

Reconciliation

GOD'S LOVE BRINGS RECONCILIATION

Focal Verses • JOEL 2:12–13, 18–19, 28–32

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: EXPLORE what motivates people to repent and seek restoration; APPRECIATE the love of God that enables prophecy, dreams, and visions; and SEEK restored relationships in personal and community life.

In Focus

Darlique had her beau, Bryce, wrapped around her finger. He would give her money when she couldn't pay her rent, but then she would spend the money on a night out with her girls. Bryce would then give her more money to replace what she spent. He felt Darlique should always have funds to pay her bills. When Darlique was irresponsible in her finances, she would make a big show of being sorry for not spending the money the way Bryce intended. She would be extra sweet to him by making his favorite dinner and telling him how much she depended on him. Darlique began counting on Bryce and his wallet to be around to bail her out.

The fourth time Darlique couldn't control her spending, Bryce knew he had to do something about it. He sat down with Darlique and told her, "Baby, you can't keep treating me this way. You keep saying you're sorry for using up my resources, but then you do the exact same thing the next month. If you were truly sorry, you'd try to change your spending habits so you could pay your rent, or at least not waste the money I give you to help. I can't stay with a woman who acts like this."

Without Bryce to help her, Darlique landed back in her parents' house. As she sat on her bed, staring at the stickers she placed on the ceiling as a teenager, Darlique knew she would do anything to reconcile with Bryce—even live on a budget.

How does God reconcile us back to Him from selfishness and sinfulness?



Keep in Mind

"And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil"
(Joel 2:13, KJV).

Focal Verses

KJV Joel 2:12 Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning:

13 And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

18 Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people.

19 Yea, the LORD will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen:

28 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your

sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

30 And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.

31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come.

32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

The People, Places, and Times

Joel. Joel's name means "whose God is Jehovah." Little is known of Joel except that he was the son of a man named Pethuel. It is believed that Joel wrote the book named after him during the time of Judah's return from exile. Others believe that it was written right before the death of King Josiah, just one generation before the exile.

Remnant. In the Scriptures, "remnant" refers to those who survived a disaster or judgment. This remnant would continue the population of humankind or the people of God. They would be holy and devoted to God and constitute the faithful. This concept is found throughout the Old and New testaments (1 Kings 19:15–18, Amos 5:15, Romans 11:5). A remnant is a sign of God's grace to humanity in light of His stern judgment on unrepentant sin.

Background

Yehud (formerly Judah) was a small province under the power of the Babylonian Empire. During a prior period of unification, Judah was the Southern Kingdom, composed of two of the twelve tribes of Israel with its capital at Jerusalem (1 Kings 12–2 Kings 25). Joel's message comes to Judah as a matter of urgency. It will mean the life or death of Judah, and all future generations.

For Christians, the prophecy of Joel extends to us and to Christ's church even today. The Apostle Peter, speaking to the newly born church on the day of Pentecost, delivers a sermon with the exact prophetic words of this passage from Joel (Joel 2:28–32; Acts 2:17–21). Prophecy functions to teach us God's desires for our lives. It is a warning, a teaching, and a call to action. The prophet must deliver the message to the people, notwithstanding any of their own internal conflicts and hesitations. The prophet should receive no personal gain or recognition.

All of the attention resulting from a prophecy should be focused upon God. The responsibility of the hearer of the prophecy is to take heed, transform their lives, and spread the word to those who are unaware of it.

Inner repentance, moral control, and faithfulness to God are of utmost importance as the primary goal of humanity according to God's purposes. Our ultimate path away from God's wrath is through our repentance and faith (Joel 2:12–17). Our capacity to have faith and our ability to interpret the will of God is made possible by the outpouring of His Spirit on all people. God's merciful offering of the Holy Spirit to us is for a purpose: to spread His Word as His witnesses to all the earth.

At-A-Glance

1. God's People Turn Back to Him
(Joel 2:12–13)
2. God Turns Back to His People
(vv. 18–19)
3. Whoever Turns to God Will Be Saved
(vv. 28–32)

In Depth

1. God's People Turn Back to Him (Joel 2:12–13)

The prophet Joel describes Judah being devastated by locusts and scorching heat—the judgment Yahweh inflicts upon the people. The prophet answers the question of who will be able to endure this judgment by the Lord when it happens. The only way someone can expect to endure it is to repent, which simply means to turn to God and away from evil. God only wants His people to repent, but this repentance must be a move in the heart. To repent is to turn toward God with all of your heart and away from your current direction of sin.

