
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.

Younger 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 (1 minute)

Timeline map (1 minute)

Big picture question (1 minute)

Sing (5 minutes)

Key passage (4 minutes)

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Discussion starter video (3 minutes)

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

Prayer (5 minutes)

Small Group Leader

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

Bible story review (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

Arriving Activity: Letter guess

- dry erase board and markers
- large sheet of paper and markers (optional)
- Bibles, 1 per kid

As kids arrive, use a dry erase board or large sheet of paper to play a game where the kids guess letters until they can solve a puzzle. Each puzzle will be the name of a minor prophet. Explain the game to the kids and show them where to find the Minor Prophets in the Bible. Draw a blank on the board or paper for each letter. When a kid guesses one of the letters in the word, write it in the correct blank. The goal is to be the first kid to identify the prophet’s name.

Say • We will be talking about another minor prophet today. Who would like to guess which one? The prophet in today’s story is named Joel.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- “Price of Sin” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils

Guide boys and girls to complete the activity page.

Say • What image jumped out when you finished the dot-to-dot? It’s a grasshopper! Today, we will hear about a bug that’s a member of the grasshopper family but can cause lots of problems.



- beanbag or paper wad

Session starter (10 minutes)

Option 1: Locust cloud

Invite the kids to form a large circle. Place a beanbag or paper wad in the middle of the circle. Encourage kids to pretend that the item in the middle of the circle is food and the kids are locusts. Assign each kid a number, making sure that you've assigned each number to two kids in the circle. Call out "swarm" and then a direction, left or right. The kids must then move by jumping in that direction. At any time, call out an assigned number. Explain that the first kid with that number to run and grab the "food" in the middle of the circle is the winner.

Say • When locusts travel as a group, they're called a swarm or cloud of locusts. They attack and eat any kind of plant. God's people dealt with more than one of these locust clouds in today's Bible story. We'll find out why.

Option 2: Green foods

- variety of green foods
- plates
- paper towels or napkins
- Allergy Alert

Provide each kid with three or four green food items on a plate or paper towel. Consider broccoli, celery, lettuce, snap peas, apples, and even candy items. Try to have at least one item that most kids will not eat, like the first four mentioned. Invite them to enjoy their snacks.

Say • What did the items you ate have in common? That's right! They are all green. How many of you ate each item? Today we will learn about an insect called a locust that ate all the plants in an entire nation! We'll even find out why.

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 (1 minute)

• calculator

[Large group leader enters with a calculator.]

Leader • Let’s see! I counted 34 above me, 144 to my left, 167 to my right. Wait, was that 168 to my right? Oh, hey there! I’ve been trying to count the stars in the sky. Have you ever tried to do that? It’s impossible! There are so many, and they are everywhere. This calculator does me no good because I lose my place every time I look away. See, I did it again.

This is a good point to stop and remember a story from the Bible where something else that you wouldn’t be able to count attacked Judah, or the Southern Kingdom. They are called locusts. Basically, a locust is a grasshopper that flies and can form large groups in the millions, covering miles at a time! They eat any plant in sight. The bugs attacked for a reason, so God sent someone to tell the people of Judah why it happened.

Timeline map (1 minute)

Leader • I don't want to get too far ahead of myself. Let's take a moment to look back on the last few weeks. Who are some of the minor prophets we've talked about? (*Amos, Hosea, Jonah*) These minor prophets had big jobs. They were sent to warn people about their sins.

God sent Amos and Hosea to Israel. They told the people that destruction was coming if the Israelites didn't start following God again. What did we learn from Amos?

God is gracious and patient, but He will punish sin.

Hosea loved a woman who didn't love him back. God used the message of Hosea's life to share how much He loves His people. We found out that ***God loves us even when we are unfaithful.***

Last week, we found out God didn't just love the people in Israel and Judah. He loves everyone, even the enemies of His people. When Jonah told the people of Nineveh that God was going to destroy them, they repented. God didn't destroy them. He forgave them. ***How can we be forgiven? God forgives people when they repent.***

Big picture question (1 minute)

Leader • So far, we have seen prophets sent to Nineveh and Israel or the Northern Kingdom. Israel started evil and never repented. They had one bad king after another. Judah, or the Southern Kingdom, had some bad kings—kings who didn't love and obey God—and some good kings—kings who did love and obey God. God sent Joel to Judah with a message during one of the bad times. Where can we find out more about Joel? That's right! Who has a Bible today?

