

Responding to Crisis Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. How often have you gone to the grocery store in the last week?
2. Are you sleeping more, less, or about the same compared to one month ago?

Read the following passage: Joel 1:1-14.

We know very little about Joel. What we do know is that he ministered to the people of Israel in the middle of a devastating national crisis: a plague of locusts. A swarm of locusts can consume as much as 35,000 people can eat every day. In the ancient world, a locust plague could lead to major famine and take years to recover from. Joel's instruction and encouragement for the people show us how to respond to crises in our modern context.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. Joel told the drunkards — the quintessentially unaware and unconcerned people of his day — to wake up and weep (Joel 1:5). Generally speaking, do you find yourself more prone to overreact or underreact? Explain. How have you found yourself responding in the present circumstances?
2. What has been the most difficult aspect of the present coronavirus pandemic for you to navigate so far? Explain.
3. Seasons of great disruption can also be seasons of great opportunity. What are some opportunities you are seeing in this unique season?
4. The “day of the LORD” is a significant and multi-faceted theme in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament. It is a reference to a day when God would come in power to re-establish his sovereignty and make all things right. This could imply both judgment and salvation.
 - a. Read Joel 1:15; 2:1-2, 11. How was the locust plague leading Joel to perceive the day of the LORD?
 - b. Read Joel 2:28-32. Explain how both perspectives on the day of the LORD emerge in this passage.
 - c. Explain how Jesus' ministry and the day of Pentecost fulfill some elements of the prophetic vision expressed by Joel in Joel 2:28-32.
 - d. What determines whether we will face crises, and even the day of the LORD, with confidence or fear?
5. Joel told the people to put on sackcloth, to mourn, and to fast. What does it look like for us to humble ourselves in this season? Does humbling ourselves suggest that there is nothing we can or should do to help?

6. Why is mourning when we are in pain important? Do you find it difficult to mourn?
7. Above all, Joel called the people to seek God. Are you taking time each day to read the Scriptures and pray?
8. Read Joel 2:18-27. What did God do in response to the people's prayers? What are some things we should be praying for in this season?
9. It is striking that Joel delivered one of the most significant messages about God's intention to pour out the Holy Spirit in the context of a crisis. What do you think God wants to do through this unique global experience?
10. What is one way you can help catalyze a movement of people toward God's kingdom in this season?

Pray