
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.

Kids 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 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.

Kids Worship

Countdown

Introduce the session (2 minutes)

Timeline map (1 minute)

Key passage (5 minutes)

Group game (10 minutes)

Big picture question (1 minute)

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

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

Group demonstration (5 minutes)

Sing and offering (3–12 minutes)

Review (4 minutes)

Missions (6 minutes)

Announcements (2 minutes)

Prayer (2 minutes)

Additional idea

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)

Kids Worship 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 worship time begins.

Introduce the session (2 minutes)

- magnifying glass
- plastic bug

[Leader enters carrying a magnifying glass and a plastic bug.]

Leader • *[examining the bug]* Well, hello there! How are you today? So glad you’re back! I’ve been kinda busy ... er ... *[looks down at bug]* Well, you see, lately I have been expanding my interests from planetary science to planetary science and migratory insects. In other words, I want to study bugs and the solar system!

At the Planetary Science Scientific Committee meeting last week, the president encouraged me to study insects. I’m not really sure why because insects do not live in space, but I’m following orders! I have looked at lots of books about insects. I’m particularly interested in locusts. Did you know that locusts travel together in groups that look like clouds? When they land in a particular area, they devastate the land by eating all the plants in sight! Locusts look very similar to grasshoppers. Wait, I think

there are locusts in today's story! Yes, there are! I can't wait to tell you more. Before I do, let's take a look at our timeline map.

Timeline map (1 minute)

• Timeline Map

Leader • We have studied three different minor prophets the last few weeks. Can anyone name them? (*Amos, Hosea, Jonah*) There are 12 total minor prophets. Does anyone know why they are called that? They are just as important as other prophets. It's because their stories are shorter. In your Bible, they are usually only a few chapters.

Amos and Hosea had special messages for Israel, or the Northern Kingdom. They both warned the people that their sin would be punished. Amos talked about how ***God is gracious and patient, but He will punish sin.*** Hosea didn't just warn the people of their sin, he showed the people how much God loved them by loving someone who didn't love him back. ***How does Hosea remind us of God? God still loves us even when we are unfaithful.***

Last week, we learned about a prophet named Jonah. God told Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh and tell the Ninevites to repent and turn from their evil ways. Jonah did not want to go, so he ran away. When Jonah finally got to Nineveh, he gave the Ninevites God's message. The Ninevites listened to Jonah and repented from their sins. This made Jonah very angry! He did not like the Ninevites, and he did not want them to repent. But God was happy, because God wants people to repent of their sins. ***How can we be forgiven? God forgives people when they repent.*** This week we will learn about another prophet sent by God. He's also another minor prophet. His name is Joel.

- "I Know" song
- Key Passage Slide or Poster

Key passage (5 minutes)

Leader • This is our last week to memorize the key passage! Does anyone know the key passage well enough to say it without being able to see the words? I like memorizing key passages from the Bible; it reminds me of memorizing fun facts about the solar system (and locusts)! Except, knowing God's Word is always more important. Let's see if you can say our key passage from memory.

Guide kids to say the key passage from memory. Form groups based on where the kids are seated. Name the first group Locust Cloud One, the next group Locust Cloud Two, and so forth. Allow the groups to compete to see who can say the key passage from memory the loudest.

Group game (10 minutes)

Leap like a locust

- handkerchiefs
- cotton balls

Spread handkerchiefs and cotton balls at the front of the room. You can also tape squares and use any other small item. Choose three or four volunteers. Give them 30 seconds to collect as many cotton balls as possible. The only rules are that they must hop from square to square and can't hop to a square with another kid on it. If a player comes off a square at any time, she must toss all the cotton balls she has collected back on the floor. Repeat as time allows.

Leader • Great job leaping like locusts! You looked just like the locusts I saw on my favorite nature show on TV yesterday! While it is fun to leap like a locust, it certainly isn't fun when a swarm of locusts fly through your farm eating everything in sight. Locusts can eat the equivalent of their body weight in a day. That's OK if you've just got one locust. But the largest cloud of locusts ever recorded

was 12.5 trillion locusts in one swarm! I wonder how they counted them all. A swarm like that could cause a lot of devastation in a short amount of time.

Big picture question (1 minute)

Leader • Hmm ... if God sent locusts to His people, He really wanted to get their attention about something. Speaking of getting our attention, it's time for something we get to do each week. It's the big picture question for today's Bible story. Our big picture question is, ***What is God's desire for people?*** Let's say the big picture question together! ***What is God's desire for people?*** Be sure to keep your eyes and ears open during our story for the answer to this question!

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Joel 1. Tell the Bible story in your own words using the script provided, or watch the Bible story video "Joel, Prophet to Judah."

Leader • We've talked about the sin of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, but it turns out that the people of Judah—the Southern Kingdom—were also disobeying God. Unlike Israel, Judah had some good kings who followed God. However, they had several bad kings that led them to sin, too.