Does anyone know what time it is? It's time for the big picture question. ***What is God's desire for people?***

Sing (5 minutes)

- “Live Like That” song

Leader • God wants His people to live a life that gives Him glory. We should all strive to live like that.

Sing together “Live Like That.”

Leader • God wants us to obey Him, but there is something God wants even more than good behavior. We’ll find out what in our Bible story.

Key passage (4 minutes)

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

Leader • God sent prophets to warn people because He loves people and wants them to love and obey Him. That reminds me of our key passage.

Show the slide or poster of the unit’s key passage, Jonah 4:2. Lead the boys and girls to read the verse together. Sing together “I Know.”

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

- “Joel, Prophet to Judah” video
- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Bible Story Picture Slide or Poster

Leader • God wants us to love Him and obey Him, but that isn’t the answer to the big picture question for today. So, let’s look at our Bible story. Here’s a reminder of the big picture question. *What is God’s desire for people?*

Show the “Joel, Prophet to Judah” video, or tell the Bible story in your own words using the script provided. For a shorter version of the story, read only the bold text.

Leader • Judah had gone through a terrible drought. That means it didn’t rain. Then, the land was attacked by locusts, likely millions of grasshopper-like insects. These locusts ate the plants that survived the drought. This didn’t just happen once. It happened four times!

God had already warned His people that if they sinned, they would be punished. He even told them that one punishment would be losing their crops, the food they needed to live.

Joel's message was simple and familiar to the people. They needed to repent. Joel told them that if they didn't seek forgiveness, the drought and locusts would be just the start of their problems. An enemy would soon take over.

Just like most of the other prophets, Joel's message ended with a reminder of God's love. The punishment would not last forever. Rain would come again. Joel even said that Judah and Israel would come back together, and God would judge His people's enemies.

God only asked one thing of His people. He asks the same thing of all people. ***What is God's desire for people? God wants all people to repent and be saved.*** This was God's goal each time He punished people. God wanted the people to be sorry for sinning and to love and obey Him. God sent Jesus to die to take the punishment for our sins. We just need to repent and trust Him.

Ask the following questions:

1. Whom did God send to warn the people? (*Joel, Joel 1:1*)
2. What insect did God send to Judah? (*locusts, Joel 1:4*)
3. What did the locusts do? (*ate all the plants, Joel 1:10-11*)
4. Why did God send the locusts? (*because the people of Judah sinned, Joel 2:12-13*)
5. ***What is God's desire for people? God wants all people to repent and be saved.***

Discussion starter video (3 minutes)

• "Unit 14 Session 4"
discussion starter
video

Leader • God often sent someone to warn people that they needed to repent, but many times the people ignored the message. Have you ever ignored something very obvious?

Show the “Unit 14 Session 4” video.

Leader •Have you been told to do something but didn’t listen? Have your parents asked you to clean your room or finish your food, but you didn’t? You probably suffered consequences for your actions. You won’t always be perfect, but your desire should be to please God. *Desire* means to want something. God wants you to repent and be saved. ***What is God’s desire for people? God wants all people to repent and be saved.*** What does *repent* mean? It means stop disobeying God and obey Him.

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

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions. If this is not possible, encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Prayer (5 minutes)

• Big Picture Question
Slide or Poster

Show the big picture question slide or poster.

Leader •It’s time to see who found the answer to the big picture question, ***What is God’s desire for people? God wants all people to repent and be saved.***

Explain that *all* means “all.” Ask the big picture question and invite all the kids to stand as they answer because it’s God’s desire for them, too.

Before transitioning to small group, make any necessary announcements. Lead the kids in prayer. Pray that God will allow the kids to see their need to repent 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.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Slide or Poster
- dry erase board and markers (optional)
- cellophane

Make sure the key passage, Jonah 4:2, is visible for each child, either as the printed poster or written on a dry erase board. Read the verse together.

