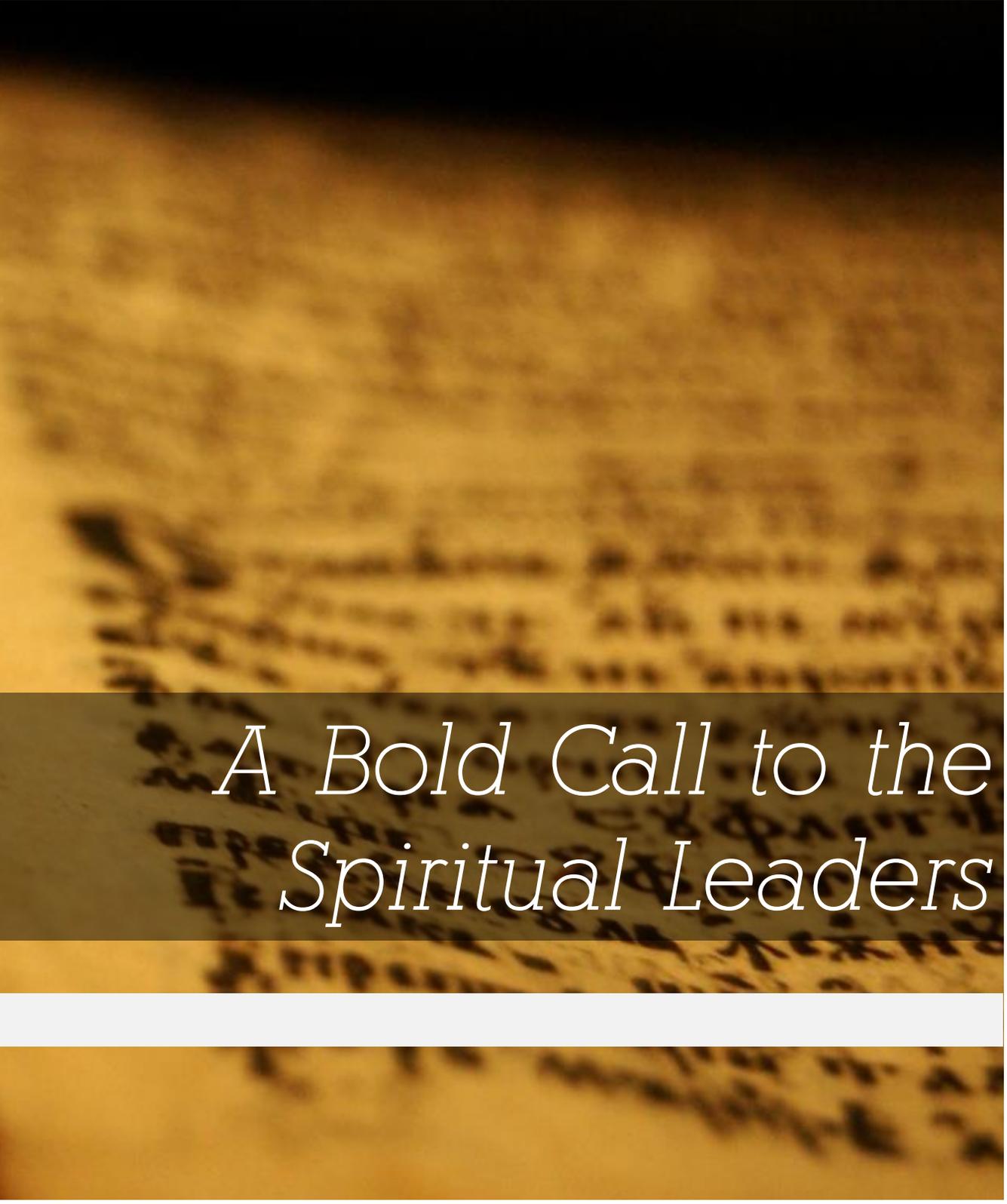


Week 16

Joel 2 Lifestyle



*A Bold Call to the
Spiritual Leaders*

Joel 1:13a *Gird yourselves and lament, you priests..*

Joel is calling the spiritual leaders of the land!

The call to lament, or to cry out to God in desperation for ourselves and on behalf of the land, is first and foremost, addressed to the priests, who were the spiritual leaders of the land. The priests were the ones who ministered to the Lord before the altar. They led the worship ministry. They were the ones who came before the Lord on behalf of the nation of Israel.

