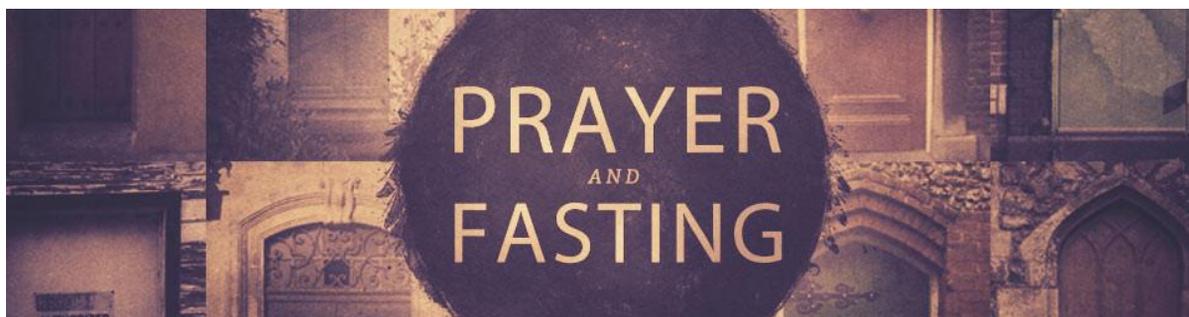


SACRED ASSEMBLY

Not Just Individual
but Corporate
Response



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 from his chamber, and the bride from her dressing room.

Joel 2:15-16

Joel 2:12-17 gives us the clearest answer from God on how the people of God should respond in times of crisis. The destiny of a nation is in the hands of God. If we respond according to the Word of God and the way of God, God can turn a crisis in a nation into a revival!

In Weeks 3 and 4, we shared with you the individual response that God is looking for. Through living out the Joel 2 lifestyle, we are seeking to live out a life that is in full agreement with God.

But more than individual response, God is looking for a corporate response from the Church. This is what God requires. It is so vital for the body of Christ to respond together. You see, God creates diversity. But He demands unity. Through the process of attaining unity, He forms in us humility. God wants us to humble ourselves to come together, putting His agenda first, and cry out to Him in one heart and one mind. Then He will hear from heaven, answer and heal our land.



THE GATHERING

So what makes up the corporate response that God is looking for? There are 5 main aspects found in verses 15 and 16:

#1 Blow the Trumpet, consecrate a fast

In verse 15, Joel begins by exhorting the people to blow the trumpet, to boldly proclaim the coming crises as well as to call for sacred assemblies, which are corporate gatherings of God's people to pray and seek His face.

He tells us to consecrate a fast (v.15). This speaks about the importance and the vital need for 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.

#2 Call a sacred assembly

Joel then exhorts us to call a sacred assembly (v.15). The word sacred tells us it is God's idea for us to come together, not man's. 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 and God will move in response to our prayers.

#3 Gather the people, sanctify the congregation

Next, Joel tells us to gather the people and sanctify the congregation (v.16). The phrase "sanctify the congregation" speaks of setting sacred assemblies as the number one priority. Joel is saying that sacred assembly is so important that we should challenge and set apart the people under us to do this. Life is a matter of priorities and order. We have to reorder our lives and our ministries so that gathering to seek God will be 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.

#4 Assemble the elders

Moreover, Joel tells us to assemble the elders (v.16). This means that leaders of the Church have to come together. They have to set an example. If the leaders do not set an example, this will not work. It is vital for the entire body of Christ to respond together. If all the leaders and pastors of this land come together as one, putting aside our own agendas, gathering in one room to seek the Lord, can you imagine the power that will be released by God?

#5 No one is exempted

Last but not least. Joel tells us that everybody has to be involved! From the children, to the nursing babes to the bridegroom and bride (v.16), no one is exempted!

In Deuteronomy 24:5, we are told that a man who has 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 right here, Joel seemingly “violates” the law in Deuteronomy 24 to call the newly-weds to come. And 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 crisis. God is essentially saying, “No exceptions!” – He wants everyone to gather and pray.

If this is the truth of God for the nation of Israel in times of crisis, what more for us? May we realize the importance and urgency of living a fasted lifestyle, and gathering in sacred assemblies to pray. May we hear the call of God’s heart and respond!



Readings and Prayers for the week

Readings for Week 5

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 stir in your heart the urgency to gather in sacred assemblies in such a time as this.

Prayers for Week 5

Pray using Ephesians 1:18, that the eyes of the Church's understanding will be opened to see the urgency of the times we are living in, and that elders and all believers will set aside other agendas and make gathering in sacred assemblies a top priority.