Say • After studying four minor prophets, we know that God warned His people many times. God is a loving God and wants His people to repent and be saved.

What is God’s desire for people? God wants all people to repent and be saved. We have a Savior who did more than come with a message. He gave His life so we could be forgiven. His name is Jesus.

Form a circle and discuss how locusts make sounds and when several of them are together, the sound can be very loud. Crumple a piece of cellophane to give them an example of what that sound might be like. Invite them to pass the cellophane around and crinkle it as they say the key passage from memory.

Bible story review (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Small Group Visual Pack
- Big Picture Question Slide or Poster

Encourage the kids to find the Book of Joel in their Bibles. Help them as needed.

Say • Joel comes from which division of the Bible? (*Minor Prophets*) Which of the Minor Prophet books have

we studied the last few weeks? (*Amos, Hosea, Jonah, Joel*) Can any of you name some of the other minor prophets? (*Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*)

Use the small group visual pack to show kids where today's Bible story is on the timeline. Review the Bible story using the bold text provided, or summarize the story in your own words. Invite the kids to make their own insect sounds without using their mouths. Remind them that they may only use their hands and feet. They can either rub their hands together, pat their legs, or quickly stomp their feet. You can also assign these parts to three different groups. You can allow them to make the noises while you read the story, or they can make the noises when you say key words like *locusts* or *Joel*.

Say • Like Israel, Judah struggled with sin. God sent Joel to explain that Judah's sin had led to the punishment of a drought and attacks by locusts. Joel warned the people to repent before things got worse and an enemy army came and took over their land.

Joel also promised that the punishment wouldn't last forever, and one day God would rescue His people and punish their enemies. God wanted the people to repent. He still wants people to repent.

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

We need to be rescued too. Jesus died for our sins. When we repent and trust in Him, we are saved.

Show the big picture question slide or poster.

Say • Who knows the answer to the big picture question?

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

Activity choice (10 minutes)

Option 1: Locust leap



- tape
- paper wad
- cards or paper pieces, 12

Tape a line for each minor prophet in biblical order, 12 in all. Place a card or piece of paper with the name beside each line. (*Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*)

Encourage the kids to line up single file behind the first line. Provide a paper wad to the first kid in line, and invite him to toss it and try to hit between the last two lines. Wherever the paper wad lands, he must hop to it, pick it up, and hop back to the first line. Each time he passes a line, he must say the name of the prophet for that line.

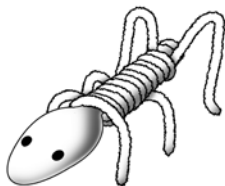
Say • Today we learned about Joel. He told the people in Judah that their sin brought a drought and swarms of locusts. Joel warned the people to repent before things got worse. ***What is God's desire for people? God wants all people to repent and be saved.***

Option 2: Locust spoon

- plastic spoons
- green or brown chenille craft stems, 4 per kid
- green or brown permanent markers
- googly eyes (optional)

Provide each kid with a plastic spoon and four green or brown chenille craft stems. Demonstrate how to wrap two of the chenille stems around and around the handle of the spoon until it is completely covered. Use one stem to create the back legs and the other to create the front legs. If you don't use a green or brown plastic spoon, allow time for kids to color the uncovered part of the spoons with green or brown permanent markers. Color in eyes or glue on googly eyes.

Say • You have your own version of a locust. I hope it reminds you of the price of Judah's sin. We all sin and need to repent. ***What is God's desire for people? God wants all people to repent and be saved.***



- journals
- Journal Page, 1 per kid
- markers or crayons
- Bible Story Coloring Page

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute each child's journal and the journal page provided with this session. Instruct the kids to draw a picture of a plant with locusts on it. Writers can write what it means to repent.

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

Make sure each child puts this week's sheet in the journal, and then collect them. Keep the journals in the classroom so they will be available every week or as often as you wish to use them.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the coloring page provided with this session. Pray, thanking God for giving His people opportunities to repent. Pray for each child by name, asking God to help the kids share God's message of repentance with others.

