
Leader BIBLE STUDY

The prophet Joel spoke to the Southern Kingdom of Judah at a time when the nation faced a crisis. The land had been invaded by locusts; swarms of the insects had devastated the plants. In addition to the locusts, Judah was affected by a severe drought. Joel looked back on these events and announced that these were not mere natural disasters—the Lord was judging the people for their sin.

In Deuteronomy 28, God told His people, “If you do not obey the Lord your God by carefully following all His commands and statutes I am giving you today, all these curses will come and overtake you: ... You will sow much seed in the field but harvest little, because locusts will devour it” (vv. 15,38). That is exactly what happened.

These disasters were a wake-up call. Joel told the people to repent. He told them to fast. He told them to gather and repent together, crying out to God and asking Him to show them mercy. Then Joel looked ahead to the future. In essence he said, “You think this is bad? This is only the beginning!”

God’s judgment of Judah was not over. The Day of the Lord was coming, a day when God would show His strength through an invading army. For those who were not right with God, this was bad news. God’s power would be against them. So Joel implored them, “Return to the Lord your God. For He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, rich in faithful love, and He relents from sending disaster.”

God had pity on His people and promised to restore them. God would rather forgive His people than punish them. He sent His Son, Jesus, to die for sins so people could be right with God. An ultimate Day of the Lord is coming, and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Preschool WORSHIP OVERVIEW

Session Title: Joel, Prophet to Judah

Bible Passage: Joel 1–3

Big Picture Question: What is God's desire for people? God wants all people to be saved.

Key Passage: Jonah 4:2

Unit Christ Connection: Through these prophets we see a picture of the salvation provided through Jesus Christ.

Large Group Worship

(15–20 minutes)

Small Group Activities

(25–30 minutes)

Large Group Closing

(10+ minutes)

The BIBLE STORY

Joel, Prophet to Judah

Joel 1–3

Joel was a prophet. God spoke to Joel, and Joel told people what God said. **God gave Joel a message to tell to the people in Judah.** Bad things had been happening in Judah. **No rain had fallen for a long time.** The people ignored God. They did not do what God said to do. **God warned the people what would happen if they did not obey Him.** One of the things God said would happen was this: **“You will plant seeds in your field, but the locusts will eat the plants.”**

What do you think happened when the people of Judah disobeyed God? Swarms of locusts came into the land. They ate the plants. When the locusts went away, more locusts came. They ate up any plants that were left. When they went away, more locusts came. One, two, three, four. Four swarms of locusts came to Judah. **They ate the plants for growing grapes, grain, apples, and other fruits.**

Joel said, “Listen to me! Has this ever happened before?” No, the locusts had never eaten all the plants in Judah before. But there had been locusts somewhere else. Do you remember where? Some of the people might have remembered hearing the story. **Many, many years before—when Moses led God’s people out of Egypt—God sent locusts to punish the Egyptians for doing bad things. Now God was punishing the people of Judah for doing bad things too.**

“Be sad for your sin,” Joel said. “Ask God to forgive you.” Joel told the people to get together and cry out to God. “A day is coming when God will punish sin once and for all!” Joel said. “That day will be terrible!”

What would happen on such a terrible day? Joel said that God was going to send a strong army to Judah. This was very bad news! The army would take over Judah. Everyone would be scared. No one would be able to survive their attack.

“Stop doing bad things and turn back to God,” Joel said. “God is

loving. He would rather forgive you than punish you.”

Joel had some good news from God. One day, God was going to send rain to make the plants grow. God would send rain so the animals could drink water. God said, “I will save anyone who calls to Me. I will bring My people back together.”

Then God said, “Another day of punishment is coming. I will punish people who turn away from Me. I will pay back all of your enemies for the bad things they did to you. I am your God. If you stop sinning, I will forgive you. I will be with My people forever.”

Christ Connection: The people in Judah sinned. To punish them, God sent locusts and stopped the rain. Joel told the people to be sorry for their sin. Jesus also wants people to be sorry for their sin. Jesus died to take away our sin, and He is alive. If we trust in Jesus and are sorry for our sin, God forgives us.

Large Group WORSHIP

Session Title: Joel, Prophet to Judah

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Large Group Worship (15–20 minutes)

- Follow your church’s security procedures.
- “Live Like That” song
- “I Know Jesus Loves You and Me” song

Play “Live Like That” in the background as children arrive.

