Preparation Guide for a Solemn Assembly

Sunday, Day 1

Joel 2:15-16

“Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.”

Joel, the prophet of God, lead by God called the people to sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. No one was left out. From those who were of age to the babies that was still nursing was to come to this solemn assembly. Your pastor is calling all to participate in the solemn assembly next week.

I know that you have heard messages for the past several weeks regarding a solemn assembly. For some, you understand the importance and are willing to prepare yourself and will attend the solemn assembly. For others, you still don’t grasp the full meaning of what you are being asked to do. You’re still struggling with it all. I’m asking you to lay aside your thoughts regarding what I’m asking you to do and seek God then respond as the Lord leads.

We don’t have to understand everything in order to be obedient unto the Lord. Also, remember you’re not participating in the solemn assembly for the pastor’s sake but because the Lord has ordained it.

Now that your decision is to participate in the solemn assembly, what’s next? Let’s first look at the word “sanctify.” “Sanctify” means to be clean, or to purify oneself. Joel called the people to come together in a solemn assembly for the purpose of purification, for the purpose of confessing and repenting of their sins so that they could be brought back into a proper relationship with God. This is the purpose of the solemn assembly being called at North Gardendale Baptist Church.

From the surface everything looks well at North Gardendale however what is not seen is what often matters. We have the tendency to look at the surface of our life missing the things that are underneath, things that are hindering our relationship with God.

Therefore, you are being called to pray Psalms 139:23-24, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Upon praying this prayer you are being asked to prepare yourself to attend a solemn assembly.

Joel said, “Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.” Joel 2:12
Joel stated what was necessary to prepare oneself for a solemn assembly. You are to come before the Lord with all your heart and with fasting. The reason is obvious. If your heart isn’t in it, it really has no purpose.

And the same is in fasting, if your heart isn’t in it, it has no purpose. Fasting allows you to separate yourself from the things of this world while spending time with the Lord. Fasting is putting the flesh under subjection so that you have a clearer ability to hear from the Lord.

Today you’re being asked to seek the Lord regarding fasting. Again, you’re not doing this for the pastor. Fasting is between you and the Lord therefore seek the Lord and be obedient. Remember, when you make a commitment to the Lord He expects you to fulfill it so be careful and take your time in making the right decision. For some fasting for the week will be right for others it may be a meal or two a day, for others it might be just one day. You cannot do wrong unless you fail to be obedient.

For those who are not able to fast let me make a suggestion. Consider giving up something that is really important to you, something that you are presently doing. Maybe a television show, maybe Facebook, or maybe your hobby. Remember the purpose of fasting is to prepare youself to hear from the Lord while spending time with Him.

If you are willing to give up something that is important to you and use that time with the Lord it will make a difference.

Now that the decision has been made regarding your fasting prepare to put it into practice. When the time comes that you would have been eating or the thing that is important to you step away and spend that time with the Lord.

Take the Bible, maybe a pencil and paper and sit down and talk with God.

Notes

Day 1
Monday, Day 2

Joel 2:15-16

“Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly.”

The trumpet blew, and a solemn assembly was called. If you are on your second day then you have probably made the decision to continue to prepare yourself for the solemn assembly. Praise the Lord.

Joel said, “Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.” Joel 2:12

Today the challenge before you is to continue to allow the Lord to speak to your heart. You have come before the Lord with all your heart, the time of fasting has been decided so what is next.

As you read this page ask the Lord to speak to your heart regarding anything that is within you.

Don’t be tempted to search yourself. Ask the Lord to search your heart. As the Lord speaks respond according to His will, this is where the weeping and mourning comes in. As the Lord convicts you, you are to confess and repent.

Don’t be tempted to rush through this process. Get your Bible, a pen and paper and head to a place where you can be alone. Take your time, read God’s word, mediate and pray, as God speaks respond.

For some, this will be a great challenge not because you have a ton of sins but because this is something new for you. I suggest that you start with prayer. Ask God to help you! “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, James 1:5-6.

Then read Psalms 139:23-24, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Read God’s Word, meditate and sit there and let God speak to you. Write down what you feel God is saying. It doesn’t have to all come together at this point. Just write down what you are impressed to write down. God will bring it all together at the appointed time.

As you understand what God is saying to you, you will need to respond. Joel called it, “weeping and mourning.” We call it confessing and repenting.

Responding to God may not be as easy as it sounds. Sure, if God convicts you of a certain sin you might be able to say, “Lord forgive me for I have sinned.” But, what if He says to you, “I need you to go to ___?___ and tell them you are sorry.” Will you be so willing to obey? Get my point.
Regardless what God tells you to do He will give you the strength to do it. “Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.” Psalms 27:14

“Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.”

