

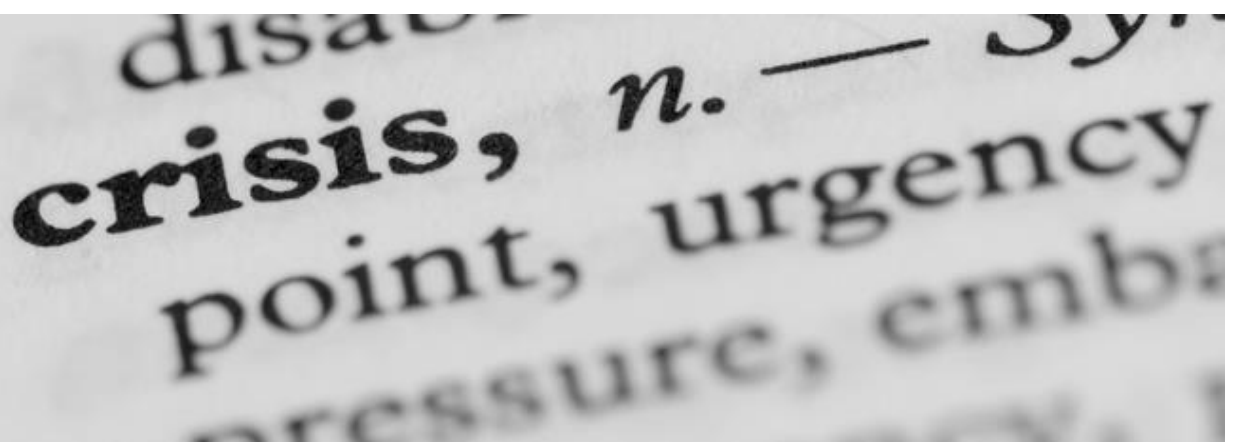


The Corporate Response that God is Looking For

*"Blow the trumpet
in Zion, consecrate
a fast, call a sacred
assembly;
Gather the people,
sanctify the
congregation,
assemble the
elders, gather the
children and
nursing babes; let
the bridegroom go
out..."*

*Let the priests... let
them say, "Spare
Your people, O
Lord, and do not
give Your heritage
to reproach, that the
nations should rule
over them.*

*Why should they
say among the
peoples, "Where is
their God?"*
Joel 2:15-17



disa
crisis, n. — Sy.
point, urgency
pressure, emb

After warning about the more severe crisis that is to come in the form of the Babylonian invasion, the prophet Joel then pressed Israel with the question of the hour.

“For the Day of the LORD is great and very terrible. Who can endure it?”

In verses 12 to 17, God spoke and revealed His answer. He commanded Israel to turn back to Him in wholeheartedness, rend their hearts, and seriously engage the God of mercy in fasting and prayer.

But more than just individual responses, God is looking for a corporate response. This is found in Joel 2:15-17.

It is so vital for the body of Christ to respond to what God is saying for the hour. God creates diversity. But He demands unity. Through the process of attaining unity, he causes us to grow in humility. God wants us to humble ourselves to come together, putting His agenda first, and cry out to Him with one heart and one mind. Then He will hear from heaven, answer our cries and heal our land.

There are 5 main aspects to the corporate response God is looking for

1. Blow the Trumpet (v.15)

God exhorts the voices in the land to blow the trumpet and boldly proclaim the coming judgment and the requirement for sacred assemblies. It is God's requirement that the people of God come together and pray. This is not an option, and there is no other solution. When we gather, it is a demonstration of our agreement with God's heart, our humility and our agreement with one another.

2. Consecrate a Fast (v.15)

Next, God tells us to consecrate a fast (v.15). This speaks about the importance of the body of Christ to call for and cultivate a fasted lifestyle. We want to live a lifestyle of fasting and press in for more of God, living in divine discontentment, constantly asking and knocking on heaven's door for the "so much more" that God has in store for us. Through fasting and praying, we want to see the hand of God move to avert a coming crisis.

A conscientious decision has to be made on the part of everyone who wants to pursue and live out a fasted lifestyle. If we do not, our feeble attempts will soon be snuffed out as the demands and pressures of life overwhelm our hearts.

In order to cultivate a fasted lifestyle, we have to fast regularly. We do not want to do it casually or only when we feel like it. Hence it is important for us to set aside a regular time to fast every week. (For practical tips on fasting, you can refer to the article on "The Practical Handles on Cultivating a Lifestyle of Fasting" found under the Resources heading of our website.)



3. Call a Sacred Assembly (v.15)

Joel then exhorts us to call a sacred assembly (v.15). The word sacred tells us that it is God's idea, not man's. This is not just a prayer meeting borne out of human initiative; it is on God's heart and agenda for us to come together and pray. This is God's initiative! Prayer is about agreeing with God's heart and with one another. In order to agree with one another, we have to gather as one body in one place. When we come together, agree and say amen, something happens in the spiritual realm. God will hear and move in response to our prayers.



4. Sanctify the Congregation (v.16)

The phrase “sanctify the congregation” speaks of setting sacred assemblies as the number one priority.

Joel is saying that regular gathering in sacred assemblies is so important that we should challenge and set apart our entire congregation to do this. Life is a matter of order and priorities.

We have to reorder our lives and our ministries so that gathering to seek God becomes our top-most priority.

This has to be higher than all our ministry programs. If this is God’s priority, this has to be our priority as well.



5. *Assemble the Elders, no one is exempted (v.16)*

Moreover, Joel tells us to assemble the elders (v.16). This means that leaders of the Church have to come together. In order of the Church to live out the Joel 2 lifestyle, leaders will first have to lead by example and live the lifestyle of prayer.

Joel goes on to say that everybody has to be involved! From the children, to the nursing babes to the bridegroom and bride, no one is exempted!

In Deuteronomy 24:5, we are told that a man who had just married was not to be charged with any business, but to be free to stay at home for one year to bring his wife happiness.



But here, Joel seemingly “violated” the law in Deuteronomy 24 by calling the newly-weds to come and gather in sacred assembly! Even nursing mothers (with their babies) are exhorted to journey all the way from their homes to the temple in Jerusalem to pray.



This underscores the importance and urgency that God places in the gathering of His people in sacred assemblies during times of crises. God is essentially saying, “No exceptions!” – He wants everyone to gather and pray.

We are living in unusual times. We cannot go on living business as usual. We need to develop a lifestyle of seeking God’s face, and hear what God is saying, both individually and corporately.



God has given us the answer. It is the Joel 2 lifestyle. It may not be easy, but there will be great grace. Will we embrace it?



Readings and Prayers for the week

Readings for Week 37

- As you read through Joel 2:12-17, ask the Holy Spirit to bring understanding and conviction regarding the necessity and priority of regular corporate gatherings for prayer. Ask Him to give you boldness and clarity to speak this Word to others, stirring in them the urgency to gather in sacred assemblies in such a time as this.

Prayers for Week 37

- Use 2 Thess 3:1,5 praying that as the trumpet is blown, leaders and believers in our nation will hear God's call for sacred assemblies and gather together regularly to fast and pray.