
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.

Older Kids BIBLE STUDY 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 repent and be saved.

Key Passage: Jonah 4:2

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

Small Group Opening

Welcome time

Activity page (5 minutes)

Session starter (10 minutes)

Large Group Leader

Countdown

Introduce the session (2 minutes)

Timeline map (1 minute)

Big picture question (3 minutes)

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

The Gospel: God’s Plan for Me (optional)

Key passage (5 minutes)

Discussion starter video (3 minutes)

Sing (4 minutes)

Prayer (2 minutes)

Small Group Leader

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Activity choice (10 minutes)

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

The BIBLE STORY

Joel, Prophet to Judah

Joel 1–3

Joel was a prophet. God gave Joel a message to tell to the people in Judah. Some bad things had been happening in Judah. **There was a drought—no rain fell for a long time. The people ignored God. They did not obey God’s commands. God had told His people many years before what would happen if they didn’t obey Him. One of the things God said would happen was this: “You will plant many seeds in your field, but the locusts will eat the plants.”**

The land of Judah had been attacked by a great swarm of locusts! The locusts ate the plants in Judah. When the first swarm of locusts left, more locusts came! They ate up any plants that were left. When they left, more locusts came! **Four swarms of locusts came to Judah, and they destroyed everything in the fields.** They ate up the plants for growing grapes and grain. The apple trees, fig trees, and pomegranate trees died.

“Listen up!” Joel said. “Has this ever happened to you before?” No, there had never been a swarm of locusts like this in Judah before. But God had sent locusts before somewhere else. Some of the people might have remembered hearing the stories about God’s people in Egypt. When God led Moses to rescue His people, God sent locusts to punish the Egyptians for their sin. Now God was judging the people of Judah for their sin.

Joel told the people to be sad for their sin. The people of Judah needed to ask God to forgive them. “Gather all the people and cry out to God,” Joel said. “God’s day of greater judgment is coming, and it will be terrible!”

Next, Joel told the people what that terrible day would be like. **Joel said that God was going to send an army to Judah.** This was very bad news! **The army would take over Judah.** The army would be great and strong. Everything would be burned up by fire. Everyone would be very afraid. **No one would be able to survive their attack!**

“Turn back to God before it is too late!” Joel said. “God is gracious

and merciful. He does not get angry easily. God is kind, and He would rather forgive you than punish you. Turn from your sin, and maybe God will bless you!”

Now God’s message for His people in Judah came with hope for the future. In the end, it would be good! “I will send rain. The plants will grow, and the animals will have water to drink,” God said. “Then I will give my Spirit to everyone. Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

“I will bring Judah and Jerusalem back together, but a final day of judgment is coming,” God explained. “I will judge those who turn away from Me. All of the enemies who hurt My people will pay for what they did. I will punish them, but you will be safe. You will know that I am your God. I will forgive those who turn from their sin, and I will be with My people forever.”

Christ Connection: God used locusts and drought to get Judah’s attention. They had turned from God, and the prophet Joel called them to repent. Like Joel, Jesus calls sinners to repent. Jesus died and was resurrected so repentant people could experience forgiveness. (Luke 24:46-47)

Small Group OPENING

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 repent and be saved.

Key Passage: Jonah 4:2

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

Welcome time

- Small Group Visual Pack

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group.

Review the books of the Minor Prophets. Remind kids that these books of the Bible are not arranged chronologically. Review the timeline using the small group visual pack.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- “How Many Locusts?” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils

Challenge kids to find all of the locusts in the activity page “How Many Locusts?” The total number of locusts is 24.

Say • Locusts are a part of today’s Bible story. In our story, there were so many locusts that they couldn’t be counted. What do locusts eat?

Session starter (10 minutes)

Option 1: All together challenge

Tape squares of various sizes on the floor. Challenge kids to get everyone inside one of the squares simultaneously. Allow kids to try each square.

Say • Who had to be inside the square to complete the



- tape

challenge? (*everyone, all of the group*)

- In our Bible study today, we are going to talk about something God wants all people to do.

Option 2: Cover it up

- contact plastic
- circle stickers
- construction paper scraps or pieces
- scissors

Provide each kid with a heart-shaped piece of contact plastic (approximately 4 inches by 6 inches). Help kids peel off the paper backing and stick a circle sticker to the center of the contact plastic. Challenge boys and girls to completely hide the circle by covering it with scraps of construction paper. Encourage kids to completely cover the sticky surface with colorful scraps of paper.