The Lord is calling leaders in the body of Christ back to the place of prayer *The real issue and great need of the hour is for spiritual leaders to pray. The primary call of spiritual leaders is firstly to come before the Lord in prayer,* and to have a deep heart connect with the Lord.



That is why in Acts 6, the Apostles raised up people to do the works of ministry, so that they may devote themselves to prayer (Acts 6:4). It is not enough to preach the message. The leaders have to lead by example and live out a lifestyle of prayer.

Joel 1:13a *Gird yourselves and lament, you priests...*

What does the term “Gird yourselves” mean?

You see, in ancient times, the Jewish men wore flowing tunics or robes reaching to their knees.

They would also wear a girdle to hold the robes to the waist. When men needed to work, run or fight, they would tuck the hem of the tunic into the girdle to gain greater freedom and movement.

Thus, girding up the waists represents preparation, vigorous concentration and readiness to do the task at hand.





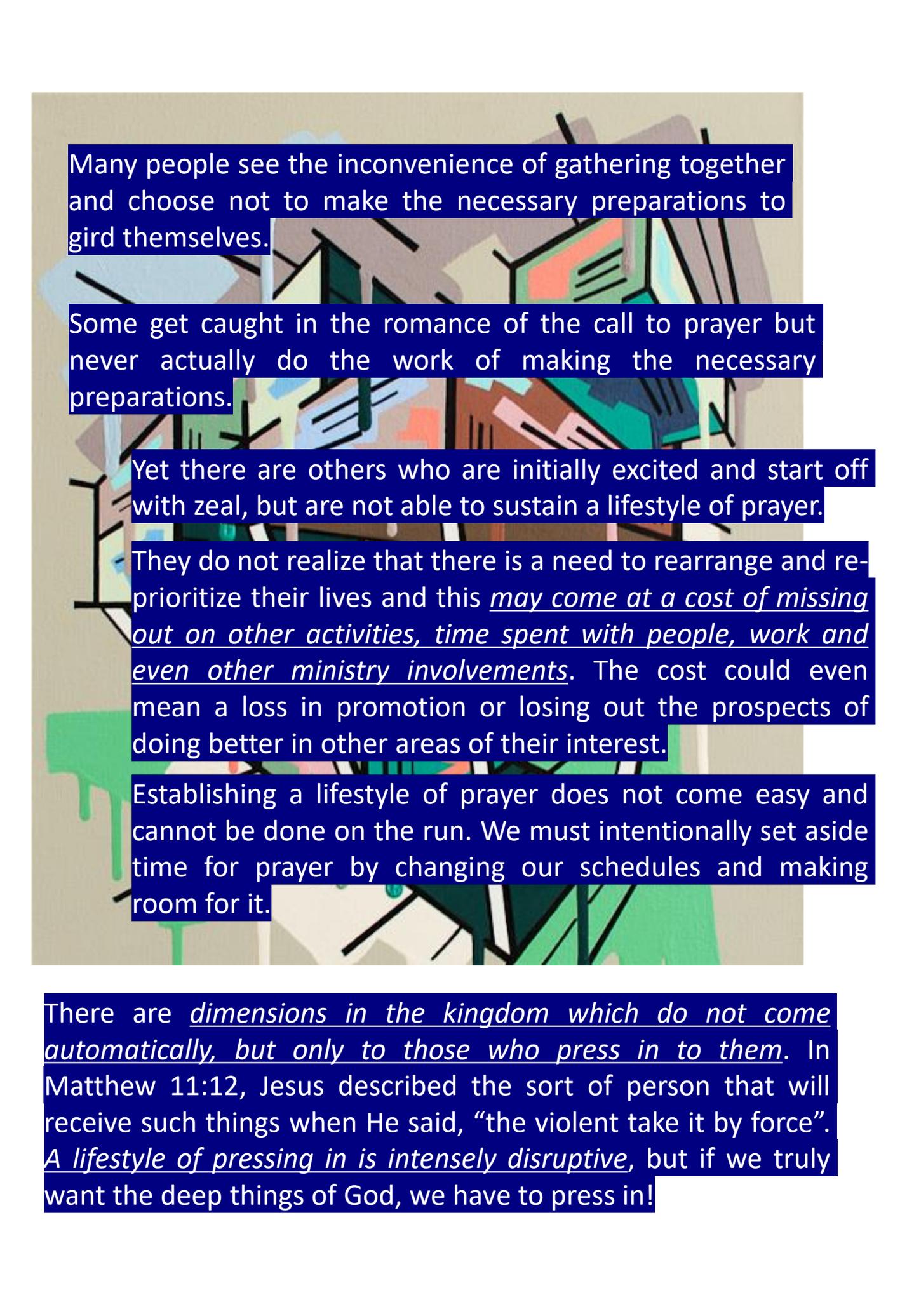
COUNT THE COST

The call to gird oneself involves counting the cost, preparing, getting ready to work or to go for war. More than a call of preparation, it is also a charge to act immediately! There is a need for the leaders to change their schedules, and mobilize their people to come together to pray.

As a body of Christ, *we need a fundamental change in mindset.* Prayer has to become the topmost priority in our ministry. Prayer is work. The ways of God are so simple, yet so offensive to our minds and understanding. God wants us first to talk with Him and understand His heart. Then He will do something.

This exhortation of Joel to “gird ourselves” is a call for all of us to *re-arrange the way that we spend time, money and energy.* It is a call to prepare ourselves not just for occasional moments or meetings for prayer, but to *entrench ourselves deeply into a lifestyle of prayer.*





Many people see the inconvenience of gathering together and choose not to make the necessary preparations to gird themselves.

Some get caught in the romance of the call to prayer but never actually do the work of making the necessary preparations.

Yet there are others who are initially excited and start off with zeal, but are not able to sustain a lifestyle of prayer.

They do not realize that there is a need to rearrange and re-prioritize their lives and this may come at a cost of missing out on other activities, time spent with people, work and even other ministry involvements. The cost could even mean a loss in promotion or losing out the prospects of doing better in other areas of their interest.

