

God's messenger

Jonah and the big fish, from Jonah 1 – 4; Hebrews 1:1 – 2

GOD HAD A JOB for Jonah. But Jonah didn't want it.

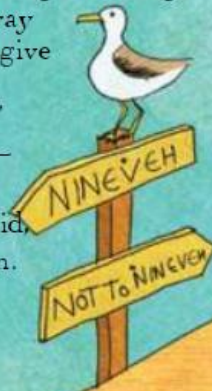
"Go to Nineveh," God said, "and tell your worst enemies that I love them."

"NO!" said Jonah. "Those are bad people doing bad things!"

"Exactly," said God. "They have run far away from me. But I can't stop loving them. I will give them a new start. I will forgive them."

"NO!" said Jonah. "They don't deserve it!"

I'll run away! Jonah said to himself. *Far away — so far away that God won't be able to find me. Then I won't have to do what God says! It's a good plan!* he said, because, as far as he knew, it was a good plan.



But, of course, it wasn't a good plan at all. It was a silly plan. (Because you can run away from God, but he will always come and find you.)

Jonah went ahead with his not-very-good plan. "One ticket to NOT Nineveh, please!" he said and boarded a boat sailing in the very opposite direction of Nineveh.

Well, it wasn't long before a fierce wind blew, and the boat started to lurch and pitch and roll — and everyone started turning green. Jonah sat bolt upright in his bed. You see, the first thing that went wrong with Jonah's not-very-good plan was that God sent a big storm after him.

The sailors couldn't sail their ship properly. "We're sinking!" they screamed, and started throwing everything overboard — suitcases, food, whatever they could find.

By now Jonah knew that the storm was his fault. "Throw me in, instead!" he shouted to the sailors. "And the storm will stop!" The sailors weren't sure. "It's the only way you can be saved!" Jonah cried.

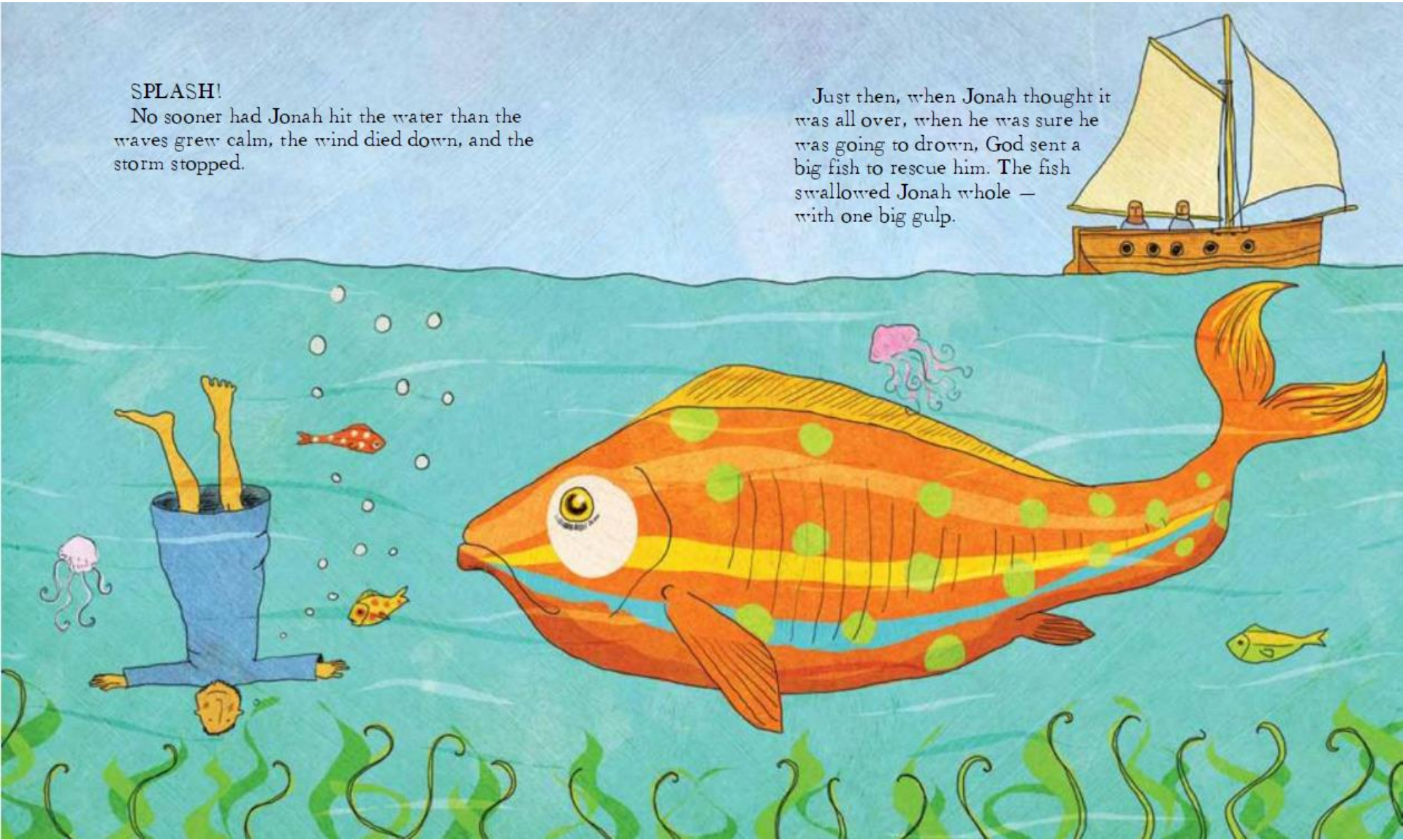
And so, one . . . two . . . three . . .



SPLASH!

No sooner had Jonah hit the water than the waves grew calm, the wind died down, and the storm stopped.

Just then, when Jonah thought it was all over, when he was sure he was going to drown, God sent a big fish to rescue him. The fish swallowed Jonah whole — with one big gulp.





Jonah must have thought he'd died, it was so dark in there, like in a tomb. But then he smelled the rotting food and felt the slimy seaweed and knew he wasn't dead. He was in the belly of the fish!

Sitting there in the darkness for three whole days, Jonah had plenty of time to think. Pretty soon he realized his plan was, well . . . a very silly plan indeed. He was sorry for running away. He prayed to God from inside the great fish and asked God to forgive him.

After three days, the fish spat Jonah safely out onto a sandy beach.

Just then, Jonah heard someone calling his name. "Go to Nineveh," God said.

And this time? Jonah said, "YES!" He went straight to Nineveh and told everyone God's wonderful message.

"Even though you've run far from God, he can't stop loving you," Jonah told them. "Run to him! So he can forgive you."

The people of Nineveh listened to Jonah, and they started loving God. They learned to do what God said and to stop running away from him — just like Jonah.

Many years later, God was going to send another Messenger with the same wonderful message. Like Jonah, he would spend three days in utter darkness.

But this Messenger would be God's own Son. He would be called "The Word" because he himself would be God's Message. God's Message translated into our own language. Everything God wanted to say to the whole world — in a Person.

