

**Materials I Need:****Memory Work:**

Learning the Old Testament books starting with Isaiah

The Prophet - Joel

The People - Southern Kingdom of Judah

The Prophecy - The Locust Army Was God's Warning.

The Principle - Heed God's Warnings And Turn Your Heart To Him.

Aim Questions:

1. Who was Joel, and what did he do?
2. What did the locust do in the book of Joel?
3. What did God tell the people to tear and why?
4. What are the three ways that Joel told the people to show their repentance to God?
5. Why did God send the locust?
6. If God sent a locust plague to your house, what would be the things that He would desire you to repent of?
7. How do you find out what God does not want in your life?

Hook:

VIDEO. Bring in a video depicting a swarm of locusts. The movie "Ten Commandments" with Charlton Heston has a scene where locusts are one of the plagues God brought down on Egypt. After viewing the video, ask children about how it would be if we experienced a real live locust plague here, today. What is it like? What is left behind? What could you do to protect yourself?

PICTURES. Visit your local library or look in some of your own resources for actual pictures of locusts. Have them available for the Bible students to peruse. There is a drawing found on page **Joel Graphics Page 1** (3JOE08JR.GF1) if you would like to use it as a last resort.

INTERVIEW. Have a radio interview with a locust. Use a cardboard box to make a pretend radio. Have the teacher adjust the knobs and waa-la an interview begins. Larry Locust finds himself interviewed by Wayed Knowdat (Wād Nōd t). Use an Encyclopedia for interview questions. Record this interview in advance. Use appropriate voices to make the interview interesting. Every time Larry Locust answers a question, Wayed could answer, "Why-I-din-Know-dat." Here is a brief example:

Wayed - Well, Larry...are you a grasshopper or a locust?

Larry - I prefer to be called a locust. Grasshoppers are usually smaller. We big boys are called locust.

Wayed - What is your family like.

Larry - My family is great, when there are only a few of us. Sometimes my family can grow and grow and grow until there are literally thousands of locust. That's when things get crazy.

Wayed - Crazy? How?

Larry - Well you know us locust can fly and hop. We have wings and strong jumping legs. When there are thousands of us all together, there is not enough food because it all gets eaten. We eat almost any kind of plant we can find. Without food, every locust starts to jump and fly around looking for more to eat. Let me tell you when there are 10,000 locust jumping and flying around were there used to be 100, it is a mess. Jumping and flying, jumping and flying. Everywhere you look another locust is crashing into you. Thou we can jump and fly, we cannot guide out direction very well. Jumping, flying, crashing, smashing, bumping, squishing. (Now Larry is worked up) It's crazy. We all get worked up. I MEAN WORKED WAY UP!!! WE ARE JUMPING AND HUNGRY AND CRASHING AND SMASHING AND PUSHING AND SHOIVING AND HITTING AND FALLING!! IT'S CRAZY I TELL YA CRAZY!!!!

Wayed - Why-I-din-Know-dat. Calm down Larry you are really getting agitated.

Larry - It's a nightmare I tell ya! Every where you look...locust! Brothers Sisters, locust I don't even know, and they are all hungry. Thousands of locust and more being hatched every second. Everyone begins to feel like "I GOTTA GET OUT OF HERE!"

Wayed - Settle down Larry. It sounds really bad. What do you do when it gets so bad?

Larry - You do any thing to get away from there. I jumped into the air and started flying as hard as I could looking for food. Any kind of food. I was so hungry I would eat any plant I saw.

Wayed - Well that's good. So you got away, when this happened to you?

Larry - No way!!! Everyone else had the same idea at the same time. All of the sudden 15,000 locust were in the air looking for something to eat. We looked like a big cloud hovering over the earth looking for food.

Wayed - Kind of like a big hungry cloud?

Larry - Yes, it is huge and black because our bodies are so dark.

Wayed - Kind of like a big black huge hungry cloud! Why-I-din-Know-dat!

Larry - And when we found something to eat...we ate it all. Entire fields of crops, people's gardens, we even went inside people's homes to find things to eat.

Wayed - What did the people do, when all of those locust showed up.

