



Jonah

Jonah 1-4

This is a story about a man named Jonah. Jonah was feeling pretty down in the dumps, but as we read, we'll see how God comforted him. The very first thing we're looking for is something that might make you slip and fall. It's also something that a monkey would eat. Raise your hand when you see it. (Allow responses) We're looking for a banana! Who got it right? (Allow responses) Awesome! Let's keep reading!

Jonah was feeling down, because he didn't want to do something that God had asked him to do. God wanted Jonah to go to a place called Nineveh and tell the people who were living there to stop doing wrong things. But Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh, because he knew how bad it was there.

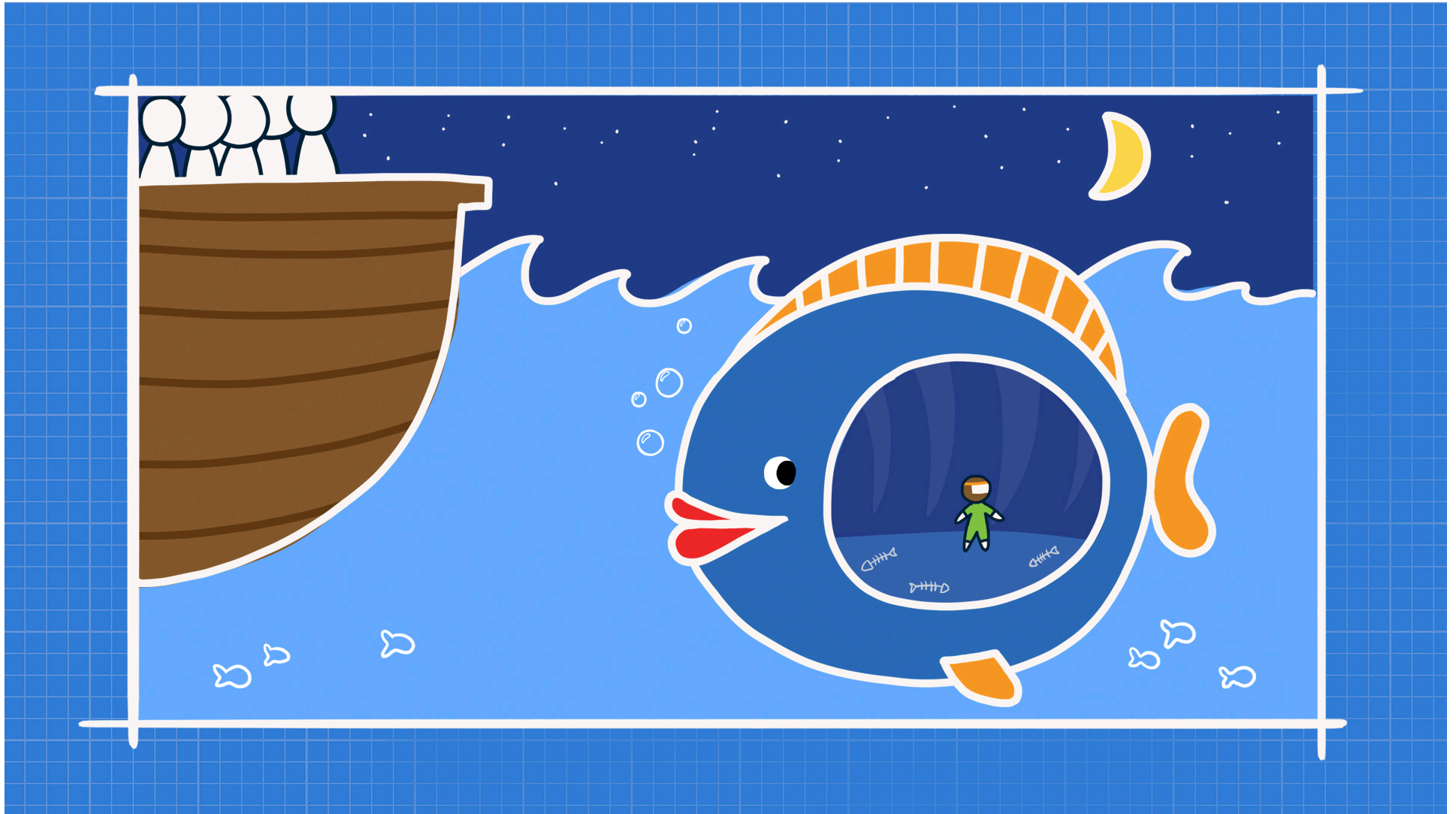
Jonah was feeling like the people of Nineveh should be punished for doing wrong things, but God just wanted Jonah to go and help them make better choices.



Even though God made it very clear to Jonah that he was supposed to go and make a difference in Nineveh, Jonah disobeyed God. Jonah decided that if God wanted him go to Nineveh, he was going to run far away in the opposite direction. He ended up on a boat with some fisherman. Now, in this picture we're looking for something that could give you an eight-armed hug. Raise your hand when you see it! (Allow responses) If you spotted the octopus, you got this one right! Good job. Now, do you think that Jonah was able to run away from God? (No)

No way! Because God is always with us and He knows everything, God knew exactly where Jonah was. So to show Jonah that He was right there all along, God sent a crazy storm to the ocean right where Jonah's boat was sailing.

