

# PRAYER GUIDE

**THE RESPONSE:**  
*a call to prayer for a nation in crisis*

## Day 1 – Joel 1 & 2

### CONSIDERATION

The book of Joel is invaluable in this hour. As our nation's turmoil deepens it is essential that we understand and practice the principles found in Joel to invoke God's mercy upon our nation in our time of crisis.

In the first chapter of Joel, the prophet describes a plague of locusts that has completely destroyed the land, leaving Israel reeling from its devastating effects. Modern readers have no comprehension of the destructive power of a locust plague. Imagine a swarm of locusts appearing with the haunting hum and buzzing of beating wings. The swarm darkens the sky and causes a pseudo eclipse as the hordes of insects blot out the rays of the sun. They descend upon the earth and as they devour all vegetation possible; they sound like a raging fire devouring a forest. Swarms of locusts can number in the millions and can cover hundreds of square miles. A single swarm eats thousands of tons daily, easily devastating entire regions. However, in Joel's time, it wasn't merely a single locust plague that wreaked havoc upon the land; there were four successive plagues that continued to pummel the land until the nation was completely crippled.

In chapter two, Joel tells the people that the solution to the devastation of their nation is a solemn assembly that will gather the multitudes, from leaders to nursing babes, for a focused time of fasting, prayer and repentance. With devastation so severe, the only possible answer is for the people to turn to God. Scripture declares that fasting and prayer with repentance is the only appropriate and necessary posture that can bring relief for God's people. Joel urges the Israelites to repent and turn back to the Lord with all their hearts so that God would heal their land.

### CONTEMPLATION

Have you considered the crises that afflict America today? Are there parallels between what Israel faced in Joel's day and what America faces today? Does fasting and prayer seem like a reasonable response in a time of crisis? What is the Biblical prescription to answer times of crisis and devastation?

### MEDITATION

**Joel 1:14** Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly; Gather the elders And all the inhabitants of the land Into the house of the LORD your God, And cry out to the LORD.

**Joel 2:15-17** Blow the trumpet in Zion, Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly; 16 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. 17 Let the priests, who minister to the LORD, Weep between the porch and the altar; Let them say, "Spare Your people, O LORD, And do not give Your heritage to reproach, That the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?' "

**Mat 9:15** And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.

### Supplication

Heavenly Father, we see the devastation that happened in Joel's time and our hearts are moved. We understand that today America faces crises of a different kind but similar severity. We ask today that You would touch our hearts with revelation of Your requirement to see further crises averted and the mercy of the Lord descend upon our nation. Reveal to our hearts the power of a corporate gathering of focused prayer and fasting, that we may have faith to see our nation turn back to You, in Jesus' name, Amen.

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## Day 2 - Locust plagues

### CONSIDERATION

In Joel's day Israel experienced the destruction of a massive locust plague. The nation's economy was crippled because of the decimation of the agriculture. The reason these plagues came was because of the people's negligence to worship and serve God with their whole heart. Because the people grew cold and eventually departed from God, they experienced incredible hardships. The result of their inner departure was multiple external crises.

In America today we face a similar crisis. We have watched sin escalate to a proportion the nation has never seen before. We live in the first generation in which the wholesale murder of infants through abortion is not only accepted but protected by law. Homosexuality has been embraced as an alternative lifestyle. Same-sex marriage is legal in six states and Washington, D.C. Pornography is available on-demand through the internet. Biblical signs of apostasy are before our very eyes. While the United States still claims to be a nation "under God" it is obvious that we have greatly strayed from our foundations in Christianity.

This year we have seen a dramatic increase in tornadoes that have taken the lives of many and crippled entire cities, such as Tuscaloosa, AL & Joplin, MO. And let us not forget that we are only six years from the tragic events of hurricane Katrina, which rendered the entire Gulf Coast powerless.

Furthermore, because of mismanagement and greed, our national economy is in incredible disarray, with our national debt topping 14 trillion dollars. We have effectively mortgaged our children's future, while spending money we do not have on entitlements as we search in vain for "the American dream". The first "wave of locusts" has begun to descend upon us and many are oblivious to the fact that destruction has come and is still coming.

God destined America to be a gospel beacon to the rest of the earth – a nation under God who declares His goodness, truth and mercy to a world desperately in need. How we have strayed from God's original intent for us! The crisis is extreme and the hour is urgent.

### CONTEMPLATION

What was God's original intent for America? How do you feel about the spiritual state of our nation today? How serious are the current crises America faces? What should our response be?

### MEDITATION

**Joel 1:2-4** Hear this, you elders, And give ear, all you inhabitants of the land! Has anything like this happened in your days, Or even in the days of your fathers? **3** Tell your children about it, Let your children tell their children, And their children another generation. **4** What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; What the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten; And what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten.