Larry - Some of them tried to shoe us away, but it was a waste of time because so many locust filled the sky. Some closed their doors and there windows and waited for us to eat everything. Some ran and hid, while others started fires to stop us, but we just kept coming. We ate and we ate and we ate until not one plant was left standing.

Wayed - And then what happened????

Larry - The big black huge hungry cloud of locust moved on to find more food.

Wayed - So that must be why they call it a plague. A plague is something that is very destructive, that comes without warning, and sometimes there is nothing to be done but wait until it passes. It sounds like one of the plagues that God sent on Egypt when Moses was leading the people. Thank you for telling us about being a locust Larry, and here...have something to eat. I wouldn't want you and your family to get that hungry again.

Larry - You're welcome. Mind if I eat those flowers on your table, too? Chomp! Chomp!



Bible Drill - Have students race to find the following verses in their bibles. All of them are about locust: Exodus 10:19, Leviticus 11:22, Deuteronomy 28:38, , Deuteronomy 28:42, 1King 8:37, Psalms 78:46, Psalms 109:23, Joel 1:4, Joel 2:25.



Book:

Presentation Ideas -



WHOLE HEART. Use this pattern as an illustration during the Bible Adventure. Glue the heart shapes together with the words inside. When you tear the heart, weeping, mourning and fasting will fall from the heart. Pin up these words to illustrate God's desire for his people's repentance. **Joel Graphics Page 2** (3JOE08JR.GF2)

Bible Adventure -

God is in control of all things. He can use whatever means He wishes to direct events or to get man's attention. He has often used the forces of nature to accomplish His will. Such is the case in the book of Joel. Joel, a prophet of God, begins his prophecy by describing a devastating event--the invasion into Judah by a swarm of locusts. It is difficult for most modern Americans to imagine what this would be like. This swarm of locusts (which, incidentally, are a lot like grasshoppers) probably numbered in the billions.

If you were to look up into the sky and see them approaching, they would blacken the sky for miles. Imagine them coming to earth. They move over anything growing, and with their scissors-like jaws begin to devour everything in sight. Nothing is spared. All crops are eaten right down to the ground. The locusts even strip the bark right off the trees, leaving them bare and dead. Wave after wave of locusts come, and when they are through, the land is devastated--bare of any growing thing.

Along with the locusts came a drought. Seeds shriveled up in the ground instead of sprouting. Not only were the crops gone, but it appeared there was no way to grow more. Even the cows and sheep were starving.

Why did God allow this to happen to His people? Joel tells them that God meant it as a warning to them of judgment, which he calls the "Day of the Lord". Last week as we heard the words of the prophet Nahum, we learned that although God is slow to anger, He does have a set time for dealing with the wickedness of man. The "Day of the Lord" is God's final, fierce judgment on all wickedness. Joel tells the people of Judah that the locust plague and the drought are God's warning to them. You see, God's people had fallen into a way of living that tried to ignore God. They forgot that God is the source of all things. He is the One who causes the rain to fall and the crops to grow. He is the only one who can keep locusts from devouring all the crops. God had given His people life and all good things and they had turned their backs on Him.

Joel gives the people a very strong warning. He tells them they must make some changes, or God's anger will fall on them in a way that will make the locusts and drought seem minor. Joel 2:11 says." . . . the Day of the Lord is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?" But God wants to give His people the opportunity to change. He says that He wants them to return to Him. However, God makes it clear that He does not want them to return unless they can do it with all their hearts.

In Joel 2:12&13 God explains what their repentance must look like:

Even now,` declares the LORD, `return to me with **all your heart**, with **fasting** and **weeping** and **mourning**.` **Rend your heart** and not your garments.

Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. (NIV)

God was not looking for the people to simply say, "I'm sorry", and then move on as if nothing had happened. Words were not proof of a people who were truly sad for their sin, and ready to change. God states specifically that he wants **all** of the peoples hearts. That means he would not settle for half hearted efforts. He would not be pleased with the people only obeying God when they felt like it, or when it was convenient. He wanted all of their attention to be turned to obeying God and knowing Him better.