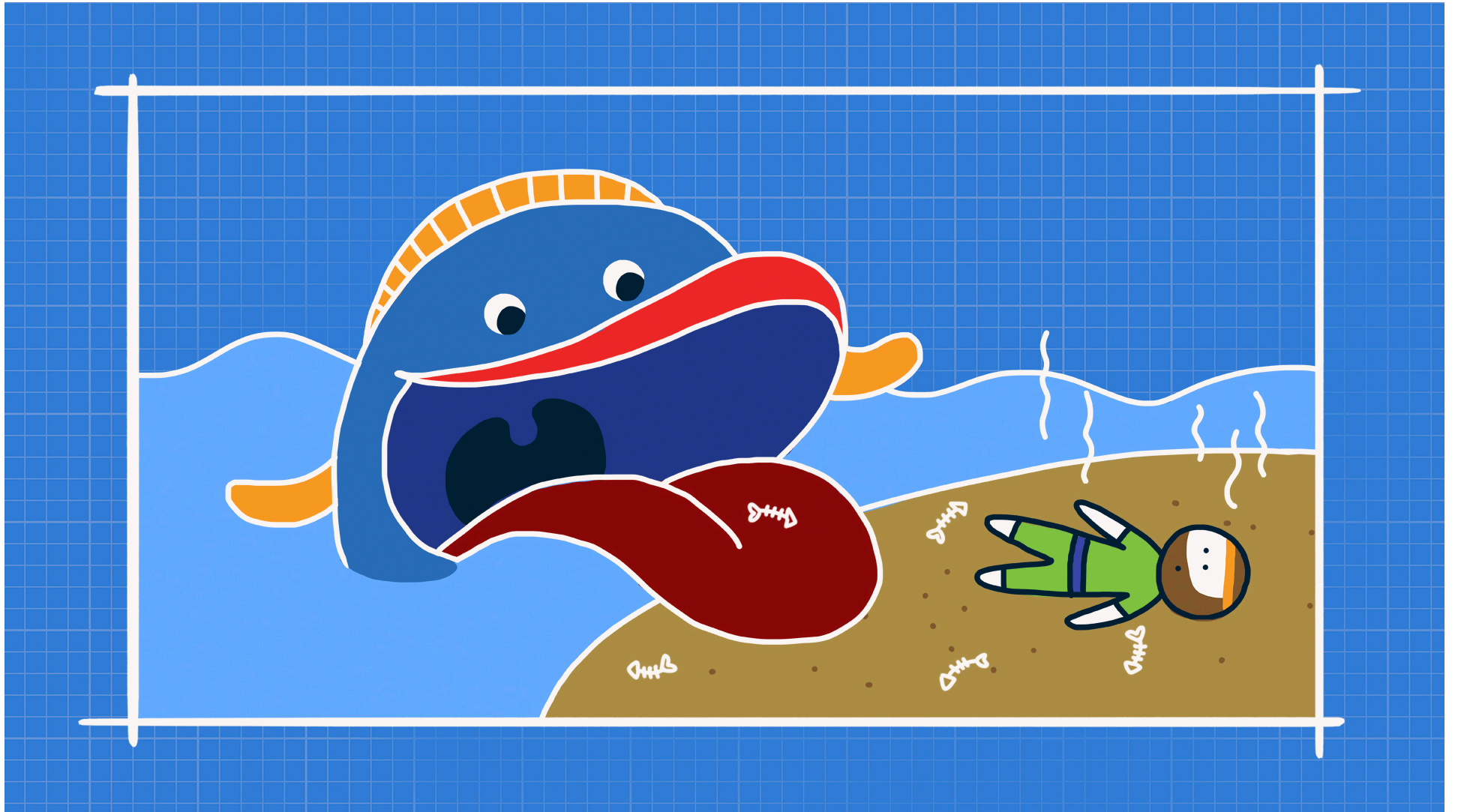
It didn't take the boat captain very long to realize that the storm was following Jonah. And Jonah knew it, too, so he told the men on the boat to throw him overboard! WOAHH! Surely this was the end for Jonah, right?!



No way! Because God was still with Jonah, God sent a big fish to swallow him right up. Now you might be thinking that was a mean thing for God to do, but it was actually one of the ways that God comforted Jonah. The fish kept Jonah from drowning.

When Jonah was in the belly of the fish, it was really dark. But in this picture we see things that give us light in the night time sky. What are we looking for? (Stars) That's right! We're looking for stars. Quick! Without counting, raise your hand if you want to guess how many stars you think are pictured here. (Allow responses) There are 33 stars pictured here. Did you know that God doesn't have to count how many stars are in the sky? The Bible says that God knows all the stars and He gives each one of them names! That's so cool!