**Prov. 14:34** Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a disgrace to any people.

**Mat 5:6** Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

### Supplication

Heavenly Father, our nation is in great need today, perhaps like no other time in our history. Though catastrophes are happening all around, we have been unfazed and impudent toward You. We pray, show us the depth of our sin and error. Convict us and bring us to action that we may find favor in Your sight. Give us Your heart toward sin, that we would love what You love and hate what You hate. In Your kindness, bring conviction that breeds repentance. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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## Day 3 - Necessary Repentance

### CONSIDERATION

Historic crisis demands an historic response. The crises our nation faces are historic and therefore the church *must* respond in God's prescribed manner to invoke His mercy. Often the church imagines that it is the wickedness of unbelievers that causes the deterioration of a nation. While unbelievers do contribute to a nation's moral state, Scripture is clear - God holds *His people* responsible for their actions and identifies their sin or obedience as the key contributor to the blessing or cursing of a nation.

Jesus loves His church. However, we must come to grips with the fact that it is our sin, the sin of the church, that has been the main impetus for the moral and spiritual decline in our nation. God told Israel that their sin caused the heavens to become bronze over their heads (Deut 28:23). We know that there are many sincere believers in the body of Christ, however, we must realize that it is our own compromises that has dramatically weakened our ability to affect change in the culture of our nation. Our own unrighteous concessions have found us bound with the very sins that bind unbelievers.

Because of the state of the *church*, America stands in danger of significant judgment, just as the nation of Israel did in Joel's day. The most productive and Biblically sound way to address the crises we face is through humility, seeking the Lord with fasting, prayer, and repentance. We must take responsibility for the sins that we have committed and permitted.

This is an hour that we must seek the Lord. God desires His people to return to Him, rending their hearts and not their garments. Ultimately, it is the internal change that the Lord is interested in, not merely the external. If we turn to the Lord with repentant, broken hearts, He promises to hear our cry and release mercy on us and our nation.

### CONTEMPLATION

What does it mean that the heavens become bronze over our heads? What did Jesus say about salt that loses its flavor? If we participate in the same sins we repudiate, how can we have authority over unrighteousness? How has the sin of the church affected the spiritual and moral climate of our nation?

### MEDITATION

**Deut. 28:15** But it shall come about, if you do not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you.

**Joel 2:12-13** "Now, therefore," says the LORD, "Turn to Me with all your heart, With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." 13 So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm.

**Mat 5:13** You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

### SUPPLICATION

Heavenly Father, You are gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness. You relent from doing harm and so we come to You. We recognize that it is the sin of Your people that ultimately causes the blessing or cursing of a nation. In light of this we turn to You with hearts torn open, asking You to inspect us by Your Spirit, revealing to us the impurity of our ways. We desire to be a people wholly Yours, Your own possession. Grant us the gift of repentance. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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## Day 4 - Promised Outpouring

### CONSIDERATION

Prayer and fasting with broken hearts of repentance is the only answer to the dark conditions of our nation—essential for a spiritual shift to occur. When we give ourselves to fasting and prayer, and in tenderness turn our hearts to the Lord, God will hear our cries and release mercy. He not only *loves* mercy, His very *name* is mercy (Ex. 34:6).

If we embrace the mandate of Joel 2:12 – “...Turn to me with all your heart, with fasting with weeping, and with mourning”, we can expect the outpouring that Joel 2:25-32 promises – “I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten...I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh...” It truly is that simple. If we will turn from sin, fast and pray, crying out to God for mercy, He will hear our cries, have mercy on our sin, bring restoration to our nation and pour out His Spirit.

Many may see God’s promise of restoration as a promise for a renewed “American greatness.” While we must be grateful that the Lord has given us a country founded on freedom and liberty to worship, we must also recognize it’s not our nation that needs to be great in this hour, it’s the Son of God! His promise of restoration is about bringing back what has been lost. Our greatest need is for the church in America to once again burn brightly as a witness of the Lord Jesus. The restoration that God wants to bring is a return to purity of devotion to His Son.

Every great revival and resulting awakening has been infused with a new focus on Jesus. In revival, the Holy Spirit floods believers with an expanded capacity to see Jesus, high and lifted up as the King of kings and Lord of lords. When Christ is seen for all He is—and rightly exalted and adored by His people – God’s fire falls.

The outcome is that believers, overflowing with the Holy Spirit, joyfully begin to win large numbers of people to Christ. Salvation sweeps through one community and then another, until the moral fabric of communities, and ultimately the nation, begins to change.

If we will follow the mandate of Joel 2, God promises to restore us and pour out His Spirit. Though we as a nation are experiencing much financial turmoil, we do not need a new promise of prosperity, we need an outpouring of the Spirit that will convict and convert men to Christ. This is the revival we need. In fact it is our greatest need in this hour.