God gave three ways that the people would show there sincere repentance. One way was **fasting**. Fasting is going without eating so that you may focus your attention on God. it is nothing like a diet. Fasting is one way of saying to God that His will is so important to you that even eating not be in the way of praying and searching for God's will. Fasting demonstrates that you are serious about the issue or problem that you are taking to God. It can be a meaningful part of asking Him for guidance.

Another way that the people could prove their desire to turn from evil and do good was **weeping** or we might say **crying**. God knew that if the people were really aware of how their sin had hurt and angered God, they would be moved to genuine tears. They might cry because they were afraid of how they had offended God. They might weep out of a deep feeling of regret for the evil that they had done. Being sorry often causes people to cry, even if nobody see them do it. Your tears say to God, "I'm sorry for how I disobeyed and ignored you God. Please forgive me."

Mourning, like weeping involves tears, but mourning lasts longer than a good hard cry. Mourning means that you spend several days reviewing your mistake. People mourn when someone in their family dies. They don't cry once and forget about it. They are sad for several days. Mourning over your sin does not mean that you feel bad forever, however, it does mean that you feel some effects from realizing how awful your sin is. God knew that the Israelites had only pretended to be sorry for their sin. He was not interested in watching them act as if they were sorry when they really were not. He was looking for their hearts to be changed. Mourning over the wrong they had done would lead them to want to change. God was looking for the Israelites to be sorry to the point of changing their behavior. "Tear your hearts not your clothes", God said. Instead of putting on a big show and tearing their shirts to show how upset they

were, God called upon Israel to tear their stubborn hearts. In other words work on the inside of yourselves, your thoughts, your desires, your stubbornness.

God expects the same thing today. He is not impressed by big tears and loud cries, if we are not going to change our actions. We can say we are sorry, but if we are not willing to turn from sin and obey God, He knows that we are not really sorry.

God's call to us today is no different than the call He gave through Joel many years ago. The Day of the Lord is yet to come, and we would do well to listen to the warnings of Joel and other writers of Scripture. Where is your heart? What do you spend time thinking about, dreaming about and planning? What do you spend your time and money on? How often do you talk to God and ask Him what His plans are for you? If your heart is far from God, it may be that you have never put your faith and trust in Jesus, God's Son, to take care of the sin in your life. If you have trusted Him to save you, but you find you do not long for God like you used to and that He is not the most important thing in your life, God wants you to return to Him. Let the warnings in God's Word cause you to tear your heart in sorrow over turning your back on Him.

What do you think the people of Joel's time did? They did what God wanted them to do. They fasted and cried out to God for mercy. They begged forgiveness for not putting Him first. God heard them and made some wonderful promises to them. Their land became green and fruitful again. There was plenty to eat and drink. The rains fell in their season. The people were full of praise when they saw what God had done.

God has wonderful things in store for you, too, but remember, you must come to Him with all your heart. Put Him first, run after Him. He desires and deserves nothing less.



Look:



Crafty Idea. Divide into smaller groups and talk while you tear. Bring several sheets of colored tissue paper. Lead everyone in the group in tearing the tissue paper into small thumb size scraps of paper. After you have accumulated an adequate pile, have students assemble the pattern of a heart by gluing tissue into place on a piece of construction paper. Mating shades of red will help the "heart work" look more appealing. At the bottom of the page have students print out the following words with marker: "Return to me with **all your heart**, with **fasting** and **weeping** and **mourning**." **Rend your heart** and not your garments." Joel 2:12

Here are some discussion questions to talk about as you tear:

1. The Jews used to tear their clothing showing that they were extremely upset. Of all the things to do, why do you think they chose tearing their clothes?
2. How do we show extreme emotions, today?
3. How is fasting like and not like dieting?
4. What is the difference between weeping and mourning?
5. What do you think the difference is between your heart and your mind?
6. What kind of things are in your heart that you know should not be?