Many years before God sent the prophet Joel to them, God had told the people of Judah that He would let locusts destroy their crops if they did not obey Him. Sure enough, they did not obey. The locusts ate everything in Judah. The people had no food to eat! These locusts probably reminded the people of the locusts God sent to Egypt during the time of Moses. God was punishing Judah like He had punished Egypt.

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

Joel told the people of Judah to repent and turn from their evil ways. He also said that God would send a strong army to burn Judah. No one would survive.

Even though God promised to do these things, God is a gracious and kind God. He did not want to punish the people of Judah. Joel told the people that if they repented from their sins, God would send rain to the land and forgive the people. Hey, I think we have found the answer to our big picture question! ***What is God's desire for people? God wants all people to repent and be saved.*** Let's say it together one more time. ***What is God's desire for people? God wants all people to repent and be saved.***

Joel called for the people of Judah to repent. Like Joel, Jesus calls for each of us to repent. When we repent, God forgives and accepts us because of what Jesus did. Jesus lived a perfect life, died, and then rose again. He took the punishment for our sins.

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

Use your Bible and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Encourage kids to ask their parents or other adults any questions they have about becoming a Christian. Anytime you share how to become a Christian in a large group environment, try to have counselors available to meet one-on-one with kids. Make sure kids know who they can talk to and when they can talk.

- sugar cookies, 1 per kid
- cookie decorating supplies (frosting, sprinkles, small candies)
- ziplock bags, 1 per kid
- construction paper and markers (optional)
- Allergy Alert

Group demonstration (5 minutes)

Leader • Joel knew that God is a very gracious God. God gives forgiveness freely as a gift, even when we don't deserve it. Today, we are going to decorate cookies to give as gifts. You may give this gift to a teacher, friend, parent, or sibling. When you give this gift, remember that

God gives us the gift of forgiveness every day.
Guide kids to decorate their cookies with icing and sprinkles. Place them in ziplock bags to take home.

Option: You may choose to let kids make cards with construction paper and markers to give along with the cookies. You may also choose to give each kid two cookies. They may decorate both cookies, giving one as a gift and eating the other as a snack.

Sing and offering (3–12 minutes)

• “Live Like That” song
and other songs of
your choice

Leader • I am feeling very thankful today. God has given us a beautiful world to live in with a beautiful solar system around us just waiting to be explored! Not to mention all the animals and insects, like locusts. He is amazing! He loves us, and He forgives us when we repent. Let’s praise God for His many blessings.

Sing “Live Like That” or “Unchanging.” Choose other songs as time allows. You may also collect the offering.

Song suggestions:

- “Live Like That” (unit theme song)
- “Day After Day”
- “Lord, I Need You”
- “Lifesong”
- “Unchanging”

Review (4 minutes)

Invite the kids to answer the following questions:

1. How did God punish the people of Judah? (*He sent locusts to eat all their food, Joel 1:4*)
2. Name another time in the Bible when God sent locusts as punishment. (*during the ten plagues of Egypt, Exodus 10:4-6*)
3. What did God say would happen if the people of

Judah continued to sin? (*A great army would take over Judah, Joel 2:2*)

4. What did God tell the people of Judah to do?
(*Repent and turn from their sins because God is gracious. He would forgive them; Joel 2:13*)
5. ***What is God's desire for people? God wants all people to repent and be saved.***
6. Who calls us to repent? (*Jesus calls sinners to repent. Jesus died and was resurrected so repentant people could experience forgiveness. [Luke 24:46-47]*)

Missions (6 minutes)

• "Keith Carpenter—
Spiritual Color"
missions video

Leader • We have spent a lot of time talking about the prophets. They spoke special messages from God. Did you know that you have a special message to share too? That's right! God has given each and every person a special set of gifts and talents that we can use to glorify Him and tell others about His goodness and love. God wants all people to be saved, and He can use our unique skill sets to reach different people groups. Let's say the big picture question and answer together. ***What is God's desire for people? God wants all people to repent and be saved.*** Here's another story of someone using their talents and gifts to share the gospel in a very unique and colorful way.

Watch the missions video "Keith Carpenter—Spiritual Color."

Leader • Let's always remember to pray for people like Keith Carpenter, who is using his gifts and talents to share Jesus with others. Let's also pray that God will give us opportunities to use our gifts and talents to tell others about Jesus.

Announcements (2 minutes)

Leader • It's been fun learning about some of the minor prophets that God sent to tell His message. God sent Amos, Hosea, Jonah, and Joel to tell His people to repent, and to remind them of His faithful love. Well, it's almost time to head out of here! Before you go, though, I have a few quick announcements.

Make any announcements from your kids' ministry.

Prayer (2 minutes)

Leader • I'm glad I've been able to spend time with you at the planetarium. I won't be here next week because ... *[whispers]* Do you promise to keep it a secret? *[in a loud voice]* I got a job at a planetarium! That's right! I'll be packing my bags next week to take my new post as a planetarium guide and curator! I'm so excited! But don't worry, I won't forget about the locusts! I'm sure I will find plenty of spare time to study them.

