

From the Desk of Doug Stringer

A SIMPLE UNDERSTANDING OF
A SOLEMN ASSEMBLY



WHAT IS A JOEL 2 SOLEMN ASSEMBLY?

The book of Joel consists of only 3 chapters, yet it was written as a wake-up call to a nation in crisis. Joel pleaded for his nation to gather before God in a great sacred assembly. Their time of great crisis and need called for a corporate response; a response of corporate repentance and consecration before God.

Today we are living in very challenging, critical and volatile times. Every day the news is filled with more human tragedy or disaster. Crises are escalating at an unprecedented rate. As the Body of Christ, we must respond. We cannot afford to hit our snooze buttons any longer while ignoring the sounding warnings and alarms around us. We must RESPOND!

A SOLEMN ASSEMBLY: THE RESPONSE

Across America the Church has an opportunity to participate in a Joel 2 moment. Key church and political leaders of our nation are sounding the same trumpet that Joel did in his day. The result is a series of sacred assemblies in states across the nation called *The Response*. While there is much anticipation over these gatherings, there is a need to understand what a sacred assembly, or solemn assembly is; what the heart and intentions behind these gatherings are; and what is really being asked of us.

The heart of *The Response* is to keep this gathering purely Joel 2 and 2 Chron. 7:14 inspired. A simple way to understand the heart of the Book of Joel and *The Response* is to realize 4 key points.

FOUR KEY POINTS

1. **Joel's appeal was to the people of God:** the priests, the ministers, the leaders of the country and the Church itself.

The Response is an opportunity for the Church to simply respond. It's for the Church to focus solely on God and us, both individually and corporately. In doing this, political, denominational and personal agendas are dismissed.

2. **Joel requested a holy fast and a sacred assembly.** This is key in capturing the heart and spirit behind the gathering. Key words in Joel are *holy, sacred, weeping, mourning, repentance*. The singular purpose was as Joel 2:12 reads to "return to Me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning."

The Response is pursuing a posture of holiness and humility through repentance. Sacred means "dedicated" or "set apart." This is first met with a personal response, as individuals position themselves correctly with humility and repentance before God leading up to our gathering together.

When this is done and we gather together at *The Response*, we will be positioned correctly before the Lord with a corporate response that is holy, sacred and in humility, focused on ourselves and the Lord alone. Our private posture affects our corporate posture before the Lord.

3. **Joel sought representation of everyone:** the priests and all the people; men and women, young and old.

The Response will be successful if there is a full representation of the Body of Christ, crossing denominational, racial and ethnic, and generational lines to meet at the cross of Christ together. This is an opportunity for us to focus on our common thread: our love for Christ and our belief in prayer.

The realization of a Joel 2 moment requires a commonality in Christ bringing unity in our diversity. It takes intentionality, humility and courage to set aside our differences to look beyond ourselves so that we can gather in the authentic unity that only comes from fixing our eyes and hearts on the Lord.

4. **Joel emphasized that it was to be a top priority.** He asked that all previous plans be put on hold for all to attend. Emphasizing urgency, Joel repeatedly wrote "blow the trumpet," an action demanding action and soberness.

The Response is not a gathering of convenience or recreation. It is a gathering that reflects responsibility, repentance and priority. Attending *The Response* for most means rearranging calendars, rescheduling events and even canceling plans. These cumulative sacrifices will reinforce the strength and power of this moment in the history of the church.

LET US NOT MISS THIS MOMENT

Please continue to pray for this to stay pure and for the hearts of the Body of Christ to be clean. Paul the Apostle said in 1 Corinthians 16:9, "a great and effective door has been opened, yet the adversaries are many..."

There is definitely a great door opened for the Church to respond properly in humility and holiness, yet there are many adversities and challenges. Sadly, oftentimes these challenges come not from the outside, but from the Body of Christ itself. May we all see the larger Kingdom purposes at hand.

(Please read the book of Joel for biblical reference for this simple explanation of a solemn assembly.)