The prophet leaves an opening for the possibility that as their hearts change, our Lord has the capacity to relent from inflicting horrific consequences on us because of His compassionate heart. Joel asks the question, “Who knows whether God will change from the pronounced judgment?” God is sovereign, with the infinite ability to do whatever He wishes. When God pronounces goodwill to us, we can count on His stable, strong word. That is the compassion of God, the ability to suffer with His people and feel sorrow for them that He has shown repeatedly in Israel's history. God will relent from punishing us. We have upon us the requirement to relent, repent, and change to move our hearts into His direction.

2. God Turns Back to His People (vv. 18–19)

Joel next lets the people know the results of their repentance. The Lord would be “jealous for his land” (v. 18). He would take special concern for His land and His people as they are His possession and in His care. He would have pity on His people. God's heart would be turned to His people and He would look on them with compassion. He would remember their limitations and weakness. He would see their hearts turned toward Him.

The Lord's care for His people would be represented by provision. His blessing would be seen in their harvest. Prosperity would come to Judah. Their barns and vats would be full of produce. This wouldn't be their own doing, but a result of their relationship with God and His mercy on them.

3. Whoever Turns to God Will Be Saved (vv. 28–32)

Here, we see the benefit of being God's people—the outpouring of His Spirit “in those days,” meaning after the day of the coming of the Lord. This gift is from God, but it is not limited

to a select few privileged by some materialistic stratification. The lowly are included and will receive God's Spirit (v. 29). These handmaids and servants represent the women and men who are the poor, downtrodden, common, and oppressed. Truly, the last shall be first.

In the midst of catastrophic judgment, a promise is given. Those who call on the Lord will be saved. Their repentance and dependence on God would be a refuge from His wrath. The sun, moon, and heavens would be affected as signs of the coming day of the Lord. Darkness would sweep over the earth, and the moon would turn red like blood. This judgment would not affect God's people who turn to Him in faith.

Search the Scriptures

1. What does it mean for Judah to tear their hearts instead of their clothing (Joel 2:13, NIV)?
2. The Lord has poured out His Spirit on all flesh. What is the reason He hasn't darkened the sun and turned the moon to blood (vv. 28–31)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. How can we as believers today turn to the Lord in repentance?
2. What are the implications of the Spirit of God being poured out on the lowly and downtrodden?

Liberating Lesson

God is a God of second chances. Many people don't turn to Him for a variety of reasons. Some are too proud, while others see themselves as unworthy and their lives as unredeemable. These are all lies. The truth is that God longs to hear the cries of those who repent. With this repentance comes restoration. God desires to restore His people to a right relationship with Him. As they turn to Him, they can be assured of His love and mercy to meet them where they are. A humble and broken heart of repentance is the key to restoration.

Application for Activation

Read Joel 2:1–2, 12–13. Do you constantly witness the sin, disobedience, and lack of care for humanity and God in our world? Permit the prophecy given to Joel by God for repentance to infuse your thoughts. Can you see how God's Word can be made manifest in your own life and the disobedient world around you? Share with your class members the ways that specific groups and individuals can advance God's kingdom by making a change in their direction and their ways.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

Sources:

Archer Jr., Gleason L.; Harris, Robert; Waltke, Bruce K. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT)*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1980.

Say It Correctly

Reproach. ree-**PROCH**.
Repenteth. ree-**PEN**-tith.

Daily Bible Readings

DAY 155

Isaiah 18–22
Psalm 65:9–13

DAY 156

Isaiah 23–27
Psalm 66:1–4

DAY 157

Isaiah 28–30
Psalm 66:5–12

DAY 158

Isaiah 31–35
Psalm 66:13–20

DAY 159

Isaiah 36–41
Psalm 67

DAY 160

Isaiah 42–44
Psalm 68:1–6

DAY 161

Isaiah 45–48
Psalm 68:7–1

Notes