Close in prayer.

Dismiss

Additional idea

Locust snack

- celery sticks, 2 per kid
- cream cheese
- raisins, 8 per kid
- hand sanitizer
- Allergy Alert

Post an allergy alert before class so that kids with allergies may opt out if they need to. Invite kids to sanitize their hands. Guide kids to make "locusts on a log." Spread cream cheese on the celery, and then place raisins down the celery in a line.

Leader • Don't the raisins look like little locusts on the celery? These locusts on a log can help us remember that God sent insects to punish the people of Judah. Even though we might not think of insects as a punishment,

they destroyed all of the crops in Judah. Without crops, the people of Judah could not eat. This was a very big problem! If the people of Judah had repented of their sins, God would have forgiven them. He would not have sent the locusts to their land.

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.

**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.**

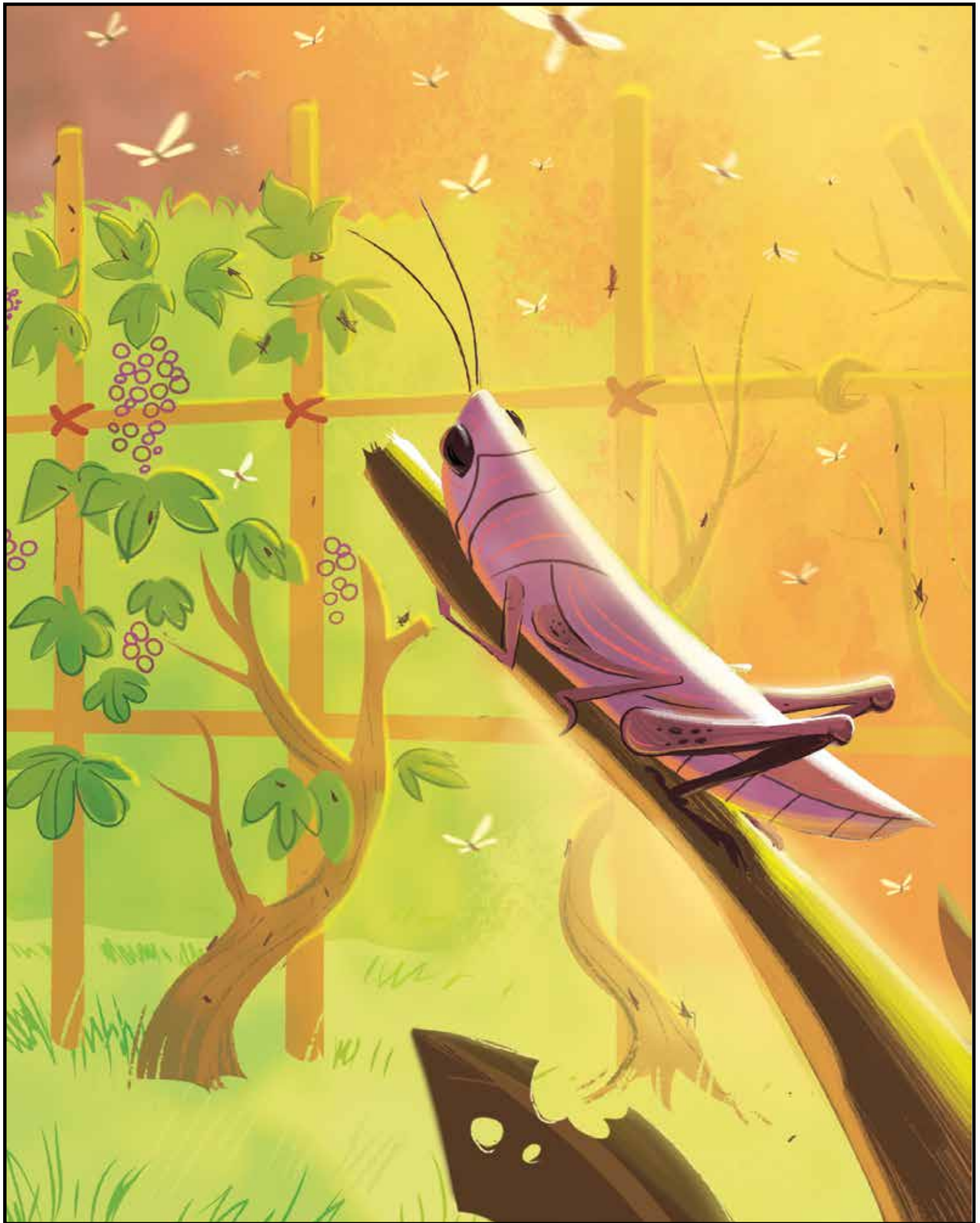
Jonah 4:2





What is God's desire for people?

God wants all people to repent and be saved.



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.