Say • Who did the best job of hiding the circle? Let me see. Hold up the contact plastic with the paper scrap side facing you and the circle facing the kids.

Say • Good work. I don't see the circle at all. What does everyone think? Anyone see the circle?

Ham it up as time allows.

Say • So what was the problem? Why could you see the circle? The other side was clear or transparent. In our Bible story today, God had a message for a group of people. He wanted them to return to Him with all of their hearts. He sees everything. He knows if we love something other than Him. We can't hide from Him.

- Why is it so hard for people (including us) to only love God?
- Why do we try to hide or cover up our sin from God when we know He sees and knows all we do?

Transition to large group

Large Group LEADER

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 repent and be saved.

Key Passage: Jonah 4:2

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

Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (2 minutes)

• map of the stars

[Large Group Leader enters studying a map of the stars.]

Leader • Welcome! I found this map of the night sky in the planetarium’s office. It is so interesting. Here is the constellation of Pleiades that Amos mentioned. And here is Orion. You know, this map really helps me get a better picture of all the stars God created. I can’t always see all of these stars and constellations, but the map reassures me they are there.

The prophets are a little like that. They provided a map of what was going to happen to the people of Israel and Judah and other nations. They said, “You can’t see it now, but one day an army will come. You can’t see Him now, but one day a Savior will come. You can’t see God, but He sees everything you are doing. He is here, and He will be gracious and merciful if you repent.” Are you ready to discover what prophet we will study today? Let’s go to the timeline map!

Timeline map (1 minute)

Indicate each prophet on the timeline map as you review.

Leader • The last few weeks, we have looked at some of the prophets. The prophets we talked about spoke primarily to two groups of people. Does anyone know who those two groups were? Amos and Hosea were prophets of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Jonah was a prophet who spoke to the people of Nineveh. The Bible tells us that Jonah was a prophet to the Northern Kingdom of Israel too. Today our prophet is Joel. Can anyone guess whom Joel spoke to? It wasn't the Northern Kingdom. Joel was a prophet to the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

Big picture question (3 minutes)

Leader • Who remembers last week's big picture question and answer? *How can we be forgiven? God forgives people when they repent.* Today our big picture question is, *What is God's desire for people?*

Has anyone ever thought about that question before? It's an intriguing question. Do I have some volunteers who want to guess at the answer?

Select four or five kids to guess. Don't reveal if anyone guesses correctly or if they guess incorrectly.

Leader • I heard some good guesses. We will have to listen to our Bible story to discover if anyone guessed correctly.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Joel 1 and tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video "Joel, Prophet to Judah."

Leader • The Southern Kingdom of Judah was suffering. They experienced a drought and swarms of locusts.

- "Joel, Prophet to Judah" video
- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Bible Story Picture Slide or Poster
- Big Picture Question Slide or Poster

The crops were devastated. Joel brought the people of the Southern Kingdom a message. He explained that the drought and the locusts were consequences of the people's sin.

Joel said that the people needed to repent of their sin. They needed to ask for God's forgiveness. Joel warned the people of the Southern Kingdom that more consequences were coming for their sin. Joel called it the "Day of the Lord." An army would come and destroy the Southern Kingdom.

Joel called for the people to repent. He reminded the people that God is gracious. God is merciful. Joel reminded the people that God wanted to forgive them. God wanted the people to ask for forgiveness.

Like many of the prophets, Joel's message ended with hope. God promised that anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. He promised that the land would have rain again one day. His people would be safe during the final day of judgment. God promised to forgive all who repented and to be with His people forever.

Our big picture question was, ***What is God's desire for people?*** The answer is, ***God wants all people to repent and be saved.*** God wants people to repent. He wants to forgive people. That is why He sent Jesus to rescue us from sin. ***What is God's desire for people? God wants all people to repent and be saved.***

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Using Scripture and the guide provided, explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Tell kids how they can respond, and provide counselors to speak with each kid individually. Guide counselors to use open-ended questions to allow kids to determine the direction of the conversation.

- Key Passage Slide or Poster
- “I Know” song

Key passage (5 minutes)

Leader • Now it is time to review our unit key passage.

Raise your hand if you can say the passage from memory.

Great work! OK, I need two volunteers.

