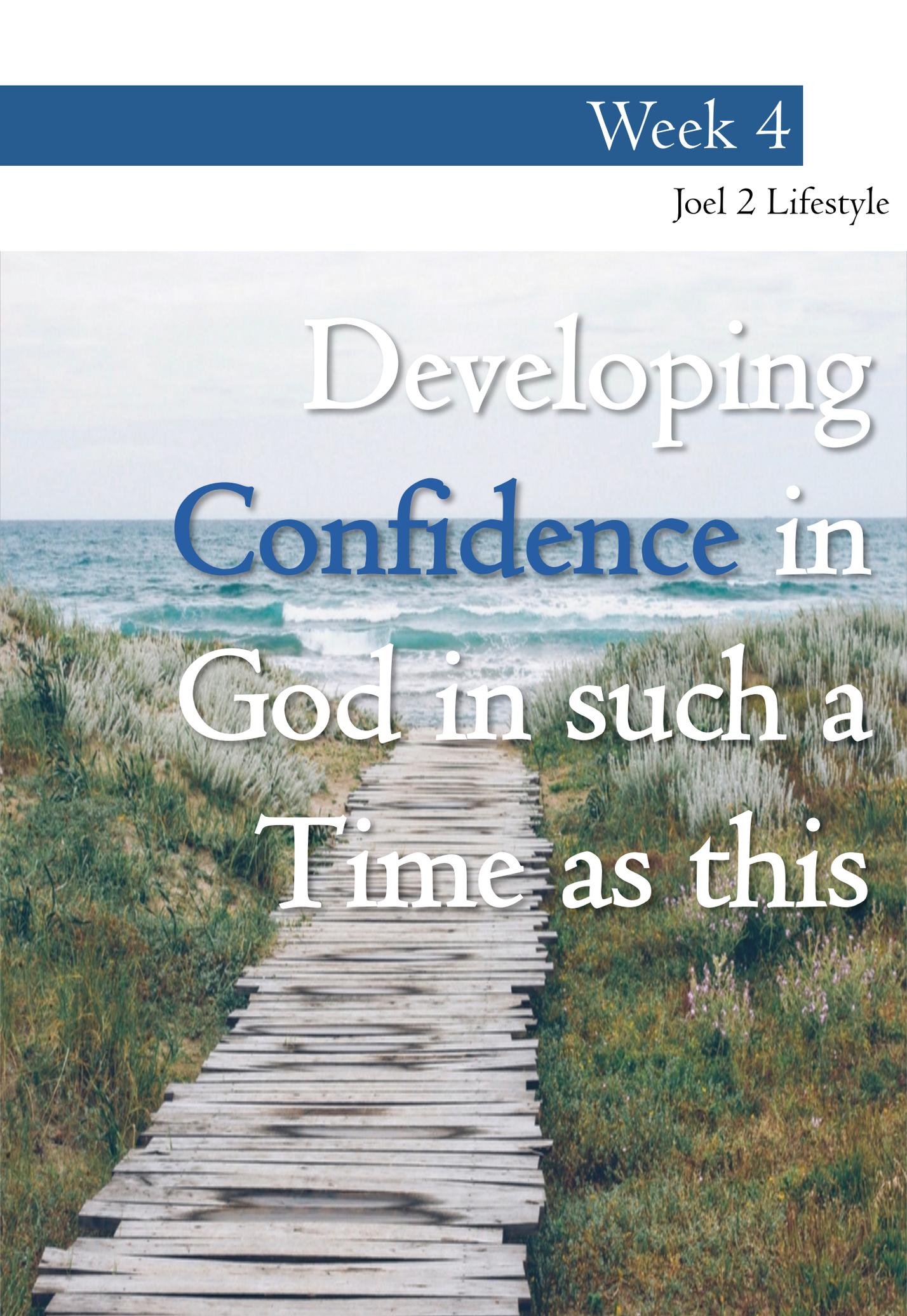
