

Lesson #3-13

Joel's Prophecy of Hope

Joel 2:12-13, 28-29



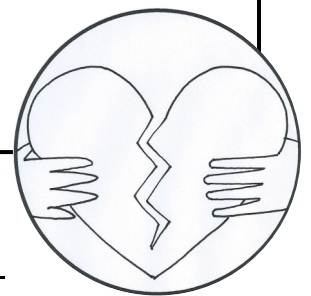
Key Verse:

Rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the LORD, your God, for [God] is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.

Joel 2:13

The Point:

God patiently and lovingly calls us to repent.



Introduction

Joel was a prophet speaking to the Israelites after the exile and encouraging them to turn back to God. He tells them not to focus on things on the outside, but to focus on changing their hearts. God loves them and wants them to turn back with their whole heart. Joel announces that God has a message of hope. God wants everyone to know this hope, so God's Spirit will be poured out on everyone so that they can see a picture or a glimpse of what it will be like on that day.

The Point

God patiently and lovingly calls us to repent. Joel preaches about God's patient, loving, and faithful nature. On "The Day of the Lord," all people will have access to God's vision for human community. In our current, unstable world, in the midst of fear and corruption, this passage brings us hope. As we prepare to experience the Day of the Lord, we can put our hope in a faithful God who longs for a restored relationship with humankind. We can press on with confidence, assured that the day is coming when all people will have access to God's vision for human community.

Activities a la Carte

Activities

Supplies

Introduction

Getting Lost

Complete a maze.

10 min.

- † Activity Sheet #3-13.A
- † Pens or pencils

Learning the Story

Straight to the Heart

Hunt for hearts.

15 min.

- † Bible
- † Colored paper
- † Scissors

Activities

Handprint Prayers

Learn a pattern for prayer.

10 min.

- † Pens or pencils
- † Paper

Advent Mural

Continue to build the Advent mural.

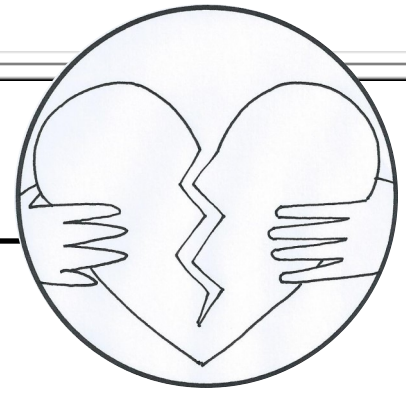
5 min.

- † Advent mural from Lesson #3-12
- † Glue or tape
- † Yellow or orange paper
- † Scissors
- † Hearts from Learning the Story

Prayer

- † Large paper heart

God's Story @ Home



Introduction (10 minutes)

Getting Lost

Complete a maze.

Supplies:

- † Activity Sheet #3-13.A
- † Pens or pencils

Preparation:

1. Make one copy of Activity Sheet #3-13.A for each person.

Instructions:

1. Invite each person to begin working on the maze.
2. **Did anyone finish the maze? Take a few minutes to share what you liked and what you did not like about working on the maze.**
3. **Did anyone go down one direction and realize they had to turn around and try another route? What did that feel like?**
4. **Sometimes we end up going the wrong way and have to turn around. Has anyone ever been in the car and had to turn around? Has anyone ever been on a hike or walk and had to turn around and try another way?**
5. **There are lots of times when it is better to turn around than to keep going when you are headed the wrong way. In our story today, the prophet Joel tells the Israelites that they need to turn around and head back to God. The ways they have been acting are not right for them at all. They need to turn their hearts back to God who loves them.**



Learning the Story (15 minutes)

Straight to the Heart

Hunt for hearts.

Supplies:

- † Bibles
- † Colored paper
- † Scissors

Preparation:

1. Cut out paper hearts of various sizes and colors, so you have at least two per person.
2. Hide the paper hearts around your home.
3. Mark Joel 2 with a bookmark in the Bible.

Instructions:

1. **Joel was a prophet, which means he shared messages from God. Today, we are going to hear one of Joel's messages. Would someone like to read part of what Joel wrote to tell people about God?**
2. Read Joel 2:12-13 aloud.
3. **Joel told the people to "return to God with all their..." does anyone remember what he said?** *[Hearts.]* **The people had gone far away from God. Just like the maze at the beginning of our time today, they were headed the wrong way. They needed to turn around.**
4. **Joel also wanted the people to know what God was like. Let's listen again, and this time, listen for words that describe God. Read Joel 2:12-13 again.**
5. **What were some of the words that describe God?** *[Gracious, merciful, slow to anger, abounding in love.]*
6. **What is Joel saying? Even though the people's hearts had gone far from God, what will happen when they return?** *[God will be glad they have turned their hearts, God will not punish them but loves them.]* **God is so happy when hearts turn back.**
7. **God loves each one of us and wants us to turn our hearts to God. Sometimes we get lost though, and we do not live the way God designed us to live. Sometimes we do not show kindness or mercy, and sometimes we do not care for others and the world. In those times, it is as though our hearts are a little lost.**