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.**

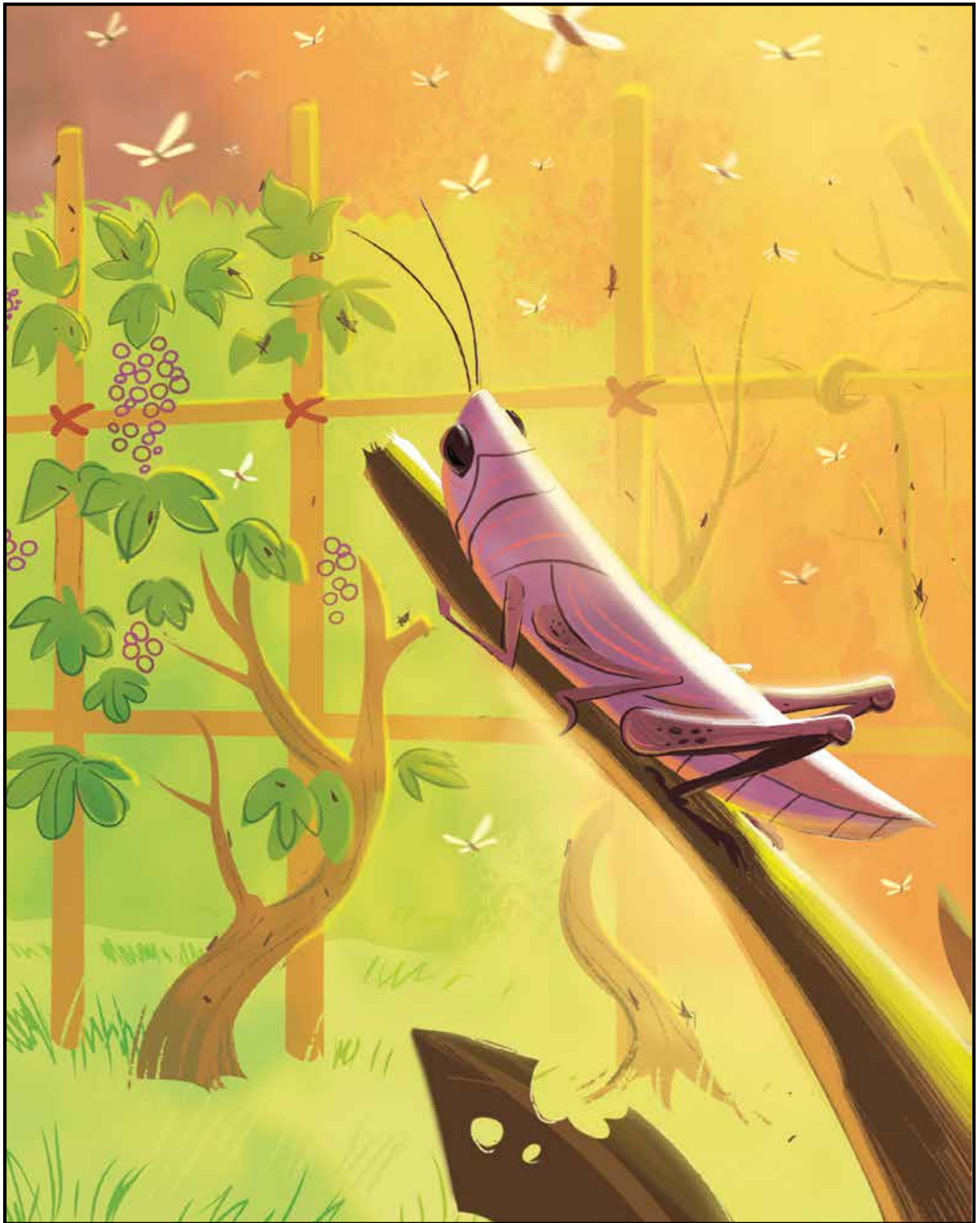


Price of Sin

Instructions: Connect the dots to discover something God used to punish the people of Israel for their sin.







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.