Welcome and sing

Welcome kids and sing “I Know Jesus Loves You and Me.”

Practice a Bible skill and the key passage

- Bible
- Timeline Map
- Key Passage Slide or Poster
- “I Know” song

Say • Do you remember Bible stories about Amos and Hosea and Jonah? Each of these men was not only a prophet but also had a book of the Bible named after him.

Can you name any other books in the Old Testament?

Refer to the timeline to help children recall details of earlier Bible stories and people.

Introduce today’s Bible story; explain that Joel was another prophet who told people to be sorry for their sin. Joel also has a book in the Bible named after him. Show the Book of Joel.

Read the key passage aloud from the poster. Then sing the key passage song “I Know” together.

- Bible Story Picture Slide or Poster
- Timeline Map
- “Joel, Prophet to Judah” video (optional)
- Big Picture Question Slide or Poster

Watch or tell the Bible story

Print and display the Bible story picture for kids to study, or point to it on the timeline. Ask a volunteer to point to the insect on the leaf. Take guesses of what kind of insect it is.

Note: Locusts are the swarming phase of certain species of grasshoppers. Grasshoppers can hop; locusts fly. Swarms of hungry locusts can eat everything green in sight.

Say • Listen to the Bible story to find out what this insect is and why it was important to the people of Judah.

Open your Bible to Joel 1. Tell today's Bible story in your own words, or watch the video "Joel, Prophet to Judah."

Follow up with review questions.

Say • What is the insect in the Bible story picture? (*a locust*) What did the locusts do? (*They ate all the plants growing food for the people.*) Who sent the locusts? (*God*) Why did God send the locusts? (*God was punishing the people of Judah for their sin.*) **What is God's desire for people? God wants all people to be saved.**

Help kids make the Christ connection.

Worship by singing and praying

Play "Live Like That" as you guide a volunteer to collect the offering. Supply a few coins for anyone who did not bring an offering (to teach giving at church).

Sing some upbeat songs such as "His Love Goes on Forever," "God Loves Everybody," or "My God Is So Big."

Pray; thank God for sending so many prophets to tell people about His love. Say thank you to God for sending His Son, Jesus. Allow time for volunteers to pray, too.

Transition to small groups

Describe each activity you have set up. Remind kids about the swarms of locusts that invaded Judah. Invite kids to hop, creep, or "fly" to the activity of their choice. You may prefer to use the countdown video.

- "Live Like That" song
- offering basket
- "His Love Goes on Forever" song
- "God Loves Everybody" song
- "My God Is So Big" song

- countdown video (optional)

Tip: Do activities

- as a group, all at the same time
- in small groups that rotate through activities
- in centers, allowing kids to choose among them

Small Group ACTIVITIES

Session Title: Joel, Prophet to Judah

Bible Passage: Joel 1–3

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Key Passage: Jonah 4:2

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Tip: Select from the activities those you can staff and which your class will enjoy.



- green and yellow construction paper
- tape
- scissors
- pen

Small Group Activities (25–30 minutes)

Make a fruit tree

Cut a 9-by-36-inch strip of green paper or tape sheets together to make a strip. Roll up the paper, beginning with the short end, and tape it into a tube shape. Print on the tube these references: *Joel 1:12* and *Joel 2:22*.

Cut 2 to 3 inches down the side of one end of the tube. Make more cuts all the way around the tube, about an inch apart. Gently pull the inside layers out of the tube to make a tree. Cut and tape yellow circles (figs) to the branches.

Say • Joel, the prophet, warned the people in Judah of bad times when there wouldn’t be rain, and the trees wouldn’t produce fruit. But later, God would forgive the people, and there would be plenty to eat. *What is God’s desire for people? God wants all people to be saved.*

Work food puzzles

Cut cereal box fronts into 6 to 12 puzzle pieces each. Put each puzzle in a ziplock bag for kids to work.

Say • The people in Judah sinned. To punish them, God sent locusts and stopped the rain. Joel told the people to be sorry for their sin. Jesus also wants people to be sorry

- cereal boxes
- scissors
- ziplock bags

for their sin. Jesus died to take away our sin, and He is alive. If we trust in Jesus and are sorry for our sin, God forgives us.

