

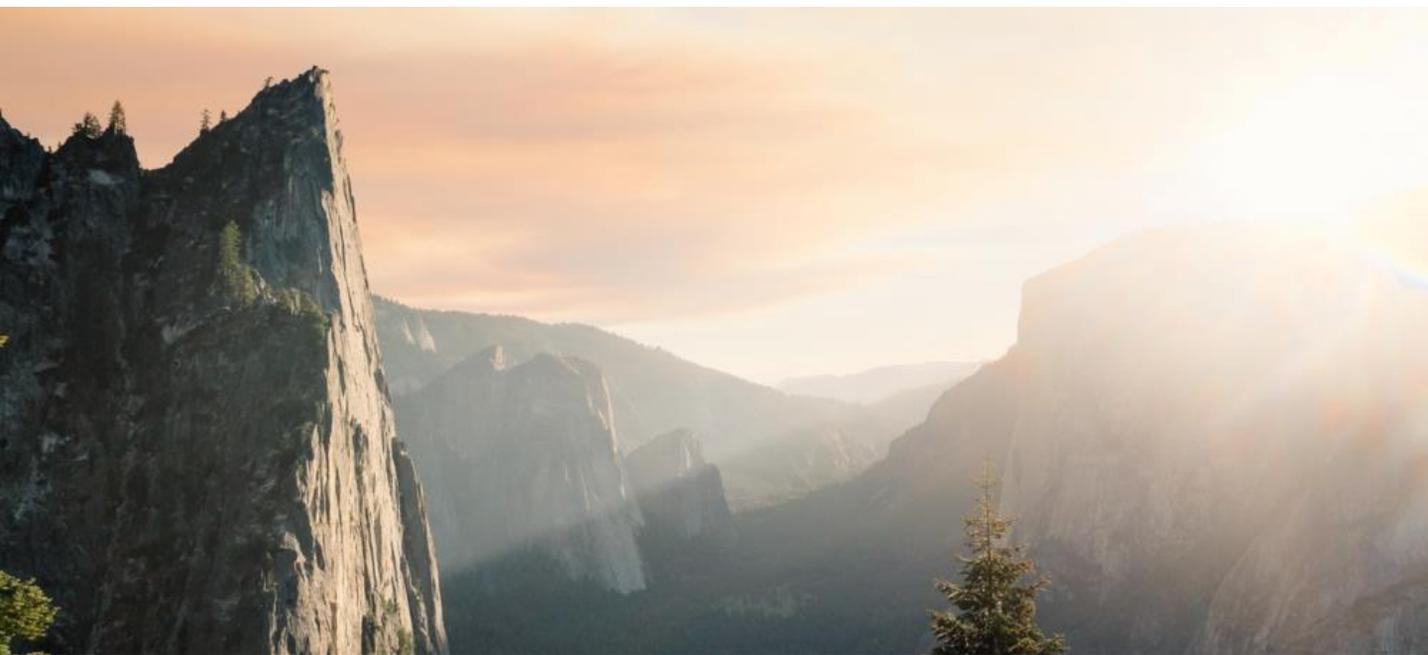
Week 23

Joel 2 Lifestyle



History

*A Call to Develop History with  
God*



*The people who  
know their God  
shall be strong, and carry out  
great exploits.  
Daniel 11:32*

The Bible tells us that there are 4 common emotions experienced by man when shakings and tribulations come. They are fear, confusion, deception and offense with God (Luke 21:25-26, Matthew 24:10-11). *These emotions are common to all men in the last days and everyone, including believers, will experience them. No one is immune.*

Really?

Is it even possible for believers to be confused, fearful, shaken, deceived or even offended with God? Can this happen to me?

Just ask ourselves, “When I go through pressures in life and stressful situations, what is the state of my heart?” Is my heart perfectly at rest and confident in God? Where do I place my confidence in? Is it in my ability to deal with the situation or in my financial strength? Or is it in God and God alone?

When disaster or tragedy hits our families or our nation, how will we feel? Will we question the goodness of God? Are there times in our life when we question the “fairness of God” - why He allows certain things to happen? What if God takes away things or even people that I hold dear to; will I still believe that He is good?