### CONTEMPLATION

What would another Great Awakening in America look like? Have you considered how important revival is to the church and our nation? What does God desire to give more, spiritual awakening or temporal prosperity? How much do we desire an outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

### MEDITATION

**Joel 2:28, 32** And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. 32 And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved...

**Jer. 33:3** Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.

**Eph 3:20-21** Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

### SUPPLICATION

Heavenly Father, We believe there is still hope for our nation. We pray that Your church would heed the call to fast and pray that we may see the spiritual climate shifted over our nation and mercy shower down upon us. You, oh God, will come to us like rain if we will return to You with all of our hearts. Today, we

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ask that You would turn the eyes of Your church to Your Son, forgive our sin, and pour out your Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## Day 5 - Who may ascend the Hill of the Lord, clean hands, pure heart

### CONSIDERATION

As we prepare for the Solemn Assembly just a few days from now, it's imperative that we consider the state of our own hearts before the Lord. Prior to the Lord visiting the children of Israel at Mount Sinai, He told them to consecrate themselves for three days so they would be ready to encounter Him. In like manner, we should now ready our hearts to meet with God on August 6<sup>th</sup>.

In Psalm 24 David gives helpful insight into the necessary preparations for one to be able to "ascend the hill of the Lord." He declares that the seeker must be one who has "clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully."

We understand that we are able to draw near to the throne of God by His grace through the shed blood of His Son. However, it is helpful to honestly allow the Holy Spirit to investigate our hearts, to reveal any wicked ways in us.

Today, let's consider the first two requisites from David, clean hands and a pure heart. "Clean hands" speaks of our actions, the things we have put our hands to. Jonathan Edwards, the great revivalist and scholar of the First Great Awakening, resolved to never do anything which he would be afraid to do if it were the last hour of his life. Oftentimes we live long periods of time without taking inventory of our actions. We trust God's mercy and forgiveness and don't take much thought for our actions. At this time it's essential that we ask the Holy Spirit to show us any area in which we have had impure actions before the Lord; things we have done that we shouldn't and things we should have done that we didn't. If God identifies things that are not pleasing to Him, we must repent of the sin and turn to Him. Repentance is a change of heart that changes our actions. It's the internal change that compels the external change.

Having a "pure heart" is about having pure motives. It's important to the Lord that we do the right things for the right reasons. The Lord doesn't merely judge by outward appearances, He looks on the motives of men's hearts and then assesses their actions. Have your motives been pure before God? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal where you have had impure motives in relationships, business, or ministry work. Ask Him to cleanse you of the impurity, that you may be prepared to meet with Him.

### CONTEMPLATION

What does it mean to "ascend the hill of the Lord?" How do our actions and motives affect our ability to draw near to God? How does repentance restore fellowship with God? Is there any sin worthy holding onto at the expense of forfeiting the outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

### MEDITATION

**Prov. 28:13** He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.

**Ps. 24:3-5** Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? 4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully. 5 He shall receive blessing from the LORD, And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

**Heb 10:22** Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

### SUPPLICATION

Heavenly Father, we recognize that at times our actions have been impure and our motives have been mixed. We ask You to purify our hearts and cleanse us by the power of the blood of Jesus. Our desire is

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to please You in all that we do, with hearts that are pure before You. We ask You to release cleansing fire upon us that we may burn with holy passion for You and You alone. Prepare us to meet with You at The Response. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## Day 6 - Who may ascend the Hill of the Lord, sworn deceitfully, soul to idolatry

### CONSIDERATION

The next two areas that David identifies are deceit and idolatry. Pure actions and a pure heart are incredibly important to the Lord. Equally important is purity in our speech. James tells us that if a man can bridle his tongue, he is a perfect man able to control his whole body (James 3:2). Proverbs tells us that when we speak many words, sin is unavoidable (Prov 10:19).

Perhaps the most important way for us to control our speech is by speaking truth. Jesus tells us that all lies come from the devil (John 8:44). Lies come in many variations. Oftentimes people use truth to perpetrate lies. For instance, when only part of the truth is told to make the hearer believe something other than what is actually true, it is a deception, a lie. Satan used this method in his temptations of Jesus.

Lying in all its forms is the work of the enemy and in opposition to the Lord. Jesus is truth incarnate. He in no way agrees with falsehood. Therefore, when we speak words that are dishonest or deceptive, we are no longer operating by the Spirit of the Lord, but rather by the influence of the enemy. We must ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to us times when we have been dishonest or deceptive and in turn repent of this sin. In some cases it will be necessary to confess the lie to individuals who have been wronged by it. Deal with this sin in the way the Holy Spirit leads you.

