

God is omnipresent Jonah 1-3

Application for the Christian girls: Because He is everywhere, I don't need to be afraid or feel alone. He is always with me.

Application for the non-Christian girls: Because He is everywhere I cannot hide my sin from Him. I need to tell Jesus I'm sorry and ask Him to forgive me.

Memory verse:

"The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good." Proverbs 15:3

Introduction

Read Jonah 1-3 to help you prepare for this week's lesson. This week the girls will be studying the truth that God is omnipresent, that He is fully present everywhere. Through the story of Jonah, they will learn there is nowhere we can hide from God. Pray the girls will be encouraged and reassured that God is always with them, that they are never alone. Pray they will understand just how big God is when they think that He can be fully present everywhere!! Pray the girls will be challenged to think about the places they go and the things they do as they reflect on the truth that God is always with them.

Pray also for those who haven't made a commitment to the Lord Jesus. Pray they will be challenged as they learn about this omnipresent God in whom they can put their trust and hope. Pray they will realise that because He is everywhere, they cannot hide their sin from Him. Pray these girls particularly will be drawn to put their trust in Jesus, the Saviour this week.

Background notes

•God spoke to Jonah and instructed him to go to Nineveh and to rebuke the people there for the sin they were committing and ask them to repent and

turn from their sin.

•The city of Nineveh was not a city of Israel but rather a Gentile city. It was the capital of the Assyrian Empire which was large and prominent during its day. It was a very important city and so it would have been an intimidating place for Jonah to go and tell the people to repent. There was no way of knowing how the people would respond to the word God had given him to bring. What if they made fun of him or mocked him or, worse still, killed him? Put yourselves in Jonah's shoes. How would you have felt? God may not be asking you to go to a foreign country to tell others about Him but is there something He is asking you to do that you are running away from?

•God wanted Jonah to go to this city as He had compassion on the people there. God in His omnipresence saw the wickedness of the people and He sent Jonah to call them to turn from their wicked ways.

•Instead of going to Nineveh, Jonah wanted to go as far away from there as possible so he got on a boat for Tarshish. This city was thought to be towards the end of the earth and Jonah in his foolishness thought that he could escape God's presence by going to a place that was the furthest known place you could go.

•Instead of Jonah getting as far away from God as possible, God knew exactly where he was, just like He knew where Adam and Eve were in the garden when they tried to hide from Him. In fact, God prevented Jonah's escape when He sent a storm.

As the storm battered the ship on the waves Jonah and all the sailors on the boat were in great danger. The sailors instantly tried to do what they could to try and lighten the load within the ship by throwing the cargo overboard. When this didn't help it was then they began to cry out to their gods. What about you? When in the storms of life do you try to fix the situation yourself or do you immediately turn to your Almighty God? These sailors cried out to their own false gods, and of course those cries were in vain as it is only the one true God who can help us when we are in trouble.

•When the storm continued, the sailors cast lots to see who was responsible for the storm they found themselves in. When the lot fell to Jonah, the sailors sought to find out all they could about him. They wanted to try and find out how they could remedy this situation. It was then that Jonah told them he was a prophet. It seems somewhat ironic that Jonah would say He feared the Lord the God of heaven when he was in fact running from Him at that precise moment.

•Jonah commanded the sailors to throw him overboard. Finally the sailors realised they needed

to cast him overboard. But before they did we are told they feared the Lord, sacrificed to God and made promises to serve Him. Notice how they went from fearing the storm to fearing the Lord.

•Jonah was swallowed by a great fish. Some people question if this happened as it seems impossible, however, surely nothing is too difficult for the Lord and He could have prepared a great fish to do this. We don't know what type of fish this was. Some have speculated it was a species of whale rather than a fish.

•Despite Jonah's disobedience, God had not finished with him. God could have rescued him in many different ways but He knew what needed to happen in order to have an effect in Jonah's heart. For three days and three nights he was in the fish's belly. It was after this period of time that Jonah responded with a prayer.

•The prayer is very interesting in that it reveals to us that Jonah was a man who knew God's Word and it was hidden in his heart as he recited from the Psalms (Psalm 18:6, Psalm 42:7 and Psalm 31:22). We can learn from this to hide God's Word in our hearts for times when we will need it to sustain us and for us to use when we are in dark places. From the prayer we read that Jonah recognised he had never been out of God's sight, that the sailors may have seen the ones who physically threw him overboard but it was all part of God's plan to speak to him and lead him back to Himself. He also recognised that it was God who saved him from drowning by sending the fish and he was able to praise God for that.