Psalms 31:24

When you hear from the Lord, take courage, wait on Him. Then spring into action for he will make a way. The rewards will be amazing. Sometimes the result doesn’t seem amazing but in the end it will be. Anytime we are obedient unto the Lord amazing things will happen, especially within you.

Learning to listen to the Lord and responding is an amazing thing. The more you do it the more you will want to do it. It will change your life forever.
Tuesday, Day 3

“Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.” Joel 2:12

Preparing for a solemn assembly is not as simple as one might think.

Joel bids God’s people to turn to God with their whole heart. As your pastor I’m calling for you to turn to God with your whole heart.

By now I pray that you have determined God’s will for you regarding fasting. I’m praising God with you as you are obedient to His calling in your life.

As you fast and pray you have heard and are hearing from the Lord. It is my prayer that you are responding to the Lord’s leading in your life.

As Joel stated, “with weeping, and with mourning,” it’s my prayer that you are responding as you hear from the Lord you should weep (confess) your sin and mourn (repent) from your sin.

We are to confess and forsake our sins. Confession is simply admitting what God already knows.

The Greek word rendered “confession” literally means to “say the same thing,” an admission of sin. The meaning is “acknowledgement,” with the implication of a change of conduct. It is also used in the sense of a profession, implying the yielding or change of one’s conviction.

Confessions of one’s sin are to be done in different ways.
It could be given to God alone, Psalms 32:3-5.
To one’s neighbor, Luke 17:4, James 5:16.
And when necessary To the entire church, I Corinthians 5:3, II Corinthians 2:6.
“Secret sins are to be rebuked secretly and public sins publicly.”

Take time to read each of these passages of scriptures.

Repentance must always follow confession if forgiveness is to take place.

Repent means to care, or to be concerned. The word is used with reference to Paul’s feeling concerning a certain course of conduct and with reference to God in His attitudes toward His purpose of grace, “For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.” 2 Corinthians 7:8-9
Repent means to have a change of mind. The word expresses the idea of the spiritual change implied in a sinner’s return to God. The term signifies, “to have another mind,” to change the opinion or purpose with regard to sin.

“And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” Luke 24:46-47

“And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.” Mark 1:15

Repent means to turn over or to turn unto. The word is used to bring out more clearly the district change desired in repentance.

It express’s the positive side of repentance, or to indicate the return to God, “But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.” Acts 26:20

True repentance is a “godly sorrow” for sin, an act of turning around and going in the opposite direction.

“And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.” Joel 2:13

The Jews were asked to rend their hearts rather than their garments and to set the truth of repentance from the heart rather than some outwardly appearance. The call to believers today hasn’t changed. God is looking for His children to be real, sincere. Too often a believer goes through the motions of repentance without genuine confession or the motions of confession without repentance. They appear outwardly to be okay when inwardly the sin hasn’t been confessed or repented of therefore forgiveness cannot take place.

In repentance the Jews were to turn unto the Lord their God because God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness.

As believers we are to turn unto the Lord for the same reason.

We know that God will always forgive when a person is sincere about confessing his/her sin and repents.

Are you sincerely ready to meet with God, confess and repent of your sin?

Notes
Seeking the Lord with all your heart, fasting and praying, confessing and repenting doesn’t just happen even if you are asked to do so. So, where does one start. A good place to start is to ask yourself a question and be honest about how you answer it. Remember, your action reveals your heart not your words.

The question for the day is this, “Have you lost your first love?” “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.” Mark 12:30

Does your life represent that God is first in everything you do? What we really love will be shown in what we do.

Christ sent a message to the church of Ephesus. On the outside they looked well but the inside was a different story, “I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted.” Revelation 2:2-3 Is this you?

Let’s look at these passages of scripture to see what it’s actually saying. Here was a body of believers who were laboring with patience’s, stood against evil and those who taught falsely. Stood up for Jesus doing great works in the name of Christ, did not grow weary in their faithfulness. Does this sound like you? You go to church, you serve the Lord. You hate evil. You will even take a stand for Jesus. You have determined that you will be faithful unto the end.

Sounds good doesn’t it. Looking from the outside the church of Ephesus appeared to be right. Every believer would want to be a part of that congregation however Jesus had a problem with them. He looked inwardly and found, “thou hast left thy first love.” Revelations 2:4

Many believers today have left their first love. They look good, doing the right things and yet they don’t love Jesus as they should.

What does it mean to have “left thy first love?” It’s not hard to figure out, leaving your first love means that you do not have the strong and passionate affection for God and for holy things that you once had. Go back to the time you were first saved. Remember the love you had then and ask yourself. “Do I still have that same love?”

