

*Five-fold Requirement of
Response that God is
Looking For*

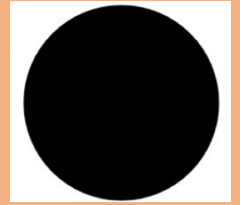
Joel 1:14 Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God, and cry out to the Lord.

In serious times like these, Joel lays before the people of God a five-fold requirement on how to respond to Him in the midst of crisis. This requirement is simple and can be done by anyone regardless of his educational level, financial status, ministry platform, prestige or talents. God gives us a simple yet offensive answer.

Will we respond in humility by choosing to lean totally on Him or will we try to find our own solutions?



CONSECRATE A FAST (Joel 1:14a).

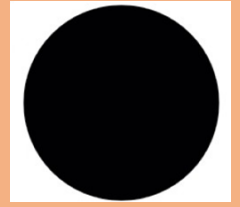


This is in essence a call to wholeheartedness expressed through fasting. In light of our times, God is calling us not just to a season of fasting and prayer, but to develop and live out a consistent lifestyle of fasting and prayer, all the way until the return of Jesus.

Fasting increases our capacity to live wholeheartedly before God. We do not fast to move God, but we fast so that our own hearts may be moved in the grace of God. Fasting under the grace of God tenderizes our hearts, and when our tender hearts respond to God, He is moved.

CONSECRATE A FAST

(Joel 1:14a).



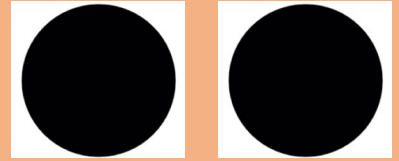
When we fast, we are refusing to pacify our souls with food or other comforts. By refusing to satisfy our hunger for food, we are stirring up a deeper hunger within us that causes us to cry out to God for more of Him; and our hunger and desperation then grow within us. In this way, fasting increases our capacity to receive more from God and enhances our ability to give ourselves fully to God in intimacy.

The essence of fasting is that we embrace voluntary weakness in order to receive God's strength as our solution. We are not trying to prove to God or to people that we are dedicated. Rather, we are waiting before God in voluntary weakness because we esteem His strength as the solution to our problem.

Finally remember this - fasting is essential to Christian living and is not an option if we want to experience the fullness of the grace of God. It is absolutely mandatory if we want to live in wholeheartedness before God.

CALL A SACRED ASSEMBLY

(Joel 1:14b).



The Lord wants entire communities to come together and pursue Him in prayer. Why?

Private prayer is important but *it is not enough for the coming global crisis. God requires corporate gatherings for prayer.*

Because of the way He has designed His Kingdom, there is a limit to how high we can go when we are interceding on our own; there is a ceiling in the Spirit until we come together. This is why we call for sacred assemblies.

More than just mere gathering, God requires corporate wholeheartedness. Corporate blessing occurs in the midst of the people of God coming together in wholeheartedness. This is the Biblical model (Psalm 133)!

There are many reasons why we should gather together. A practical one is that the fire in our hearts dies out when we are alone. The Lord knows that the coming crisis is so great that we cannot afford to lose our strength in the race. We keep our fervour by clustering together with like-minded people, people of the same passion and vision.

The word “sacred” or “solemn” *speaks of its weightiness before God.* God calls it sacred, and therefore it needs to be important to us. *Assembly speaks of people gathering together in one place.* If the assembly is sacred and there is such high priority accorded to it by God, there are no excuses for neglecting it. God is going to awaken the Church to the revelation of the sacredness of these assemblies. They *should not be treated casually.*

It takes great effort and courage to call for sacred assemblies. They do not happen automatically. It requires much work and necessitates persistent effort and courage on our part to do so.

GATHER THE ELDERS

(Joel 1:14c)



Gathering the elders is necessary in order to fulfill God's action plan.

It would mean getting all of the pastors of the land and leaders in ministry to come together. God is not unaware of all the implications of this plan, the difficulties and the challenges it takes to consistently gather the leaders. Yet this is the group that the Lord told Joel to convene, no matter how difficult the task.

GATHER ALL THE INHABITANTS OF THE LAND

(Joel 1:14d)



We are summoned to gather all the inhabitants of the land in the house of the LORD. This comprehensive description leaves no one out.

CRY OUT TO GOD

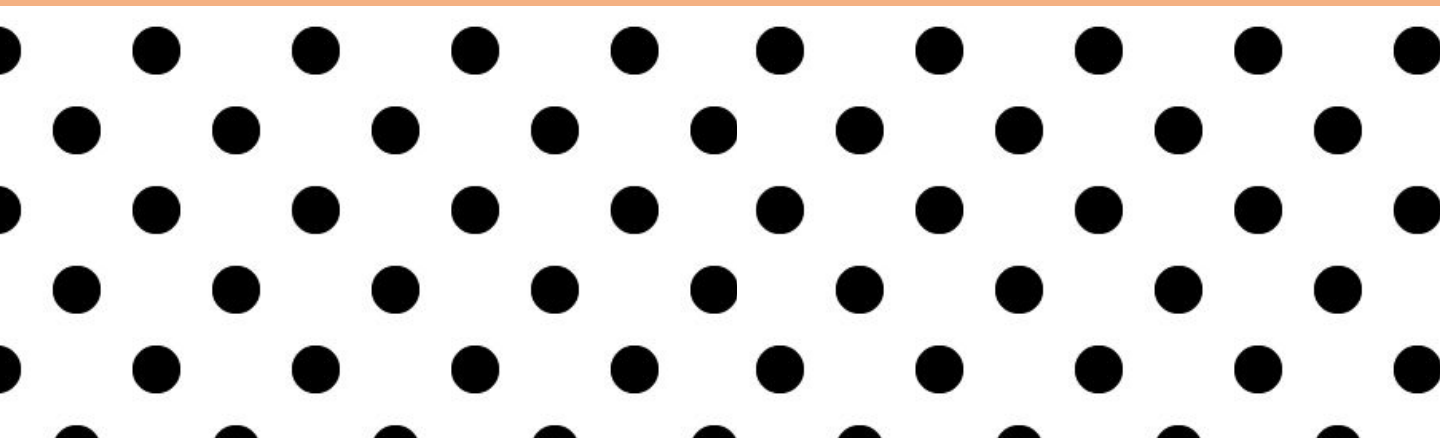
(Joel 1:14e)



The Lord commissions us to lift our voices to Him together. It will not happen with a casual mindset. It is an earnest and deliberate effort. It does not necessarily mean that we have to pray with loud voices, but it's about our hearts being engaged with God's.

To cry out means that we come into deep agreement with what God is saying, with what He has promised and with His heart in prayer.

May we hear God's call in this day and hour and respond to this five-fold requirement of God!





Readings and Prayers for the week

Readings for Week 18

Read Joel 1:13-14 and think of the five-fold requirement of God and the responses He desires from us. Ask Holy Spirit to allow these words to mark your heart. What is your response even as you read this?

Share what you have read with at least two to three other believers. Take time to gather together to fast, pray and seek His face.

Prayer for Week 18

Use 2 Thessalonians 3:1 to pray for voices to arise to release His word regarding this five-fold requirement that God is looking for. Pray that this word will go forth swiftly and with clarity to stir up the hearts of the spiritual leaders in this land.