•In this prayer we recognise that Jonah has realised that he can't run from God; he can't resist Him. He repents from trying to run away from God and he makes a declaration, a commitment to do what God asks him to do (2:9). It has been revealed to Jonah afresh just how amazing his God is. Jonah has been able to say personally that he has known God's salvation.

•We continue to see God in all His glory and power as He speaks to the fish and commands it to vomit Jonah on to the dry land.

As you prepare

This week the girls will be learning how God is omnipresent (present everywhere at the same time). As humans, this can be hard for us to get our heads around. God is everywhere; He cannot be contained. He is limitless and there is nowhere we can go to escape His presence. Take some time as you prepare this week to soak that in and to remind yourself about this amazing truth about your Mighty God, your Heavenly Father.

Sometimes when we are struggling, we can feel like God is not present with us. Our hearts can

deceive us so we believe that He is distant from us but the truth is that, because He is an omnipresent God, He never leaves us. Have you ever felt like this? Perhaps you are feeling a bit like this now. It is so easy when we are feeling tired, weary, worn out and exhausted by our circumstances to feel that God is not with us.

If this is you, please be assured that God is with you! He never leaves you. Focus on this truth and bathe yourself in the Psalms, where the Psalmists express their despair and disappointment at feeling distant from God, but were then able to lift their eyes and remember how wonderful and trustworthy He is.

Before you begin the lesson take some time with the girls to pray about any prayer requests they may have and invite God to help everyone to understand this week's attribute of God and how they can apply what they have learnt to their lives.

Break the ice

Play a fun game of Twister with the girls where they will realise it is very difficult to place yourself in lots of different places at the one time. Ask them if they have ever felt like this before in everyday life, where they wanted to be in different places at one time. Perhaps you have agreed to do something with someone and then you get asked to do something or go somewhere else really fun. But you can't be in two places at one time!

We humans are limited in our capacity and can't be in two places at one time. However, this is not true for God. This week through the story of Jonah we are going to learn that He is omnipresent which means He is present everywhere.

Studying the Bible (pages 18-21)

Read Jonah 1-2.

Ask the girls to answer these questions in their journals.

1. Where did God ask Jonah to go and why did He ask him to go there?

God asked Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh to preach against the wickedness that was going on there. Jonah was a prophet from God which meant he heard from God and passed on the message.

2. How did Jonah respond to God's request?

Jonah ran away, or at least he thought he was running away from God, but he soon realised this is something you can't do. Jonah "ran away" and headed to Tarshish which was completely in the opposite direction to Nineveh. He was trying to get as far away from Nineveh as he could because he didn't want to deliver God's message.

3. What happened when Jonah disobeyed God and tried to run away? What does this teach us about God?

Jonah headed to Tarshish on a boat but God sent a great wind and a storm arose, (this also reminds us about the attribute of God we learnt about in a previous lesson - He is all powerful.) The sailors on the boat quickly realised that Jonah was the cause for this storm and reluctantly threw him overboard. Jonah was tossed in the sea amidst the storm and ended up in the belly of a fish. Jonah tried to run away from God by going in the opposite direction to where he was asked to go but God was still with him. He was with Jonah in the boat and He was also with him in the belly of this great fish.

We learn that we can't run away from God, He is present everywhere. There is nowhere we can go that God isn't with us. When we read Jonah's prayer to God in the belly of the fish, we learn

how Jonah realises his sin in disobeying God and he repents. If we were to read on in the story we will read how when the fish spat him out, Jonah obeyed God and went to Nineveh. Guess what? God was with him there too and as he shared God's message with the people they did indeed repent.

There is another place in the Bible where we are told very clearly about God being present everywhere, they may remember it from the Psalms Scripture Course. It is Psalm 139 verses 7-12. Ask someone to read these verses. What do they tell us? There is nowhere we can go to flee God's presence. Everywhere we go He is there.

Journal

There are four statements written in the girls' journals which they are asked to discuss together and to state if they think they are true or false.

1. God is only present with us when we are happy.
False. God is with us all the time. There is never a time when He is not present with us. The Bible tells us that God watches over us day and night. He never slumbers or sleeps. (Psalm 121:3).

2. God is too busy dealing with world problems to be with me all the time.

False. The amazing truth about God is that He is fully present everywhere, all the time. It is not like He has one ear listening to you, but thinking about something else. We may be in someone's company but our mind is somewhere else so we are not present. This is not the same with God. He is fully present with us all the time. He cares about every detail of our lives. Whatever bothers us and makes us fearful or stresses us, matters to Him. He is fully present with us to help us work through all that we are going through big or small.