Establishing a lifestyle of prayer does not come easy and cannot be done on the run. We must intentionally set aside time for prayer by changing our schedules and making room for it.

There are dimensions in the kingdom which do not come automatically, but only to those who press in to them. In Matthew 11:12, Jesus described the sort of person that will receive such things when He said, “the violent take it by force”. A lifestyle of pressing in is intensely disruptive, but if we truly want the deep things of God, we have to press in!

The decree to “gird ourselves” requires us to strengthen our resolve and to follow through. It is easy to engage when we go through exciting times of prayer, but there will often be times when our hearts are dull and our bodies want to give up. In those moments, the Lord wants us to remain steady in the place of prayer. The same way Jesus exhorted His disciples He is asking us now, “Could you not watch with Me...” (Matthew 26:40).



God is first inviting the spiritual leaders, and through them, the body of Christ, to develop a lifestyle of prayer, and to labour at coming before Him day by day in intercession. As we seek to live out this lifestyle of prayer, we must posture our hearts such that we will not be thrown off by delays in answered prayers, tiredness, discouragement or simply hitting the wall of spiritual boredom that will set in on us.

Gracious God+

*Isaiah 30:18-19 says,
“...the Lord will wait, that He may be
gracious to you... He will be very
gracious to you at the sound of
your cry...” Isaiah 30:18-19*

The Holy One is waiting for us at the place of prayer. Whether good days or bad days, He is there. He longs to be gracious to us, and will be very gracious to us at the sound of our cry.

Will we be faithful in coming before Him and crying out to Him at the place of prayer?



Readings and Prayers for the week

Readings for Week 16

Are you just doing prayer or are you a person of prayer? Take some time to read Matthew 11:12. Ask yourself what actions you need to take to radically change your priorities and lifestyle, so as to become a person of prayer.

Look for a sacred assembly and commit yourself to praying regularly with the body of Christ. Persevere even when the times of prayer are dry and boring. Cultivate and grow in a lifestyle of persevering prayer. Pray for yourself from Luke 18:8 that you may be found faithful at the place of prayer when Jesus returns.

Prayers for Week 16

Use Colossians 1:9-11 to pray for the spiritual leaders in our nation to awaken to this call to gird themselves, and live out a lifestyle of prayer.

Using Luke 12:35, pray that the Body of Christ will respond to the call of the leaders, and to prepare themselves to live out a lifestyle with perseverance even until Jesus returns.