When a person is first saved, they have a love and zeal for the Lord that words cannot express.

They are excited, desiring to be holy, to do what’s right because of their love for God. Their service for the Lord isn’t about doing because it’s the right thing to do or a type of formality. Their service is driven from love not for any other reason.
Love is the motivating factor.

When a believer loses his/her love for Jesus he/she can continue to do the right things but they are done for the wrong reasons and it becomes a formality rather than a love for.

When a believer continues to go through the motion of serving the Lord without love they will die, it becomes a form, a formality, eventually the light will go out and they will be no more. They will go by the wayside.

When a believer continues to serve the Lord because they have a love for Him, they are strengthened and encouraged. Love becomes love which becomes love. They will bear fruit. They will follow the commands of the Lord with zeal and excitement. Their light will become brighter not dimmer.

You may still be at a place where you don’t know if for sure you have left your first love. Jesus makes it clear, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” John 14:15 NKJV

John 14:23-25, “Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me.” NKJV

The bottom line is, if you are obeying, (doing) God’s Word you have not lost your first love but if you struggle or you’re not obeying God’s Word to its fullest you have lost your first love.

Those who have lost their first love must, “remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works.” Revelation 2:5a

The instructions are clear, when a believer leaves their first love they are to remember where they were, where they have fallen from and repent, go back to their first love and serve the Lord because of love not duty, responsibility or formality.

They must seek to be revived, to recover their first zeal, to be serious about their relationship.

If not, Jesus said, “I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” Revelation 2:5b

Until a believer goes back to their first love there will be no fasting, praying, confessing or repenting to the extent that God desires and a solemn assembly will not be beneficial for you.

Notes

Day 4
Thursday, Day 5
Removing Idols

Maybe the quickest way to leave our first love is having a love for this world.

We are told, “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.” Mark 12:30

We are warned, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” 1 John 2:15-16

Yet it’s so easy to want both this world and the blessing of the Lord. A sure sign that you are in trouble, spiritually speaking, is to stop and take inventory of our love for the things of this world.

Stop and pray. What things have taken your attention away from the Lord? Don’t rush through this list. Take your time, pray over each, remember to pray Psalms 139:23-24, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

___ job  ___ hobby  ___ television  ___ phone
___ friend  ___ family  ___ pleasing others  ___ internet
___ fame  ___ position  ___ money  ___ addition(s)
___ sports  ___ travel  ___ entertainment  ___ something else

What’s in your life that you would struggle to give up for the Lord, should he ask?

Confess, repent and ask the Lord for strength to overcome. “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” Galatians 5:1

If you don’t think any of the above things are a hindrance to you or you cannot think of anything else, do me a favor.

Take a pencil and paper and write down what you have done in the past week and how much time you have put into each thing you have done.

For example: work, 40 hours; read, 8 hours; watched television, 6 hours; etc.
Did you list have prayer, reading God’s Word, serving others, sharing your faith, attending church, etc?

**How did the God things match up with the worldly things?**

**Was God pleased?**

**Could you have done more for the Lord?**

**Now, is there anything that is taking the place of the Lord that has become an idol to you?**

**Confess, repent and ask the Lord for strength to overcome.**

Remember Romans 8:2-8, rejoice in what the Lord has done for you, “ For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”

**Notes**
Friday, Day 6
Humble Yourself

2 Chronicles 7:14-15

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place.

It is my opinion that our nation is in trouble, we as God’s people have failed. Many factors indicate that the church should be preparing for the return of the Lord. Instead, our impurities is bringing God’s judgment on America and on His church by removing His hedge of protection and giving us over to the consequences of our sins.

Unless we repent, the gravity of His judgment will intensify with each passing day as He pours out His wrath through chastening.

Therefore, we must be honest. We must humble ourselves and allow the Lord to reveal to us those things that isn’t right in our life. Through prayer we must seek God’s face confessing and repenting of those things that the Spirit of God reveals to us.

Because God hears the prayers of His people as we confess and repent God will forgive us.

In doing so, maybe God will remove His judgment or maybe it won’t be as intense. Regardless of how God responds towards this nation, it will make a difference in us individually and as a body of Christ.

Let’s dig a little deeper at the meaning of the words and phrases found in 2 Chronicles 7:14-15.

“If my people, which are called by my name,” “if” is a two letter word with a big meaning. If refers to a condition. If you do this I will do that. God gave his people a condition, “if.”

Who is the condition given to, “my people, which are called by my name?” In 2 Chronicles, “my people” refers to the Jewish people. Today “my people” refers to those who are born again, who are saved, “If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 2:3-5

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.” 1 Peter 2:9-10
We see the “IF’s” given to God’s people.