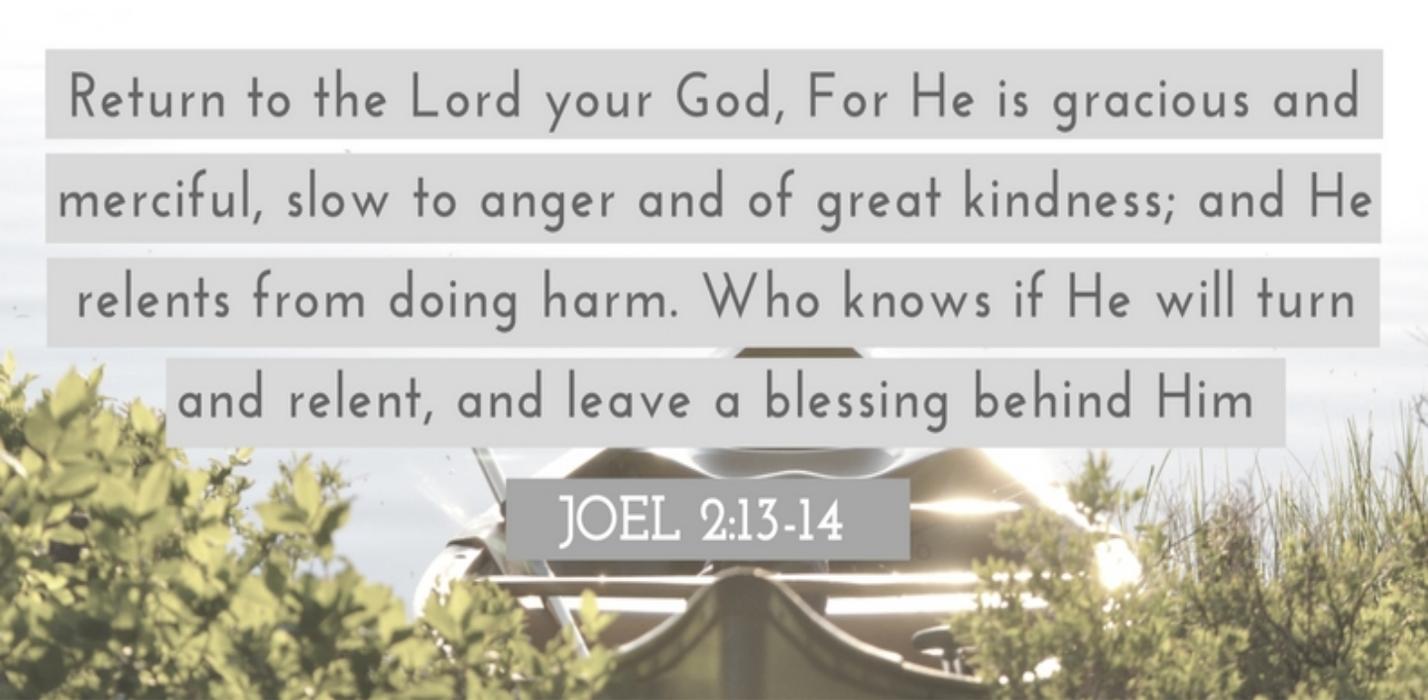