3. Even though I may not "feel" God with me, I know He is there.

True. We should never base our faith in God on feelings. Regardless of whether or not we feel close to God, it does not change the truth that He is fully present with us.

4. It is true God is present everywhere but because of sin there is still separation between Him and I if I don't know Jesus as my Lord and Saviour.

True. God is fully present everywhere; there is nowhere we can go that He is not present. However, in order to be in relationship with Him and to know Him, to seek His help and guidance we need to acknowledge our sin, repent and turn away from it, tell God we are sorry and trust in the Lord Jesus as our Saviour - the only one who can save/rescue us from the punishment we deserve for our sin.

We have a response to make. God is all-knowing, present everywhere and so much more. The opportunity is there to be in relationship with Him and to be part of His family.

Tell the girls there is a challenge to us this week as we think of this mighty truth that God is everywhere. Does the knowledge of knowing He is present everywhere make us think about the things we are doing when we are at school or what we are looking at on our phones e.t.c. Our parents or teachers or GB leaders can't be with us everywhere or can't know what we are doing or thinking all the time, but God can. We need to ask ourselves if we bring glory to God through what we do on our own in our bedroom when the door is closed, or what we look at on our phone or where we go with our friends. Knowing He is with you everywhere, would you be happy continuing to do these things knowing that this loving, all-knowing, everywhere-present God is watching on?

He can see who we are and what we are when no one else can. We may tell our parents we are doing something/going somewhere that is not true, but we have learnt from Jonah's story that we can't run away from God, there is nowhere we can escape from Him even if we wanted to!

You may not be happy about this, you may even feel God is like an angry parent ready to punish you but this could not be further from the truth. He loves you unconditionally, regardless of where you go and what you do. He wants you to flourish and to be in relationship with Him because He knows what is best. When we sin, or are disobedient, or go places where we are led to do things that we shouldn't do, it hurts us and that hurts Him. Our sin brings heartache and spoils the Christian's fellowship with God. He doesn't want that.

This truth that He is with us everywhere should bring us great comfort and reassurance. This means we are never alone, whether that is at school when people are being mean and leaving us out, or when we are experiencing difficulties at home. Remember He is present everywhere and all-knowing. These go hand in hand. He knows what's going on, He is with us and He is ready to help and instruct us with His wisdom and guidance when we are in relationship with Him. There is no one better to be with you than this amazing God who can go with you everywhere you go. He even knows your deepest thoughts.

So the challenge this week is how knowing God is with you all the time will change you. Will it change how you think, where you go, what you

do? And as if it is not amazing enough that He is fully present now, He always has been and always will be. He was fully present in the past, is in the present and will be in the future.

Explain that you are going to do an exercise to help the girls think of the times God has been with them in the past and also will be with them in the future.

In their journal on pages 30 & 21 there is an image of a path. Ask the girls to write or doodle pictures on a timeline of their lives from their earliest memories to the present day and into the future. Ask them to include significant events or places they have gone to/go to on their timeline. What are their hopes and dreams for the future?

Encourage the girls to look at their life's journey and to think of the fact that God has been with them at every single stage and at all times of the day and night. His eye has been on them the whole time and will continue to be. So, going forward, God will be with you in every situation. (Examples: changing school, moving house, going to university, dealing with illness or bereavement, starting work, being unemployed).

Because He is omnipresent

As you finish this week, remind the girls that the attribute of God they have been focusing on this week, is His omnipresence. He is fully present everywhere. Acknowledge that it can be difficult for us to grasp this as God is so big, He is not limited to one place like us, His presence has no bounds.

Encourage the girls who are believers to be reassured by this truth: God is present with us, He never leaves us, we are never alone. We can know His guidance, His wisdom and His presence with us. Remind them there are two challenges with this truth. The first challenge is to those who are believers. In all we do we want to bring glory to God and to follow His ways. However, the temptation can be to do things we shouldn't when we are on our own, or to go places and do things we shouldn't when adults are not with us. However, God sees and He knows and He doesn't want you doing anything that will affect your relationship with Him. So do think about this during the week and moving forward. Don't be like Jonah when God asks you to do something and you do the opposite.

The second challenge is to those who haven't put their trust in the Lord. It is true that you are

always in the presence of God. Do you remember Psalm 139:13? He was there when He formed you in your mother's womb and He has seen and known about everything in your life. But your sin makes a separation between you and God (who is holy). (Isaiah 59:2) However, the good news is that Jesus' death paid the price for your sin and He rose again so you can be in a positive relationship with God if you turn from sin and trust Jesus as your Saviour. (There is a box at the bottom of page 19 of their journals that says 'Because God is omnipresent.' Ask the girls to summarise and put into words what they have learnt this week about God and how it impacts their lives).