**If we**, “Shall humble,” ourselves that is, if we will bend our knees, lower into subjection, if we will humble ourselves before God.

**If we will**, “pray,” that is, if we will call out to God or have communication with God.

**If we will**, “seek God’s face,” that is, if we will search out, or strive after God so that we might see and hear Him.

**If we will**, “turn from their wicked ways,” that is, if we will walk away from those things that isn’t pleasing unto the Lord.

**If we will** “humble ourselves, and pray, and seek God’s face, and turn from our wicked ways.” God will “hear from heaven.” God will hear. God will pay attention to what His people is praying and will respond.

**AND He will** “forgive us of our sin,” that is, he will pardon or spare his people of their sin, of their punishment.

**He will** “heal their land.” The word “heal” means to mend, to cure. It refers to making whole again. “Land” refers to country, the place in which you dwell.

**If we do what God has asked of us, God’s** “eyes shall be open, and His ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place.”

God will see the repentance attitude of his people and it will be received.

God will hearken to the prayer of his people.

**There is hope for God’s people and their nation. “IF,” we will be obedient.**

**Are you willing to be obedient to God’s “IF’s”**?

**Notes**
Holiness is foreign to us. We know what it means, “to be blameless or pure” but we haven’t really experienced it at least to the fullness of our Lord and Savior.

Jesus was without sin, “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

Hebrews 4:14-16

As a believer we often have a sincere desire to be holy but we fail. For some this is discouraging so they give up or don’t even try, saying “I’m just a sinner.” For others they realize their failures, confess, repent and try again. **Which are you?**

Giving up or not attempting to be holy is a sin. God expects us to strive for perfection, when we fail we are to confess and repent, pick up where we are and strive again.

There is a big difference in trying to live holy through the Spirit of God and trying to live holy within my own strength.

As a believer the flesh and the devil is constantly fighting against us and if we don’t allow the Lord to help us we will continually fail, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” Ephesians 6:10-13

**If living holy is foreign and so hard to do where does one start?**

**It starts with you making the decision to live holy.** Once you have made the decision to live holy and pure you must remove those things that hindering you from doing so. If you are wearing white clothing, you do all you can to stay away from dirt, mud or any other things that will cause your cloths to become dirty. It’s no different in living a holy life.
This is going to take some serious soul searching so go back to Psalms 139:23-24, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

There are some things that we know that believers should not be around but there other things that may not be a problem for someone else but is for you.

You will have to allow the Lord to reveal these things to you and then be willing to clean house (that is remove those things that is hindering you.) If it is a person, you will have to make the decision to stay away from that person.

Check the ones you are struggling with and think of a way you can correct it and/or remove it from your life.

_____ Are you following in the path of the wicked
_____ Drinking of strong drink/Drunkenness
_____ Have you failed to be salt and light to this world
_____ Are you trying to serve God and the world
_____ Have you truly forgiven all who have done you wrong
_____ Are your yes, yes and your no, no’s
_____ Are you living free from the law of sin and death (are you in bondage to sin)
_____ Are you struggling with an addiction
_____ Love without hypocrisy
_____ Using flattery
_____ Have a rebellious spirit
_____ Love your enemies
_____ Adultery
_____ Evil thoughts
_____ Given to hospitality
_____ Are you selfish
_____ Gossiper
_____ Do you live in contentment

___ Feet that runs to evil
___ Refuses to hear the Word of God
___ A heart that devises wicked plans
___ One that sows strife (division)
___ Failure to fulfill a promise to God
___ Do you bear false witness
___ A lying tongue
___ Stealing
___ Using Astrology
___ Lust
___ Do you live in doubt
___ Not tithing – (10% of your income)
___ Jealously
___ Covetousness
___ Do you fear God
___ Trustworthy
___ Not praying enough

Day 7
Do you complain

Murder (hatred in your heart)

Homosexuality

Foolish talking

Are you a stumbling block to others

Unloving

Pride

Are you using your spiritual gift correctly

Rejoicing and weeping with the brethren

Do you allow others to comfort you

Do you love your spouse, children as you should

Do you carry the burdens of others

Are you grieving the Holy Spirit

Do you live in fear

Do you have a form of godliness but denying its power

Cling to what is good

Wickedness

Have you forsaken all for Jesus

Vulgar talk

Being lazy

Do you struggle with an addiction

Do you walk in wisdom

Deceit

Patient in tribulation

Do you pray with confidence, boldness

Do you make the best of your time

Do you love yourself more than God

Do you have a love for money

Do you follow the Word of God

Day 7