

## **Small Group Guide Yahweh is God**

*Cleary Baptist Church, January 2, 2011 Joel*

**This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.**

### ***Joel***

The name Joel may be translated, "Yahweh is God." God sent Joel to proclaim "the day of the LORD" or judgment on Israel and all nations. He offers a message of hope and reconciliation for those who truly repent and turn to God, but for those who do not repent God promises utter destruction. Joel's message is that we must choose whom we will follow, God or man. God rejects apathy. He demands and is worthy of our worship.

### ***Study the Text . . .***

#### **Joel 1: The destruction of the nation and a call to repent.**

- What do the locusts destroy?
- Why do locusts destroy the nation?
- Why is the nation told to commence a fast?
- Who will fast?
- Do you think there were people of Joel's day that explained this judgment away based on their naturalistic worldview? In other words, do you think some tried to explain what was going on in purely scientific categories?
- Do you think God still uses nature as a means to bring about His judgment today?

#### **Joel 2:1-17: Joel foretells the Day of the LORD and again calls the people to return to the LORD.**

The beginning of chapter 2 is similar to chapter 1, but it speaks specifically of judgment on Jerusalem through a plague of locusts. Most likely, Joel is making an analogy between the locusts and the Babylonian army. The prophecy is clear; no one can withstand the judgment of God. God then turns and says to His people, "Return to me with all your heart."

- How did God command the people to return to him?
- How does Joel describe God in verse 13?

### ***Group Discussion . . .***

Joel's prophecy focuses on explaining the coming Day of the LORD. It will be a day of judgment and destruction. Joel is warning us to not live in apathy towards God, but to devote our lives to God, repent of our sins and live for God alone.

- Begin by asking people to share about how they approach God. Verse 2:13 describes God as gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting over disaster. We are comfortable with this description. But do we believe that God will judge all who do not worship Him alone? Do we approach God as a God of judgment and wrath?

- Verse 2:12 states, “Return to me with all your heart.” How does a person return to God with all his or her heart?
- How does a church return to God with all their heart?
- Why does God require fasting, weeping and mourning?
- Why does God want them to “rend” (tear) their hearts and not their garments? What does that mean?
- Is God seeking the repentance of individuals only? What does Joel call the whole congregation to do together?
- Have group members to share how they have seen God’s grace, mercy, patience, and steadfast love toward them in the past when they repented before God of a particular sin that had entangled them. Some may even want to share how God saved them when they first repented and trusted in Christ (this would be a good time to hear some peoples stories of salvation).

### ***Study the Text . . .***

**Joel 2:18-32: Yahweh alone is God, and He will pour out His Spirit on His people!**

- List examples of how God will restore His people.
- Why will God restore His people? See verse 27.

### ***Group Discussion . . .***

God will deliver a remnant of His people who are repentant so that all peoples will know that Yahweh alone is God and there is no other. God will transform His people with His Spirit so that all who call upon the name of the LORD will be saved.

- Read Joel 2:28-32. Read together Jeremiah 31:31-33. God will secure restoration with His children by sending His Spirit to change the hearts of all His children. Judgment will come upon all the earth, but some will be saved. Who shall be saved?
- Read together Acts 2:14-24, 37-38.
- Who was filled with the Spirit?
- Who was cut to the heart?
- Jeremiah 31 and Joel 2 are beginning to be fulfilled as God’s Spirit changes the hearts and minds of His children. Later in Acts, we see that God also pours out His Spirit on Gentiles. The prophecies in Joel and Jeremiah have already begun to be fulfilled!
- What are some evidences in a person’s life that demonstrate that the Holy Spirit lives within them (that they have been born again)?
- Read Romans 10:10-21.
- Who will be saved?
- As Christ-followers what is our responsibility?
- Will everyone we share the gospel with believe?
- Why do we share the gospel?
- Ask group members if they have seen God save someone through their witness over the last year. Begin praying that God would use and allow each person in your group to be a part of seeing someone saved this next year.

## ***Study the Text . . .***

**Joel 3: God avenges the blood of His people, and He is a refuge for His children.**

All nations will stand before Christ and be judged. There is no escaping the judgment of God.

- Why will God judge all peoples?
- Will Judah be destroyed? How does God describe Jerusalem?

## ***Group Discussion . . .***

God is “gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.” Nowhere in the Old Testament does God forgive a stubborn and rebellious people. Repentance precedes mercy and forgiveness. Joel’s message to us today is repent and call on the name of the LORD (have faith in Christ alone), and we will be saved!

- Do we truly believe that God will punish all mankind for their sins?
- Have we repented of our sins? Are we living for God alone, or are our loyalties divided?
- Have we been cut to the heart because of our sins? Have we turned to God with all our hearts?
- Why is fasting so important in the life of a local church?
- How will your family fast and pray this coming Sunday?

As a small group, end your time together with corporate confession. Give everyone an opportunity to confess sins out loud and quietly. Then you can end with a prayer like this below from *The Book of Common Prayer* (1897).

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, Judge of all men – We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness which we from time to time most grievously have committed by thought word and deed against thy Divine Majesty provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings. The remembrance of them is grievous unto us. The burden of them is intolerable. Have mercy upon us. Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father. For thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, forgive us all that is past and grant that we may ever hereafter serve and please thee in newness of life. To the honor and glory of thy Name through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.