Week 4

Joel 2 Lifestyle

A wooden boardwalk made of weathered planks leads from the foreground through a field of tall, green and yellow dune grasses towards the ocean. The ocean is visible in the distance with waves breaking under a cloudy sky. The text is overlaid on the image.

Developing
Confidence in
God in such a
Time as this



Return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm. Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him

JOEL 2:13-14

Joel summons the people to return to the Lord. He gives five reasons why this is doable and wise – God is **gracious**, **merciful**, **slow to anger**, of **great kindness** and **relents from doing harm**. These 5 reasons are also the very core nature of who God is. Through living out the Joel 2 lifestyle, we want to know Him deeply in these five core nature of who He is, so as to develop confidence in God in such a time as this.

God is good. He desires to make a way of deliverance. **The knowledge of God's tender heart for us gives us courage and confidence to tear our hearts in repentance.** If we take one step towards Him, He will take ten steps toward us.

Deep in our hearts, many of us have a wrong picture of who God is. We think He is a strict God, who tries hard to tolerate us and is mostly angry or even mad with us. As we study who God is according to the scriptures, it will renew our minds. His true nature will really surprise and even shock many of us.



The Lord is Gracious

He evaluates us differently from anyone else. He remembers our frailty and that we are but dust (Ps. 103:14). He is not like a harsh military leader or the angry coach that rejects any form of weakness. God is tender-hearted in relating and gentle in dealing with us. His requirements are within the reach of the weak with the grace of God (1 John 5:4; Mat. 11:30).



The Lord is Merciful

God delights in showing mercy to us (Mic. 7:18)! David says in Psalm 145:9 that God's tender mercies are over all His works. God loves to watch the expressions and the heart responses of His people as they encounter His relentless mercy. He enjoys what happens in us when we understand that we get a new start even after many failures.

The Lord is Slow to Anger

God is so patient with us. He is not easily provoked by our weakness. Jesus spoke of His patience with the Church in Thyatira (Rev. 2:20 – 22). He does not blow His top when we fall into sin. But he gives us chance after chance after chance to turn back to Him. The Lord is slow to anger and takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11). He looks for ways to forgive them without violating their free will and His justice.

The Lord shows Great Kindness

When we believe in God's kindness, then we have confidence to press through all the hindrances, to God in full repentance. In our weakness, we can also cry out to Him to help us repent. (Rom. 2:4)



Do not be mistaken.
There is always a need to repent when we sin. But knowing and understanding God's goodness will lead us confidently back to His heart in genuine repentance.

The Lord Relents from Doing Harm (Joel 2:13)

God desires to relent so as not to release the deserved judgment that He has prepared for a nation. When a city rises up and repents before the Lord, the Lord is able to send blessings to them without violating His justice or their free will.

This does not mean that God randomly changes His mind, surprising even Himself in the process. Rather, it means that He honours the free will of man without violating His justice.

God is so willing to relent. Through prayer, God can change the decree He initially establishes in the heavenly courts, and do what He delights in doing, to be merciful and release His blessings. The course of events or the end result can be changed.

The Mysterious “Perhaps of God” releasing “Pockets of Mercy” (Joel 2:13 – 14)

Zephaniah 2:3 exhorts us to seek the Lord, and that “it may be that you will be hidden in the day of the Lord’s anger”. God wants to turn from judgment and leave behind a blessing. In other words, God wants to transform a would-be “disaster zone” into a “revival centre”.

This is the mystery of the grace of God! The Lord is not trying to keep us guessing, as if it were a game. Rather, He knows the full implication of all that is involved in releasing His judgment in a specific geographic area.

In the light of the Babylonian invasion that Israel faced, God invited Israel to cry out to Him in the premise that **perhaps He would provide pockets of mercy or cities of refuge** in the midst of the invasion – “Perhaps He will leave a blessing behind Him” (Joel 2:14). In other words, God can take the place that would be a “disaster zone” and transform it into a “revival centre”, making it a place of sovereign blessing.

We need to let the truth of who God is mark our hearts and renew our minds. God is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, of great kindness and relents from doing harm. **He wants to turn the greatest crisis into the greatest awakening.**

Let us press in to know God in His very core nature. May we develop great confidence in who He is in such a time as this!

A vintage typewriter is centered on a wooden surface. To its left is a dark green notebook, and to its right are several yellow sticky notes. The background is a warm, natural wood grain.

Readings and Prayers for the Week

Readings for Week 4

Take some time to study the five attributes of God in Joel 2:13, which are also the core nature of who God is. Meditate on them and allow these truths to renew our minds and the way we see God.

Prayer for Week 4

Pray Eph. 1:17 asking the Father of glory to reveal Himself as the One who is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, of great kindness and who relents from doing harm. Pray that God will raise up a Church who knows Him and is confident in who He is.