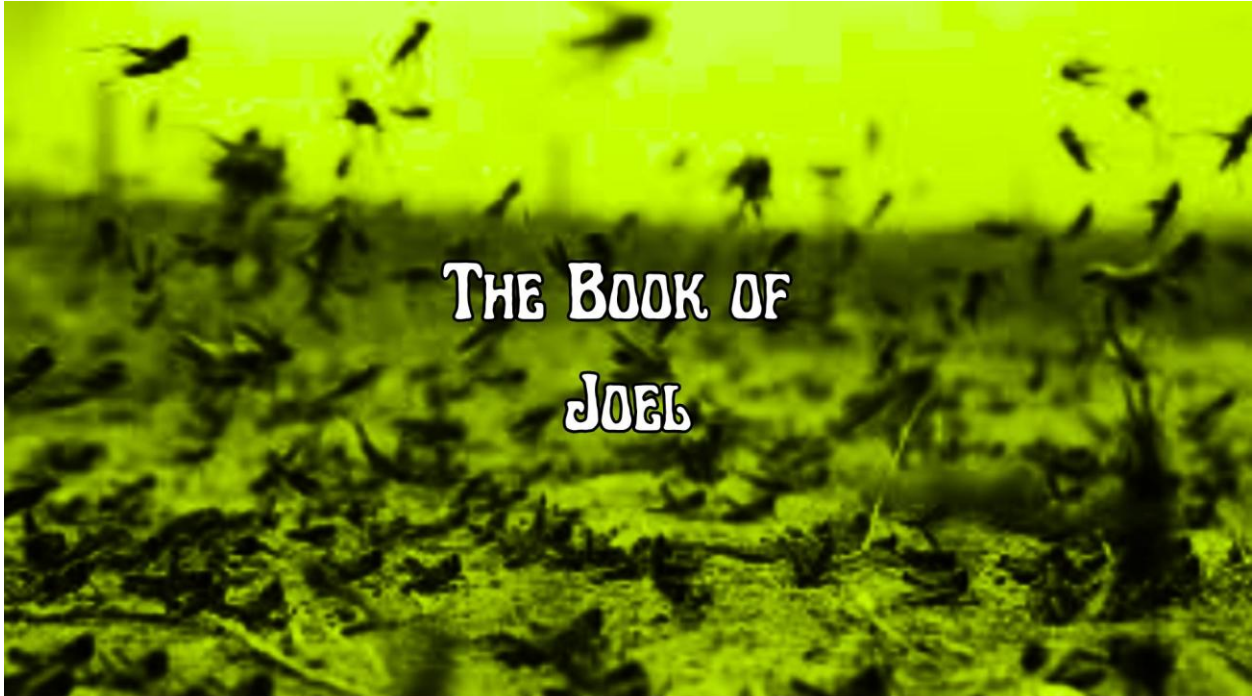


Small Group Guide: The Book of Joel
"Judgment, Repentance, and Restoration"



Opening Prayer (2-3 minutes)

Begin by inviting the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and open hearts to God's Word.

Introduction & Context (5-7 minutes)

Key Background:

- Joel is a prophetic book with an uncertain date (possibly 9th-6th century BC)
- Written to Israel (likely the southern kingdom/Judah)
- Uses a locust plague as both a historical event and prophetic metaphor
- Points forward to the Day of the Lord and ultimate restoration

Ice Breaker Question: Have you ever experienced a crisis that seemed overwhelming at the time but later realized God was trying to get your attention? Share briefly.

Discussion Questions

Part 1: Understanding Judgment (Joel 1)

Read Joel 1:1-7

- 1. The pastor described the locust invasion as both a real historical event and a prophetic picture. Why do you think God uses tangible experiences to communicate spiritual truths?**
- 2. Joel tells the people to "tell your children" about what happened (v. 3). What spiritual lessons or testimonies from your life do you need to pass on to the next generation?**
- 3. The sermon emphasized that this judgment came because Israel broke the covenant (Deuteronomy 28). How does understanding consequences help us take God's Word seriously today?**

Part 2: The Call to Authentic Repentance (Joel 1:13-14; 2:12-14)

Read Joel 2:12-14

- 4. The pastor spoke powerfully about coming to God honestly—weeping, wailing, and crying out rather than approaching Him with "decorum." Why do we often resist being this vulnerable with God?**

Follow-up: Share a time when you were completely honest with God. What happened?