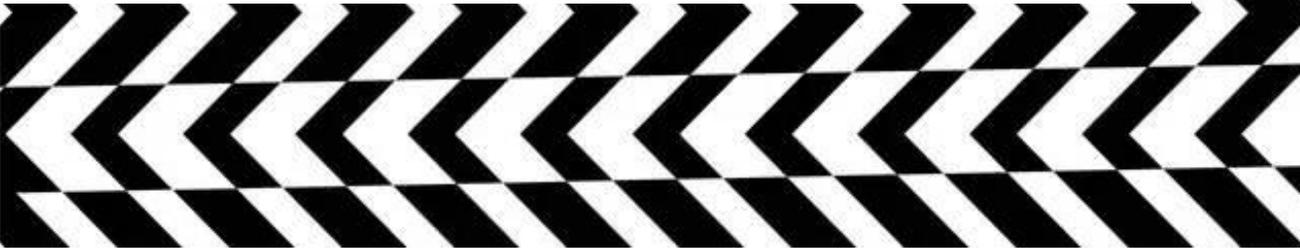


The truth is that whoever we are or whatever position we hold, all of our hearts can be shaken. We must remember the shakings at the End of the Age will be unprecedented in their intensity. Waves after waves of crises will hit us. That is why the Bible prophesies that there will be a Great Falling Away among believers, and many hearts will be offended with God (2 Thess. 2:3, 1 Timothy 4:1, Matthew 24:10).

Knowing all these, what then is our response? What can we do to strengthen ourselves and our foundation?

How can we be confident even in the midst of shakings? What can we do now to prepare ourselves so that we will stand firm?

We need to develop our own history with God right now. In the last days, it is absolutely vital for us to establish a strong and unshakable relationship with God. We must know Him intimately, have confidence in His love and learn to hear His voice. Our relationship with God has to be one which is real, personal and intimate.





Matthew 25 tells us of the parable of ten virgins waiting for the Bridegroom to return. All of them started off well. All were sincere. But five were wise and five were foolish. The wise virgins acquired and kept oil in their lamps. The foolish ones took only their lamps, but did not take any oil. At midnight, which is the darkest hour, the Bridegroom returned. Only the five wise virgins who had oil with their lamps were able to enter the wedding feast.

The virgins in this parable represent sincere believers. The Bridegroom is Jesus. Oil in this parable represents cultivating intimacy and developing a personal history with God. It does not refer to the anointing of the Holy Spirit, as anointing cannot be earned, but is a grace that is given by God. Lamps represent our ministries. Entering the wedding feast is not a reference to salvation, but it is about partnering with God in what He is doing during the End Times.



Having large and vibrant ministries is good, but this should not be our primary focus. ***Our priority*** should be ***to press in to cultivate intimacy with God in the present hour*** so that we will always have the heart-connect and spiritual reality with God. There will come a time when the darkness is so great that we will only be able to stand and shine if we have a deep history and relationship with Christ.

The darkness will be so great that ministries without an inward reality of a deep relationship and history with Christ will simply be snuffed out. This is what happened to the foolish virgins!



Knowing the intensity of what is about to come, what can we do? How can we be wise? Like Mary of Bethany, we need to see what is the one thing that is needed and choose the good part of cultivating our intimacy with Christ (Luke 10:42). In that passage, Martha's heart was overly distracted with serving. Ministry is good and important, but it should never distract us to the point of neglecting our time with the Lord.

However, it is not an issue of choosing between ministry or intimacy with God. Both are important, but it is a question of priority. We need to choose to set our time with God as the highest priority in our lives, in the midst of faithfully serving the Lord in ministry.



It takes time to cultivate an intimate relationship with God. Are we taking time to seek His face amidst the mundaneness of our daily life? Don't wait until crisis comes; it will be too late! If we do not cultivate a lifestyle of knowing Him and His heart now, what makes us so sure that we will have the confidence in Christ to turn to Him when crisis hits, and when fear and confusion overwhelm our hearts?

Will we be able to hear God clearly when our hearts are in that state?



We need to start *cultivating confidence in hearing His voice.* We want to live out the Isaiah 30:21 lifestyle of hearing His voice, whether we are to turn to the left or to the right, to stay or to go.

There will come a time when this becomes absolutely critical, because our lives and the safety of our loved ones will depend solely on our ability to hear God clearly and correctly.

*Let's consciously set aside time each day to cultivate intimacy with God.*

*May our roots grow down so deep and so strong, that no storms or crisis can shake our confidence in the Lord!*



# Readings and Prayers for the week

## **Readings for Week 23**

What are the emotions experienced by men when shakings come (Luke 21:25-26, Matthew 24:10-11)? What do you think your own reaction will be when faced with those circumstances? Will these same emotions overwhelm you? What can we do now to ensure that our hearts will stay connected with the Lord when shakings hit us?

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## **Prayers for the Week 23**

Tell the Lord that you really desire to cultivate intimacy with Him. In the midst of the distractions and cares in your life, will you choose the good part of praying and seeking the Lord? Using Luke 10:42, pray for understanding for yourself to see what is the One Thing that is needed in your life, and for wisdom and grace to choose the good part.

Ask the Holy Spirit to shine His searching light in your life to help you identify areas that you need to re-prioritize, re-organize or re-arrange so that you can cultivate intimacy with God. Pray for yourself using Colossians 1:9-10 for God to give you wisdom, so that you may walk worthy of Him.