Wave to the music

- “Ride of the Valkyries” from *Die Walkure* by Wagner
- craft sticks
- crepe paper strips
- tape
- punch balls (optional)

Play the “Ride of the Valkyries” by Wagner (hear it online) or choose other stirring music. Give each child a craft stick. Attach strips of crepe paper to wave like locust swarms.

When the music begins, locusts are on the ground. The children listen to the music and move their craft sticks up, down, and in circles according to how the music sounds to them. Alternate idea: Use punch balls.

Say • Some of the messages from God that the prophets said sounded very scary, but God wanted people to ask Him for help and forgiveness. ***What is God’s desire for people? God wants all people to be saved.*** Every scary message ended up by saying God will make things right.

Make grasshoppers

- clothespins
- green and black markers
- chenille stems



Help kids color a clothespin green with a marker. Color eyes on the closed part of the clothespin. Thread a chenille stem through at the spring, and bend it into legs. Put it on the floor, press down, and make it hop.

Say • Locusts and grasshoppers are related. Think about millions of locusts eating everything green and growing. Where else did God send locusts? (*Egypt*)

Paint with fruit-shaped stamps

- sponges
- tempera paint
- apple halves (optional)
- paper

Cut sponges into fruit or vegetable shapes, or paint with apple halves. Kids can stamp them on paper.

Say • ***What is God’s desire for people? God wants all people to be saved.*** One day, Jesus will make everything right, and there will be plenty of food for everyone.

Transition to large group closing

- countdown video (optional)

Large Group CLOSING

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Large Group Closing (10+ minutes)

Review

- “I Know” song
- Bible
- Key Passage Slide or Poster
- Big Picture Question Slide or Poster
- Timeline Map
- Bible Story Picture Slide or Poster (optional)

Play the song “I Know” as children return from small group activities. Display the big picture question poster. Ask a volunteer to point to today’s Bible story on the timeline.

Say • What insect is this in the picture? (*locust*)

What did the locusts eat? (*all the plants*)

Who sent the locusts? (*God*)

Why did God send locusts? (*to punish the people of Judah for their sin*)

What is God’s desire for people? God wants all people to be saved.

Help preschoolers understand that God is loving and patient. God wants us to love and obey Him. Joel shared good news from God, too. God would send rain. The plants would grow. **God wants all people to be saved.**

Show the key passage poster and read it.

Pray and sing

- “I Know Jesus Loves You and Me” song

Pray • Thank You, God, that Your Son, Jesus, took our punishment for us, so we can be forgiven.

Sing “I Know Jesus Loves You and Me.”

Missions story: Telling neighbors about Jesus

What is God's desire for people? God wants all people to be saved. But how can people learn about God? Members of a Vietnamese church in Pennsylvania worked together to tell everyone in their neighborhood about Jesus. Even the kids had a part.

First, the children went on a prayerwalk around the neighborhood with their pastor. It was a cold, windy day in March, but they stopped in every block and prayed for the people who lived or worked there.

Next, they helped fill bags with information about Jesus and about their church. The information was printed in both English and Vietnamese. The children helped hang the bags on doors. They also set up a table at a local Asian market. They gave bags to everyone who wanted one. Even 4-year-old Michelle helped hand out bags. By the end of the day, they had given away over 1,000 bags.

Christine, age 13, was excited that people came to their church because of information they found in the bags. One homeless woman they met in the market came to their church many times. She became a Christian. Christine, and the other children, were glad they had prayed and shared information about Jesus with so many people in their neighborhood.

Play “What Can Fly?”

Name animals, birds, fish, and insects. When you name a creature that can fly, kids flap their arms like wings. Otherwise, kids stay still. Include locusts in the list of insects that can fly. After several rounds, invite kids to call out other kinds of moving creatures.

- Follow church security rules for dismissing children.

**I knew that You are
a merciful and
compassionate God,
slow to become angry,
rich in faithful love.**

Jonah 4:2



**I knew that thou art
a gracious God, and
merciful, slow to
anger, and of great
kindness.**

Jonah 4:2



**I knew that you are
a gracious God and
merciful, slow to anger
and abounding in
steadfast love.**

Jonah 4:2



**I knew that you are
a gracious and
compassionate God,
slow to anger and
abounding in love.**

Jonah 4:2



**I know that You are a
gracious and merciful
God, slow to anger
and abundant in
lovingkindness.**

Jonah 4:2



**What is God's desire
for people?**

**God wants all people
to be saved.**



