

"MAJORING IN THE MINORS: EXPLORING THE MINOR PROPHETS" FOR THE WEEK OF JUNE 9 | PENTECOST 3

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE: "RETURN TO THE LORD!"

God will take nine steps toward us, but he will not take the tenth. He will incline us to repent, but he cannot do our repenting for us. (A.W. Tozer)

OPENING PRAYER

Father, Creator of all, you are the eternal judge over every detail in your kingdom and each moment of our lives. How often we wander, becoming lost in the darkness of the world and our own sinfulness. Please stop us in our tracks, help us to recognize our selfish focus, and open our hearts and minds to your perfect ways. By the power of your Spirit, bring us to our knees in repentance and return us to your presence, only made possible through the sacrificial life of your Son, Jesus. It is in his redemptive name, we pray. Amen.

CONNECTING QUESTION

Joel's theme was that God's people had a choice: continue doing wrong and be harshly judged or repent and receive the Lord's forgiveness and salvation. Is that theme still relevant today? Why or why not?

SCRIPTURE READING

Read Aloud & Meditate on God's Word: Joel 2:1-27; Mark 1:9-11, 14-15

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Video Presenter: Kristin Reese

EXPLORE THE TEXT

Invite the Holy Spirit to lead as you work through the questions in this guide. Cover what your time allows and encourage everyone to finish the guide on his or her own.

1. A significant focus in Joel is the "Day of the Lord," a time filled with both dread and hope, as it would bring about judgment but also the promise of salvation for those who call on God's name. Read Joel 2:1-11. Summarize what you learn about the Day of the Lord in those verses. Do you believe the present time is experiencing a "Day of the Lord?" (See also 2 Peter 3:3-10.)
2. What is the definition of "rend?" Does it have any synonyms? What does the Lord ask in Joel 2:12-13? (See also Psalms 51:17, 86:5-6; Ezekiel 24:14.)
3. Read Exodus 34:6, Numbers 14:18, Psalm 86:15, 103:8. How is the Lord described? What kind of relationship does the Lord desire to have with you?

4. In Joel 2:15-17, Joel emphasizes the importance of community. Describe his specific directions. Do you agree that community is a critical component in returning to the Lord? Share what role the community of God plays in your daily life. (See also Ephesians 4:1-6, Hebrews 10:24-25; James 5:13-16.)

5. What are some of the changes the Lord brings to his people through his zealous restoration after the swarm of locusts destroyed everything (Joel 2:22-26)? What outcome did God desire for the people? (Joel 2:27)

6. What is the "good news" found in Mark 1:15? Why do you think Simon, Andrew, James, and John decided to follow Jesus (1:16-20)? Why do you follow Jesus?

A PERSONAL, PROPHETIC JOURNEY

Little is known about the prophet Joel, but his words speak clearly of the high price paid for sin. Yet, his message is also filled with a message of hope because the Lord is merciful, and he wants his people to return to him. Read and meditate on the entirety of Joel's three chapters. In addition, read Isaiah 55:6-7; Jeremiah 24:7; Hosea 14:1-2; and James 4:8-10. Take notes on the impactful points you discover. At the end of the week, prayerfully answer the following question: how will you personally return to the Lord in a deeper and more intentional way?

SCRIPTURES FOR FURTHER STUDY

Luke 15:11-32 – The Prodigal Son. This parable is a familiar story that illustrates the need to return to the Lord, whether you are the son who runs off or the elder brother mired in self-righteousness who remains at home.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God, we come to you with searching hearts. Thank you for the prophetic warnings you have given us in Scripture, telling us about sin and its consequences. When the connection between the two is clear, grant us the grace to humble ourselves in repentance. When it is not so clear, grant us the grace to humble ourselves by trusting you with the ambiguity, believing that you are in the midst of the randomness, working goodness. Thank you for being so patient with us. And thank you for doing whatever it took to bring us back to you. It is in the saving name of your Son, Jesus, we pray. Amen. (Taken from Eugene Peterson's commentary on Joel in *The Message*.)

Our Father ...

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