Next is the issue of idolatry. The church in America is rife with idolatry. Though believers may not sneak away from church to bow down to a graven image, we definitely have our idols. Idolatry is worshipping or trusting in anything above or in place of the Lord Jesus. The church in our nation not only has human idols, from Hollywood stars to athletes to politicians and even pastors, we also have objects that we "worship: in place of the Lord Jesus. Many people trust their occupation, income or family over the Lord. We need to recognize that this too is idolatry and ask for the Lord's cleansing and forgiveness. Only when we esteem Jesus rightly, trusting Him and worshipping Him as God above all others things will we truly begin to experience the power of the Kingdom of God. To say it another way, unless the King is enthroned within us, He will not be enthroned about us, in our churches, communities and cities.

### CONTEMPLATION

Do exaggeration, deception and deceit find their way into your speech? How does the Lord think and feel about lying? How does idolatry appear in the church in our nation? Are there any people or things that you trust, i.e. worship, in place of the Lord Jesus? Does the Lord have complete liberty to reign in your heart?

### MEDITATION

**Zech. 8:16-17** These are the things you shall do: Speak each man the truth to his neighbor; Give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace; 17 Let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor; And do not love a false oath. For all these are things that I hate,' Says the LORD.

**Ex. 20:3-6** You shall have no other gods before Me. 4 You shall not make for yourself a carved image--any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; 5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.



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**1Jn 5:20-21** And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. 21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

## **SUPPLICATION**

Heavenly Father, we recognize that we have not been perfect in our speech. We have allowed deception and falsehood to gain entrance. As You did in Isaiah's day, take the coal from the altar and cleanse our lips that we may be clean.

Lord, we also desire to have no other gods besides You. Convict our hearts of our idolatry and bring us to true worship and trust in You. We deeply desire to see You move in our lives. Do all that you must do to have all of our hearts and to glorify Your Son, Jesus. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## Day 7 - Promised Blessing

### **CONSIDERATION**

There is much at stake for the church in America. In many ways we are at a crossroads of two divergent paths. Either the church will turn to the Lord with her whole heart, sparking a great revival and reformation in our nation, or she will continue in compromise, keeping the status quo as we watch our nation turn to debauchery, sin and ultimately destruction.

In Psalm 24 David declares that he who turns from sin in actions, motives, words and worship "shall receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation." This is what we need in this hour – a great outpouring of the Lord's righteousness to flood our churches until the bride becomes the burning and shining light that Jesus destined her to be.

We must allow the Lord to redefine for us what true blessing is so that we may rightly esteem His work and activity in the earth. The blessing the Lord promises is not necessarily material, but spiritual. When He releases His power in conviction of sin and righteousness it is of far greater value than all temporal benefits.

The Lord continually warned Israel that she should not forget the Lord when she began to prosper. Yet, we see that when Israel experienced material comfort she turned away from the Lord and served other Gods. Could it be that we are committing the same sin as Israel in forgetting the Lord because we have experienced material prosperity? We must remember Jesus words, "What profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?" (Mat 16:26).

Though America faces financial crisis we must not turn to the Lord simply for the blessing of His hand. We must turn to the Lord, seeking His face, to see the outpouring of His presence bring conviction and conversion. Oh that the Lord would arise over our churches again and shine the glory of His countenance upon us. When our hearts are overwhelmed with the beauty and majesty of Jesus, when we desire to know Him more than we desire silver and gold, then we will truly experience the blessing of the Lord.

God promises to pour out His Spirit on all who are thirsty, floods of living water on the dry grounds (Isa 44:3). This could be the hour that we see the greatest awakening to righteousness our nation has ever witnessed. The crisis we face is difficult, however the answer is with God and we will find it on our knees. Let this be the hour that we ascend the hill of the Lord to find the blessing of revival that we so desperately need.

### **CONTEMPLATION**

Have temporal comforts in some ways caused the church to "forget the Lord?" What do you desire more, material prosperity or spiritual revival? Are the two exclusive? How has our material prosperity affected our passion and hunger for Jesus? What could a third Great Awakening in America look like?

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## MEDITATION

**Deut. 8:10-19** When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you. 11 "Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, 12 lest--when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them;...13 and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; 14 when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God ...17 then you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.'...19 Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the LORD your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish.

**Ps. 24:4-5** He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the LORD, And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

**Act 3:19** Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

## SUPPLICATION

Heavenly Father, we recognize that revival is the greatest need of the church in this hour. Though we face many other challenges, if we do not have Your presence we have nothing. We ask You to use The Response as a flashpoint that will cause revival to begin to break forth across our nation. We still believe there is hope for America. We humble ourselves before You, knowing that You are good, asking for Your great mercy upon us, our families and our nation. Let Your kingdom come and Your will be done in our nation. In Jesus' name, Amen.