Select two volunteers. Form two groups and assign each volunteer one of the groups to lead. The first group will stand and say the first line of the key passage. The second group will stand and read the second line of the key passage. Continue alternating until the entire passage has been read. Challenge the groups to say the key passage without any help from the poster or a leader.

Leader • What has this key passage taught you?

Choose a few kids to respond before leading the group to sing “I Know.”

- “Unit 14 Session 4” discussion starter video

Discussion starter video (3 minutes)

Leader • Raise your hand if you have ever ignored a warning someone gave you. I see some hands. When we study the prophets, we are tempted to think, *How could the Israelites just ignore the warnings from the prophets God sent?* But they did. Check out this video.

Show the “Unit 14 Session 4” video.

Leader • Is it easy to ignore a warning? Why do you think the Israelites ignored the warnings from the prophets?

- “Live Like That” song

Sing (4 minutes)

Leader • Our theme song describes a desire to follow God. Did the Southern Kingdom of Judah have that desire? No. They had turned from loving only God. They sinned and were not sorry. They did not love God with all of their hearts. Think about whether or not you love God with all of your heart as we sing our theme song.

Lead girls and boys to sing “Live Like That.”

Prayer (2 minutes)

Leader • Tell me again what our big picture question and answer is. *What is God's desire for people? God wants all people to repent and be saved.* We have a special role as believers to share the gospel with people. This week pray specifically for someone you know who has not repented and trusted in Jesus as his or her Savior and Lord. Spend some extra time in prayer for that person, and if you have an opportunity to talk about Jesus with him or her, I hope you will.

After I close in prayer, watch your small group leader for your group's turn to walk to your small group. Close the group, in prayer praising God for sending Jesus so that people can repent of their sins and be saved.

Dismiss to small groups

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.

God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.

We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)

God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.

Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.

We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus.

Small Group LEADER

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 repent and be saved.

Key Passage: Jonah 4:2

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

- paper, 10–12 pieces
- marker
- scissors
- Key Passage Poster

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

Print five or six words of the key passage on each piece of paper. Cut each paper in half and each half in half again. Each paper should be in four pieces. Scramble the pieces and allow kids to search for the first part of the passage.

When they have reassembled the first paper, kids may work on assembling the second paper. Challenge kids to complete the activity without referencing the key passage poster.

Say • Which statement about God in our key passage is your favorite? Why?

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Provide kids with a salty snack to eat while you review today’s Bible story. Briefly review or retell the story using the bolded text of the Bible story script as your guide.

Say • How was your snack? Is anyone thirsty? The Southern Kingdom experienced a drought, but they still didn’t repent. They experienced four swarms of locusts, and they didn’t repent. Judah would face the consequences of their sin. We will learn more about the consequences in the coming weeks.

- Allergy Alert
- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Small Group Visual Pack
- popcorn, crackers, or other salty snack
- water

Share some water with the boys and girls.

- ***What is God's desire for people? God wants all people to repent and be saved.***
- ***Who calls sinners to repent? (Jesus calls sinners to repent. Jesus died and was resurrected so repentant people could experience forgiveness.)***

If you choose to review with boys and girls how to become a Christian, explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

- **God rules.** God created and is in charge of everything. (Gen. 1:1; Rev. 4:11; Col. 1:16-17)
- **We sinned.** Since Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Rom. 3:23; 6:23)
- **God provided.** God sent His Son, Jesus, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. (John 3:16; Eph. 2:8-9)
- **Jesus gives.** Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again so we can be welcomed into God's family. (Rom. 5:8; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 3:18)
- **We respond.** Believe that Jesus alone saves you. Repent. Tell God that your faith is in Jesus. (Rom. 10:9-10,13)

Review the unit using the timeline in the small group visual pack.

Activity choice (10 minutes)

Option 1: Harvesting clothespins

Form two teams. Lead one team to stand in the hallway or with their eyes closed while the other team hides 20-25 clothespins. Time the team to see how long it takes them to locate all of the clothespins. As they search, emphasize that the group must find *all* of the clothespins. After all of the



- clothespins, 20-25
- permanent markers

clothespins are found, guide teams to switch roles and play again.

Say • How many clothespins did you have to find—all of them or just some of them?

• ***What is God's desire for people? God wants all people to repent and be saved.***

• Who calls sinners to repent? (*Jesus calls sinners to repent. Jesus died and was resurrected so repentant people could experience forgiveness.*)

Distribute one clothespin to each kid. Ask kids to write the initials or name of someone who is not a Christian on their clothespins. Urge kids to take the clothespin home and place it where they will see it at least once a day as a reminder to pray for that person.