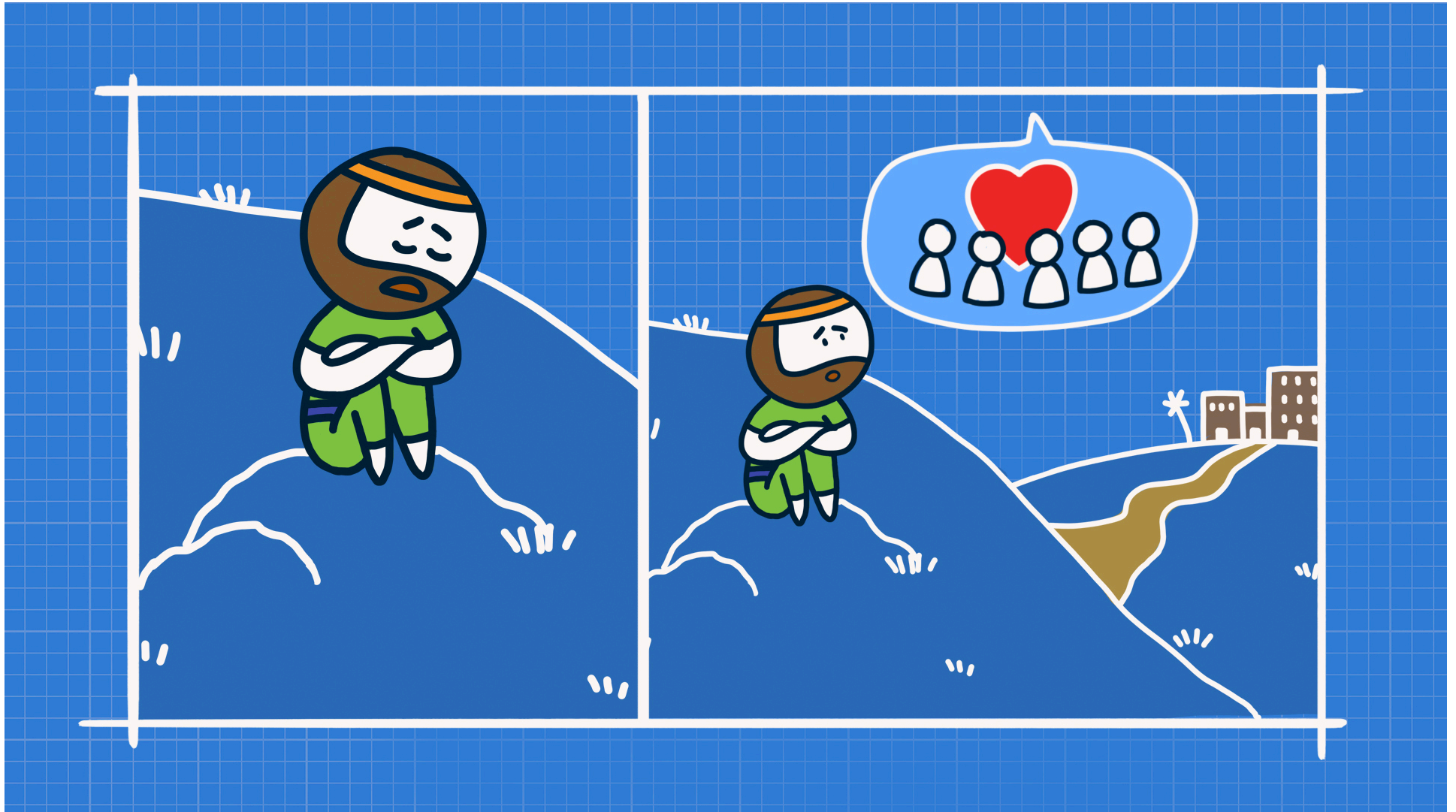
Now, back to our story. How long do you think Jonah was in the belly of that fish? (Allow responses) Let's keep reading to find out.



For three whole days, Jonah was in the belly of that fish! While he was in there, Jonah talked to God a lot. Jonah said that he realized God was the one listening to him and taking care of him.

So on the third day, the big fish spit Jonah out on dry land, along with his dinner from a few days before that. Jonah was probably covered in fish guts and I'm sure he smelled. How many little fish did this big fish eat for dinner? Raise your hand as soon as you know! (Allow responses) There are five little fish pictured here. If you guessed five, you got it right! Good job.

Once Jonah landed on the shore, God told him to go to Nineveh... for real this time. Do you think Jonah obeyed God? (Allow responses) Jonah DID obey God this time. He went to Nineveh and told them the good news that God loved them and that they should turn from making wrong choices to making better decisions.



The people of Nineveh listened to Jonah! But, Jonah still felt like they should all be punished for the wrong choices they had made in the past. But God didn't punish them at all, which made Jonah feel down again. Do you think God just left Jonah feeling down? (No)

God saw that Jonah was sitting alone and feeling down, so God comforted Jonah with the truth. God helped Jonah understand that He loves everyone. God was happy that the people were now making right choices. Just like God comforted Jonah, God comforts you and me, too!