

## Message Discussion Guide

### REPENTING OF SIN AND RETURNING TO GOD

*The Church at Brook Hills,*

*Dr. David Platt*

*August 15, 2010*

*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.

### **Connect . . .**

*Use one or both of the following options to introduce the discussion time to follow.*

#### **Option 1**

Invite learners to discuss popular television shows, movies, or music in current culture. Encourage them to discuss how certain aspects of these avenues of entertainment can desensitize us to sin. Explain that today we will talk about turning to God even in the face of desensitized sin.

#### **Option 2**

Invite learners to describe a time in their lives when they were so consumed by an emotion (grief, love, stress, etc.) or task that they forgot to eat or could not eat. Ask: **How did not eating cause you to focus all of your energy on this one circumstance? How can fasting purposefully help us to focus our energy toward God?** Explain that today we will discuss repenting and focusing all of our attention on God.

### **Review the Message . . .**

#### **The Day of the Lord...**

- A day of destruction for the                    resistant                   .
  - Judgment upon                    God's                    people.
  - Judgment upon                    all                    peoples.
- A day of salvation for the                    repentant                   .

#### **Discussion**

- Explain that Joel's prophecy to the nation of Judah came at a time when they had become completely desensitized to their sin against God. Locusts had come and destroyed everything in the land as judgment and as a picture of the destruction that was to come to them in future judgment.
- Enlist learners to read Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31. Describe what the "Day of the Lord" meant to Judah according to these verses. Who would receive this judgment?
- Read Joel 3:12-14. Who else would be subject to the "Day of the Lord?"
- Enlist two learners to read Joel 2:31-32 and 3:16. What would the "Day of the Lord" mean for those who had remained faithful to God and who were repentant in their sin toward Him?

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- Read Joel 1:13-14 and 2:15-16. How did Joel call the people of God to repentance? How were they to demonstrate the serious nature with which they approached God and the serious nature of their sin?

#### Application . . .

- How serious do we really view sin in our lives?
- What habits do we have in our lives that help us to become desensitized to sin in our lives and in our culture?
- Name examples of sins that many people no longer see as wrong in our culture because we have justified them as cultural progression?
- Are there some sins that we allow in our lives because we do not see them as “big” sins? Discuss some examples.
- How does our North American church culture sometimes cater to sins in a veiled attempt to be culturally relevant?
- What are some practical ways to set up accountability in our lives to help us to see sin as a gross abhorrence to God?

#### A Day of Fasting...

- Fasting is an \_\_\_\_\_ external \_\_\_\_\_ expression...
  - Of an \_\_\_\_\_ internal \_\_\_\_\_ reality.
- More than we need a meal...
  - We need God’s \_\_\_\_\_ mercy \_\_\_\_\_.
- More than our stomachs long for the pleasure of food...
  - Our souls long for the \_\_\_\_\_ presence \_\_\_\_\_ of God.
- We \_\_\_\_\_ repent \_\_\_\_\_...
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Confession \_\_\_\_\_ : Agreement with God about sin.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Contrition \_\_\_\_\_ : Brokenness before God over sin.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Conversion \_\_\_\_\_ : Turning to God from sin.
- God \_\_\_\_\_ relents \_\_\_\_\_...
  - He \_\_\_\_\_ rescues \_\_\_\_\_ us.
  - He \_\_\_\_\_ restores \_\_\_\_\_ us.
  - He \_\_\_\_\_ resides \_\_\_\_\_ with us.
    - He will come to us in His \_\_\_\_\_ Son \_\_\_\_\_.
    - He will live in us through His \_\_\_\_\_ Spirit \_\_\_\_\_.
    - He will forever protect us in His \_\_\_\_\_ stronghold \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Discussion

- Enlist a learner to read Joel 2:12-13. Explain that in a time of grief in this culture, one might tear his clothes as an outward expression of his grief, sorrow, or penance.
- How does the Lord clearly desire that His people return to Him in repentance? What should the reality of hearts be toward sin? What does it mean to “rend your hearts”?
- What had to happen in their hearts in order for God’s people to grieve over their sin? How could they grieve over something they did not see as wrong?

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- How did fasting demonstrate their inward grief and their hearts' attitude toward God?
- Looking at Joel 1:5, 8, and 2:12, what words were used to describe how the people should respond to the admission their sinfulness? How does this kind of grief illustrate their brokenness before God?
- Enlist one or two learners to read Joel 2:18-27. How does God react toward true repentance?
- What is the greatest consequence of repentance and reconciliation with God?
- Read Romans 10:12-13. How would God ultimately provide reconciliation for all people?
- Enlist two learners to read Acts 2:17-21 and Joel 2:28-29. How did God provide His unending presence for His people?

#### **Application . . .**

- What are the most common ways that we try to deal with our sin?
- How do the ways that we try to deal with sin demonstrate the serious or non-serious way that we view sin? How does repentance or the lack of repentance illustrate our attitude toward sin?
- Compare the ways that we view sin with the words used in Joel such as weeping, sorrow, and heart rending. Why should we view sin this way?
- How do we know whether we have genuinely repented or just gone through religious motions or words?
- What should be evident in our lives when we truly repent of our sin?
- What is our primary goal for seeking repentance?
- How can we have peace in God after we have repented to Him?
- How are our lives to reflect true reconciliation with God?
- How can we help each other to repent from sins?