Option 2: Clue review

- paper, 20 pieces
- marker
- beanbag

Option: Write each statement on a slip of paper and lead each team to draw it.

Write each answer and its point value on a piece of paper.

- 10 point answers: Amos, Joel, Jonah, Gomer
- 15 point answers: plumb line, plant
- 25 point answers: Return to the Lord, In 40 days you will be destroyed
- 50 point answers: Jezreel, Amaziah

Create two or three teams. Tape the possible answers on a wall or place them on the floor. Explain that you will alternate giving each team a clue. If a kid answers the clue correctly, his team earns the assigned points. Allow him to toss the beanbag and attempt to hit or land on the correct answer for five extra bonus points.

1. He was a prophet to Israel who farmed and cared for sheep. (*Amos, Amos 7:14-15*)
2. He was a prophet to Nineveh. (*Jonah, Jonah 1:1-2*)
3. He was a prophet to Judah. (*Joel, Joel 3:1*)
4. One of Amos's visions was about this item. (*plumb line, Amos 7:7*)

5. She was Hosea's wife. (*Gomer, Hosea 1:3*)
6. This was attacked by a worm. (*plant, Jonah 4:7*)
7. This was Joel's message. (*Return to the Lord, Joel 2:13*)
8. This was Jonah's message. (*In 40 days you will be destroyed, Jonah 3:4*)
9. He was a child of Gomer and Hosea. (*Jezreel, Hosea 1:3-4*)
10. He was a sinful priest who disagreed with Amos. (*Amaziah, Amos 7:10-14*)

Say • *What is God's desire for people? God wants all people to repent and be saved.*

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Invite kids to write or draw their responses to the following prompts.

- Say** • List some things that you want. Why do you want them? What would you give up for them?
- Do you want your family and friends to know Jesus as Savior and Lord as much as you want those things you listed? Why or why not?

Provide kids with a few moments to journal quietly. You may suggest that kids spread out across the room or small group area to allow kids space and freedom from friends who distract. Encourage kids to think about the big picture question and answer while you pray.

Close the group in prayer. Thank God for His desire for all people to repent and be saved. Thank Him for sending Jesus to rescue people from sin.

As time allows, lead kids to review the Christ Connection by completing the activity page "Double Code."

- pencils
- journals
- Bibles
- Journal Page, 1 per kid
- "Double Code" activity page, 1 per kid

Great Prophets

Key Passage: Jonah 4:2

Session 1: Amos, Prophet to Israel
Amos 1–9

Session 2: Hosea, Prophet to Israel
Hosea 1–14

Session 3: Jonah, Prophet to Nineveh
Jonah 1–4

Session 4: Joel, Prophet to Judah
Joel 1–3



**I know that You are a
gracious and merciful God,
slow to anger and abundant
in lovingkindness, One who
relents from doing harm.**

Jonah 4:2

**I knew that you are a
gracious and compassionate
God, slow to anger and
abounding in love, a God
who relents from
sending calamity.**

Jonah 4:2



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

Jonah 4:2



**I knew that You are a
merciful and compassionate
God, slow to become angry,
rich in faithful love, and
One who relents from
sending disaster.**

Jonah 4:2



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

Jonah 4:2





What is God's desire for people?

God wants all people to repent and be saved.

How Many Locusts?

Instructions: Circle all the locusts you can find in the picture.



Double Code

Instructions: Use the double code to complete the sentence about Jesus.