Creative prayer idea

Give the girls each a stone along with some sharpie pens. Ask the girls to think of all the places they will go this week. Would they be happy that God was with them in these various places. Reassure them that there is nothing more comforting than intentionally reminding ourselves every morning every evening, during the day that we are not alone, that God is with us. As the girls reflect on this truth, ask them to write 'I am not alone, God is with me' on the stone. (see also challenge for the week).

Internet clip

Omnipresent (tributes of God) by Pastor Landon (2:27 mins)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDsUG3yDbSI>

This is a helpful, visual video to help the girls understand the omnipresence of God.

Challenge for the week

Allow the girls to take the stone home with them and to carry it in their pockets wherever they go this week or put on their bedside table as they go to sleep each night. As they feel the stone in the pocket, or as they look at it on their table or school desk, encourage them to keep constantly reminding themselves that God is with them wherever they go and that they are never alone when they put their trust in Him.

Girls' prayer

Heavenly Father we praise You because You are fully present everywhere. Thank You that You are present with us everywhere and that you never leave us and we are never alone. Help us wherever we go to seek Your wisdom and guidance. In Jesus' name, Amen.

God is holy

Exodus 26 :31-34, Matthew 27 :45-53

God is holy

Exodus 26:31-34, Matthew 27:45-53

Application for the Christian girls: Because He is holy, He wants me to live a holy life.

Application for the non-Christian girls: Because He is holy, He is separate from sin. Trusting in and giving your life to Jesus is the only way to come close to a holy God.

Memory verse: "Who among the gods is like you, O Lord? Who is like you— majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?" Exodus 15:11

Introduction

The attribute the girls will be learning about this week is the holiness of God. There is a lot to cover in this lesson and because of this, we would recommend taking as long as you need to ensure the girls understand what it means that God is holy and how those who know Jesus are called to live holy lives.

Take your time to read over the passages the girls will be studying as you prepare so you are clear as to how you should be teaching your girls. The lesson begins by reminding them how sin entered the world causing separation between God and His children. They will then explore briefly the story of Moses and the children of Israel and how God instructed them to build a Tabernacle so He could reside with them when they were wandering in the desert. The girls will learn the symbolism of the curtain in the Temple and the significance of it being torn from top to bottom when Jesus died on the cross.

As you prepare this week, pray God will help the girls understand what it means that He is holy. Pray they will be reminded of the seriousness of sin and how it separates us from God. Pray for a fresh understanding of what it means for them that Jesus

died and rose again so that we could be reconciled with a holy God.

Pray for those girls who do not know the Lord, that the Holy Spirit would convict them of their sin and help them to realise their need of the Saviour. Pray also for those girls who are Christians that they will be inspired afresh to live holy lives so they can bring glory to God.

Background notes

Exodus 26:31-34

- The veil that was made was reported to have been as wide as four fingers so no one could see into the Holy of Holies.
- It was made of fine linen with blue, purple and scarlet yarn with an artistic design of cherubim. It hung on four pillars made of acacia wood and was overlaid with gold and set on silver sockets.
- The veil was designed to be a barrier and no priest could go beyond the veil into the Holy of Holies except the High Priest. Even the latter could only enter once a year on the Day of Atonement.

Matthew 27:45-53

- This passage tells us about the death of Jesus. In class the girls will be focusing on verse 51 when we are informed of the veil in the temple being torn.
- The veil, we are told, was torn literally from top to bottom and it was God who did the tearing. This veil was what separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies in the temple. It was a vivid demonstration of the separation between man and God. There was now an entrance made for people to enter into the presence of the almighty God, because Jesus, by dying on the cross, took the full punishment of humanity's sins.
- When Jesus made a full atonement for our sins, this veil, a symbol of separation, was destroyed. No longer would there be a barrier to entering God's presence.

As you prepare

This week as the girls learn about the holiness of God we would like you as leaders to take some time to reflect and remind yourself of God's holiness. In Isaiah 6 we are told Isaiah had a vision where he saw God. As he encountered God and His holiness, he is all of a sudden fully aware of his own sinfulness. He recounts how even the angels were in awe of God and His holiness as they called out, 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory.' (Isaiah 6:3) This is a humbling passage which we would encourage you to read and study as you prepare this week.

We would also love you to use your imagination as you read the passage from the Gospel where