke
I Believe

Suggested congregational songs:

Our God is an Awesome God – Rich Mullins
Great is the Lord – Steve McEwan
Indescribable – Jesse Reeves/ Laura Story
Our God is a Great Big God – Jo Hemming/ Nigel Hemming
Great in Power – Russell Fragar
Good, Good Father – Anthony Brown/ Pat Barrett
God's Love is Big – Simon Parry
How Great is Your Love For Us – Brett Younker
How Deep the Father's Love For Us – Stuart Townsend

Suggested YouTube clip that tells the story of Jonah:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=MSD972Nbr7g>



Suggested activity: Quiz

Make up teams to answer questions about the story of Jonah. All ages can be involved in this and try to include as many people as possible in a mix up of ages etc. (There is a powerpoint presentation with quiz questions included on your **SPLASH!** DVD)

At the conclusion of the quiz give the losing team the best prize and the winning team a not so good prize (or none at all). Use this as an illustration of how sometimes we can feel upset by what we see as injustice - this is how Jonah felt in chapter 4 of the book of Jonah.

Suggested thoughts:

Jonah has just won a blinder! The people of Nineveh have listened to him and in just 8 words he had saved an entire nation! He went in fear and trepidation, but when he got there, the people – even the king- listened and repented. What more could Jonah want after the time he had just had. Jonah had been called by God, run away from God, been thrown overboard in a storm. He'd been swallowed by a large fish, called out to God, repented and then been spat out on the shoreline. Jonah then did as God asked and got that result that God really wanted. You'd think he would be full of joy that God's plan had come to fruition. So was Jonah pleased? Was Jonah praising God for His good works? No, Jonah behaved like a spoilt child who hadn't got his own way!

At the beginning of chapter 4 we read this:

(verse 1) This change of plan greatly upset Jonah, and he became very angry.

Jonah was angry that God had changed his mind and spared the people of Nineveh. Jonah was hoping for a great big firework show over Nineveh where he could sit back and say: 'I told you so, you didn't listen to God or me and now look at you!'

But that's not how God works. This whole book shows the grace of God in a beautiful way. Despite the fact that God had watched the Ninevites behaving in a way that made Him sad, angry, disappointed, God still loved them and he wanted what was best of them. He was overjoyed when the people returned to Him.

In fact God had been gracious to Jonah as well. When Jonah was in the belly of the great big fish he cried out to God. He asked God to give him another shot at what he was supposed to do, to let him live and to go to the city of Nineveh. Jonah was given a second chance as well. So why was Jonah so cross when the Ninevites were given a second chance? He knew God was a gracious God who was compassionate towards people and who loved His people. No-one really knows why Jonah behaved like this, but perhaps he was stung by the fact that this seemed unfair. Just like in our quiz, people were a bit cross that the losing team got the best prize, Jonah felt like the people of Nineveh deserved the anger of God for the way they behaved. We can see in this chapter that God and Jonah have a little chat about how Jonah cared more for the vine he was sat under than he did for the people of Nineveh.

In Luke 15, we find another person who behaves a bit like this. The brother of the prodigal son got into a strop when his brother returned home and was treated like royalty. He ranted at his dad about the injustice of it all. The father in this story also shows the gracious nature of God too and guides the brother into seeing that this was the only way he should have treated his prodigal son.



Perhaps, just like Jonah and the prodigal son's brother, we all feel a little frustrated at situations that feel a little unjust to us.

It's very true that the Ninevites were not pleasant people, but when they heard the word of God they were prepared to put their old ways behind them and start worshipping the one true God. In our lives we encounter people that we feel are like the Ninevites. We have neighbours that we find it hard to like, school bullies, vandals, people who steal from others, colleagues at work who drive us up the wall, the difficult neighbours who are brash and loud. The list could go on. We can get frustrated by them and find it difficult to like them; just like Jonah felt about the Ninevites, but God still loves them just like he loved the people of Nineveh.

The story of Jonah ends with a bit of a cliff-hanger. Jonah is asked a question by God - why he thinks that God shouldn't show compassion to the people of Nineveh. The question is never answered by Jonah in this story, or even by God.

Perhaps we need to ask the same question of ourselves today. Does God love the people we find it hard to love or even like?

Do we behave like Jonah did and get cross by the fact that they seem to succeed at life? Do we get cross because this seems unjust?

Perhaps it is our attitude that is wrong? God loves all of us whether or not we get it right or wrong. God gives us all a second, third, fourth chance and so on and so on. Perhaps everyone deserves another go?

Are we willing to be like Jonah and take the good news message of God to the people we don't particularly want to? To the people we find it hard to like? What would this feel like? Would we run away like Jonah did at first? It's not easy, but with God's help we can.

Suggested response:

Provide a rope, green ribbon and a vine leaf cut out (see attached).

Jonah had a vine that God gave him and then destroyed, the rope in this reflection represents that time Jonah spent arguing with God.

Using the vine leaf shape, ask people to write the name of someone that they find it difficult to get on with on the leaf and tie it to the rope with the ribbon. Ask people to reflect with God how they can show his love to that person.

When people have added the names on to the vine, pray a simple prayer over the people on the vine and the people in the service too.

Suitable music to play in the response time:

You Say – Lauren Daigle

Look Up Child - Lauren Daigle

You Make Me Brave – Amanda Cook

Nothing But Grace – Chris Lawson Jones