Jesus died and was

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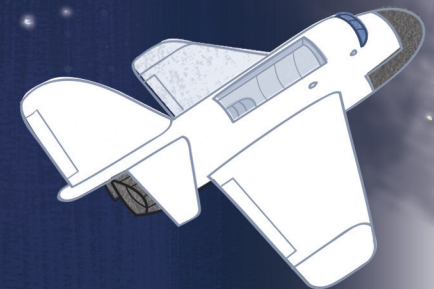
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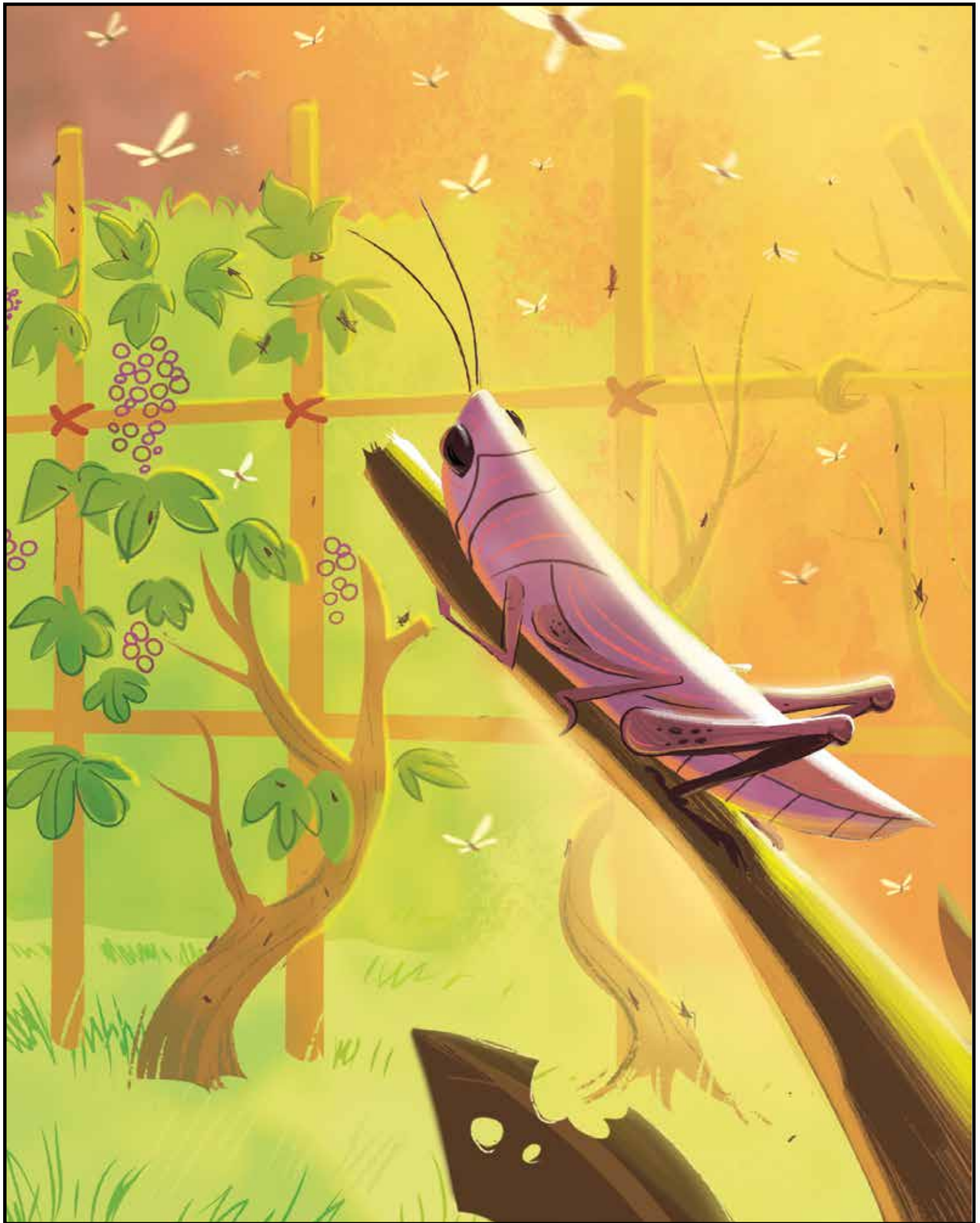
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the

GOSPEL

GOD'S PLAN FOR ME

gos·pel – *noun*. good news. the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation.



GOD RULES.

The Bible tells us God created everything, including you and me, and He is in charge of everything. *Genesis 1:1; Revelation 4:11; Colossians 1:16-17*



WE SINNED.

We all choose to disobey God. The Bible calls this sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. *Romans 3:23; 6:23*



GOD PROVIDED.

God sent Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. *John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9*



JESUS GIVES.

He lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! *Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18; Ephesians 2:8-9*



WE RESPOND.

Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus. *John 14:6; Romans 10:9-10, 13*

ALLERGY ALERT



Today we will be tasting/
touching/sniffing:

Please notify the leader
if your child should not
participate.

Instructions: Print this poster. You may laminate it and reuse it throughout the quarter. Use a dry erase marker to fill in the necessary information. Display the poster where parents and kids can see it before class.