

Devotion 5: A Heart Torn Open

February 27, 2026

Scripture: *Joel 2:12–13*

“Yet even now,’ declares the LORD, ‘return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.’ Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.”

Devotion

In Bible times, when people were deeply upset, they would tear their clothes to show their grief. It was an outward sign everyone could see. But God says something surprising through the prophet Joel: “Don’t just tear your clothes—tear your hearts.” God isn’t interested in an outward show. He wants what’s real and what’s inside. True repentance isn’t just feeling sorry we got caught. It’s an honest look at our hearts and a genuine turning back to God. And why would we turn back? Because of who God is! Joel reminds us that God is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, and overflowing with love. The Augsburg Confession teaches that repentance has two parts: sorrow over sin and faith in God’s promise to forgive for Christ’s sake. We don’t repent because God is angry and scary. We repent because God is loving and trustworthy. Lent is a season to let God’s love break open our hearts so He can fill them with His mercy.

Discussion Questions

1. What’s the difference between being sorry you got caught and being truly sorry?
2. What does it mean to “rend your heart”?
3. How does knowing God is merciful and loving make it easier to repent?

Closing Prayer

Gracious Lord, tear open our hearts so that we may truly repent. Help us to trust that You are merciful and loving, ready to forgive all our sins for the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Family Action Item: Choose one habit this week to give up or one act of service to add as a family—not to earn God’s love, but as a response to His love for you.