- 5. "Rend your hearts and not your garments" (2:13). What's the difference between external religious activity and genuine heart repentance? Where might you be tempted to substitute one for the other?**
- 6. Joel says "even now" there's time to return (2:12). The pastor emphasized there's no time to waste—even if you're nursing children or on your honeymoon. What excuses do people (or you) make for delaying repentance?**

Part 3: The Character of God (Joel 2:13)

Read Joel 2:13

- 7. This verse describes God as "gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love." How does understanding God's character change the way you approach Him in times of judgment or difficulty?**

8. **The pastor said, "God doesn't delight in judgment, but because He is just and righteous and holy, it must be done." How do you reconcile God's love with His judgment?**
9. **God provides two ways judgment can be satisfied: we bear it ourselves, or Christ bears it on the cross. How does this truth shape your understanding of the gospel?**

Part 4: The Day of the Lord & Future Hope (Joel 2:28-32; Chapter 3)

Read Joel 2:28-32

10. **Peter quoted this passage on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). The pastor believes we're still in the "last days," which means the gifts of the Spirit are still active. What's your experience or understanding of spiritual gifts like prophecy, dreams, and visions?**
11. **Joel 2:32 says "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." This is the gospel in the Old Testament! How does seeing salvation by faith throughout Scripture strengthen your confidence in God's plan?**
12. **The book ends with God dwelling in Zion forever, bringing eternal peace and restoration. How does this future hope impact how you live today, especially during difficult times?**

Key Takeaways

1. **God uses real circumstances to teach spiritual truths** - The locust plague was both historical judgment and prophetic picture
2. **Authentic repentance requires vulnerability** - God wants our honest hearts, not religious performance
3. **God is both just and merciful** - He must judge sin, but provides a way of escape through Christ
4. **The gospel appears throughout Scripture** - "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Joel 2:32)
5. **We live in the last days** - Between Pentecost and Christ's return, marked by the Spirit's presence and activity

6. **Ultimate restoration is coming** - God will dwell with His people forever in perfect peace
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Practical Applications

This Week, I Will:

Choose 1-2 to focus on:

- Practice vulnerable prayer** - Set aside time to be completely honest with God about something you've been holding back (anger, fear, disappointment, sin)
 - Examine my heart** - Ask God to show me where I'm "rending my garments" (external religion) instead of my heart (genuine repentance)
 - Stop procrastinating** - Identify one area where I've been saying "I'll deal with that later" and repent/take action now
 - Share the gospel** - Look for an opportunity to share that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved"
 - Be open to the Spirit** - Ask God to speak to me through His Word, impressions, or other means this week, and journal what I sense
 - Live with eternal perspective** - When facing difficulty, remind myself of the ultimate restoration God promises
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Memory Verse

Joel 2:32a *"And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

Closing Discussion (5 minutes)

Final Reflection: The pastor said, "God is not your vending machine. He's the one who deserves worship and our service, not the other way around."

- How does this challenge modern Christianity's tendency to make faith about what God can do for us?

- What would it look like to worship God simply because of who He is, regardless of your circumstances?
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Prayer Requests & Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

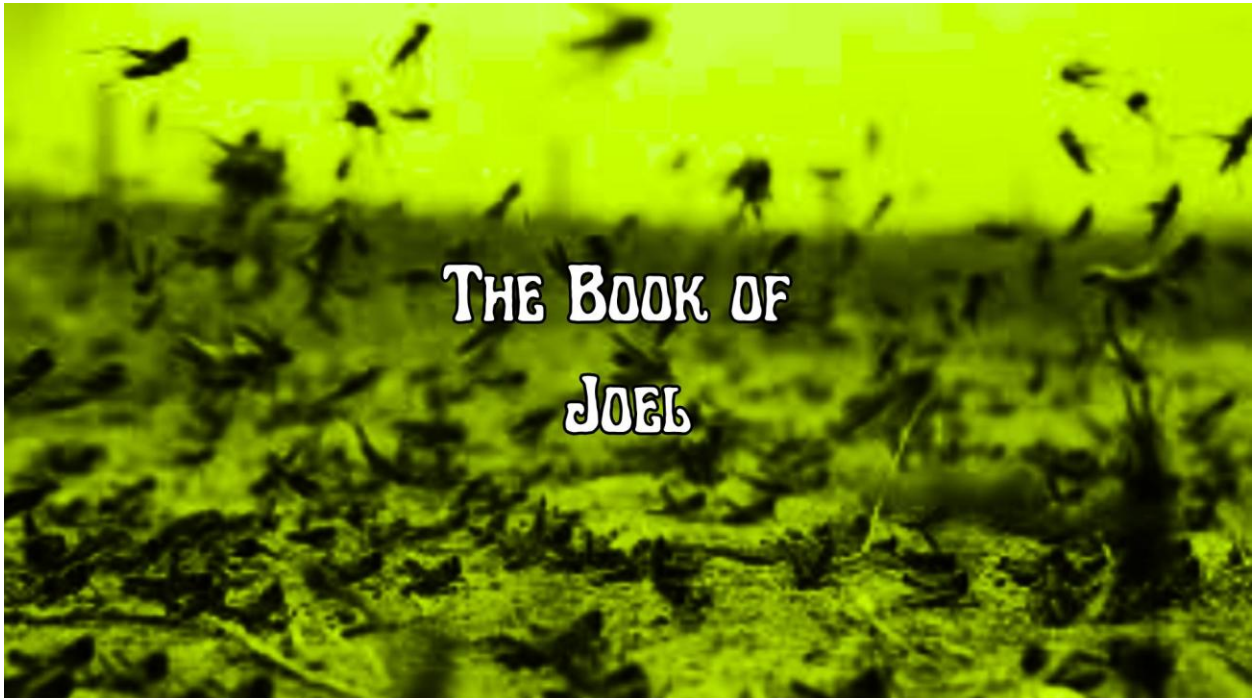
- Share specific prayer needs
 - Pray for vulnerability in approaching God
 - Pray for readiness for Christ's return
 - Pray for those who haven't yet called on the name of the Lord
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For Further Study