8. **There are some lost hearts hidden in our home. I want everyone to go on a search to find two lost paper hearts. Once you find two, you could help someone else who has not found a heart, or you can sit back down and write your name on one heart and one thing about God on the other heart. Everybody go searching for two lost hearts!**
9. Once everyone has found two hearts, invite them to be seated and write their name on one heart and one thing about God on the other heart.
10. **Joel wants hearts that are lost to turn back to God, but Joel has something else he wants to tell everyone about. God's Spirit will be poured out.**
11. Read Joel 2:28-29.
12. **The Spirit of God will be poured out on all kinds of people. All those people will be able to glimpse God's kingdom and tell everyone the good news about God's love.**
13. **Are the hearts you found all the same? No. God's Spirit will be on all kinds of hearts—old hearts, new hearts, big hearts, little hearts. Everyone will be able to tell about God's hope and love. We can tell about the hope of Jesus, the best picture of God's kingdom. Jesus shows us how much God loves us. God loves us so much that God would even send a son to help us understand the kingdom.**
14. **You wrote your name on one heart to help you remember to turn your heart to God. You wrote something about God on the other heart. Remember that you are chosen by God to share God's hope for the world. When you share about the hope of Jesus, you help other people see part of God's kingdom. This good news about God is meant to be shared.**
15. **Go give that heart to someone else When someone gives you a heart with something great about God on it, say, "Thank you, God!"**



Activity (10 minutes)

Handprint Prayers

Learn a pattern for prayer.

Supplies:

- † Pens or pencils
- † Paper

Instructions:

1. **Prayer is one way we can turn our hearts to God. Sometimes it can be difficult to know what to say when we pray. A pattern can help.**
2. **Everyone trace your hand on your piece of paper.**
3. **We are each held in God's hands, and we can use our handprint to pray. Each finger will remind us to pray for someone or something.**
4. **Everyone hold up one hand. Which finger is closest to you? *[Your thumb.]* Our thumb can remind us to pray for those closest to us: our friends and our family. I might pray for... give an example of friends or family members you would pray for.**
5. **Point to each finger as you explain each step.**
6. **Everyone hold up your index finger. You would use this finger to point. This finger will remind us to pray for all the people who help to teach us or give us wisdom. You could pray for your teacher, your pastor, or your parents.**
7. **Now it is time for your third finger. This stands the tallest, so we will use it to remind us to pray for our leaders and our government.**
8. **Did you know that your ring finger is the weakest finger? This finger will remind us to pray for those who are sick, sad, or lonely, and those who need some extra help.**
9. **Which finger is left? The pinky finger will remind us to pray for ourselves.**
10. **If you would like, you can write this down on the drawing of your hand so you can remember. Let's review. Your thumb reminds you to pray for ... *[those closest to you, friends and family]* Your index finger reminds you to pray for ... *[those who teach]* Your third finger reminds us to pray for *[leaders and government]* Your ring finger reminds you to pray for ...*[those who are sick, sad, or need help]* and your pinky reminds you to pray for ...*[yourself]*.**
11. **Try to use this pattern to pray everyday this week as a way to turn your heart to God.**

Activity (5 minutes)

Advent Mural

Continue to build the Advent mural.

Supplies:

- † Advent mural from Lesson #3-12
- † Glue or tape
- † Yellow or orange paper
- † Scissors
- † Hearts from Learning the Story activity

Preparation:

1. Cut a flame shape from the yellow or orange paper.

Instructions:

1. **Does everyone still have the heart with their name? We are continuing to look forward to Christmas, the coming of Jesus with great hope. We learned that God's Spirit has been poured out on all of us so that we all can share the great hope of God's kingdom. Attach the heart with your name to the second candle of our Advent mural. The hope of Christmas is getting closer. Remember, you are a part of sharing that hope!**
2. Place the second flame shape above the second candle.

Prayer

Supplies:

† Large paper heart

1. Form a circle.
2. **Can anyone think of something that they used to do, but now they are too old to do?**
Allow people to share.
3. **Can anyone think of something they are not old enough to do yet?** Allow people to share.
4. **Is there anything you are never too young or too old to do?** Allow people to share.
5. **No matter how old or young you are, we hear from Joel that God's Spirit is in you and you can share the hope of God's coming.**
6. **Joel wanted us to turn our hearts to God and learn more about the characteristics of God. Most importantly, God promises to bring hope. We see that hope in Jesus, and we wait with hope to see all of God's kingdom. I am going to pass this heart around the circle. When you receive it, turn around in place as a reminder to turn your heart to God. Then share your favorite word to describe God. Pass the heart to the next person.**
7. Pass the heart around the circle and let each person contribute if they choose.
8. **Great job describing God. God is full of hope!**

Let us pray.

Faithful God, you know our hearts and you love us. Thank you for your many characteristics: loving, faithful, merciful, (and others that the group named).

Help us this week to share your hope by (share ideas that the group had of how to share God's hope this week). Help us to give you our whole hearts. Amen.

If you have the "Living the Word: Sharing God's Story @ Home" sheet, remember to use it throughout the week as a part of your family devotions!

Getting Lost

Complete a maze.