- Read Revelation 6, 9, 14, and 19 to see how Joel's prophecies connect to end-times events
 - Study Acts 2:14-21 to see how Peter applied Joel's prophecy
 - Compare Joel 3:10 with Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3 regarding swords and plowshares
 - Explore Ezekiel 36-39 for parallel themes of restoration and invasion
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Leader Tip: The sermon covered deep prophetic material. Keep the group focused on personal application rather than getting lost in end-times debates. The goal is heart transformation, not just information.

5-Day Devotional: The Day of the Lord and God's Redemptive Promise



Day 1: Crying Out in Desperate Times

Reading: Joel 1:13-14; Psalm 62:8

Devotional: When life crumbles around us—when our plans fail, relationships break, and security vanishes—God invites us to come before Him with raw honesty. Joel's call to "cry out to the Lord" isn't about polished prayers or eloquent words. It's about opening our wounds before the Great Physician. God doesn't want our carefully crafted religious performances; He desires authentic vulnerability. When you're angry, tell Him. When you're confused, pour it out. When you're devastated, weep before Him. The times we sense God's presence most clearly are often when we stop holding back and release everything to Him. Don't bandage your pain alone—let the Healer see it all. True healing begins with honest confession.

Reflection: What are you holding back from God today? What would it look like to approach Him with complete honesty about your struggles?

Day 2: Salvation for All Who Call

Reading: Joel 2:32; Romans 10:9-13

Devotional: The gospel blazes through the Old Testament in Joel's powerful declaration: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." This isn't a promise reserved for the perfect or the pious—it's an open invitation to all. No matter your past, your failures, or how far you've wandered, salvation is available right now. God doesn't require you to clean yourself up first. He simply asks you to call upon His name in faith. The same God who promised deliverance to ancient Israel extends His hand to you today through Jesus Christ. This is the heart of grace: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Salvation isn't earned through religious performance; it's received through humble confession and belief in the risen Lord.

Reflection: Have you called upon the name of the Lord for salvation? If so, who in your life needs to hear this life-changing invitation?

Day 3: God's Character in Judgment

Reading: Joel 2:12-13; Exodus 34:6-7

Devotional: "Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love." Even in the midst of pronouncing judgment, God reveals His heart—He is compassionate, patient, and overflowing with love. God doesn't delight in judgment; His holiness demands it, but His mercy provides an escape. The cross demonstrates this perfectly: God's justice was satisfied, and His mercy was displayed when Jesus bore our judgment. Today, God still calls us to return with fasting, weeping, and mourning—not to earn His favor, but to realign our hearts with His. He relents over disaster because He loves us. No matter what you're facing, remember: judgment is necessary, but mercy triumphs. God's character is defined not by wrath, but by steadfast love.

Reflection: How does understanding God's merciful character change the way you view His discipline or the difficulties you face?

Day 4: The Outpouring of the Spirit

Reading: Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:14-21

Devotional: "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh." What a revolutionary promise! God's Spirit wouldn't be reserved for prophets, priests, and kings—He would be poured out on everyone: young and old, male and female, servants and free. Peter recognized Pentecost as the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, marking the beginning of the "last days." We still live in this era of the Spirit's outpouring. Dreams, visions, prophecy, and supernatural gifts aren't relics of the past—they're signs that we remain in the age of grace, awaiting Christ's return. God desires to speak to you, empower you, and use you through His Spirit. Don't settle for a powerless Christianity. The same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, ready to work wonders.

Reflection: Are you open to the Holy Spirit's work in your life? How might God want to use you through spiritual gifts today?

Day 5: Restoration and Eternal Hope

Reading: Joel 2:25-27; Revelation 21:1-5

Devotional: "I will restore to you the years that the locusts have eaten." What a breathtaking promise! The devastation you've experienced—the lost time, broken dreams, and painful seasons—God promises to restore. He doesn't just patch things up; He makes them better than before. Joel's vision culminates in God dwelling permanently among His people in Jerusalem, bringing eternal peace and abundance. This points to our ultimate hope: the new heaven and new earth where God dwells with us forever, wiping away every tear. No more sin, suffering, or separation. Until that day, hold onto this truth: God is jealous for you and has pity on you. He will restore what's been lost and one day bring you into His eternal presence where peace and joy last forever.

Reflection: What areas of loss or devastation do you need to trust God to restore? How does the promise of eternal restoration give you hope today?