BOOKMARK. Use colored paper to create an attractive bookmark. Write the Principle and draw or glue locust onto the bookmark so that you will remember to heed God's warnings from Joel! Color, decorate and draw to personalize each bookmark. **Joel Graphics Page 3** (3JOE08JR.GF3)



DROUGHT/SWARM RELAY. *To begin you will need: 1 bucket per team, 1 dixie cup per person and one main water source. Divide the class into 2 - 4 teams.* Today is the beginning of our drought and we need to get as much water from our wells as we can. That means getting water from our main source into our team bucket. You will use a small dixie cup to scoop water out and get it to your team bucket. Oh, did I tell you about the locust? That means, you'll have to hold on to the cup with your mouth, pour it into the bucket without your hands! Why, you ask??? Because you have to swat the locust away!!! The team that saves the most water in their bucket wins!



In Your Own Words. Help students look up the following passages. Have them read it out loud, and then say the meaning of the verse(s) in their own words. Use the following questions as a guide to help students express what they think the meaning is. Who is speaking in this verse? What are

they speaking about? What do they want the listeners to know or do? Joel 1:11; Joel 2:8; Joel 2:17; Joel 2:25; Joel 3:17



Took:

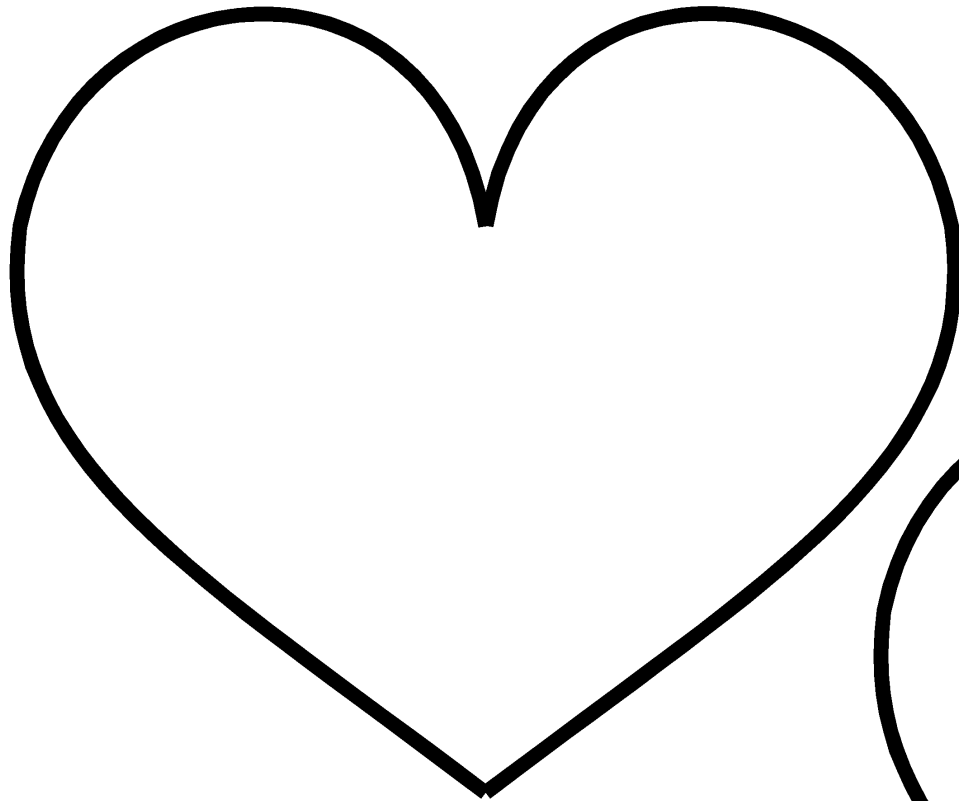
PROPHET PAGE. This is a half sheet of paper for the Bible students to fill out. This sheet will also help with the Memory Work. If these pages are all saved, the Bible students will have a booklet on the minor prophets that they have put together. These pages will fit into a small binder.
3JOE08JR.GF4

LETTER. In your small groups have the Bible students read the letter together. As you are reading the letter together fill in the blanks. These answers can be used for further discussion or kept private between students and God. You know your group. Use the letter how it will best fit your group. **Joel Graphics Page 5** (3JOE08JR.GF5)

Remember. Who knows the books of the OT or from Isaiah to Malachi. Give out special stickers for the bookmarks for students who are successful!!!



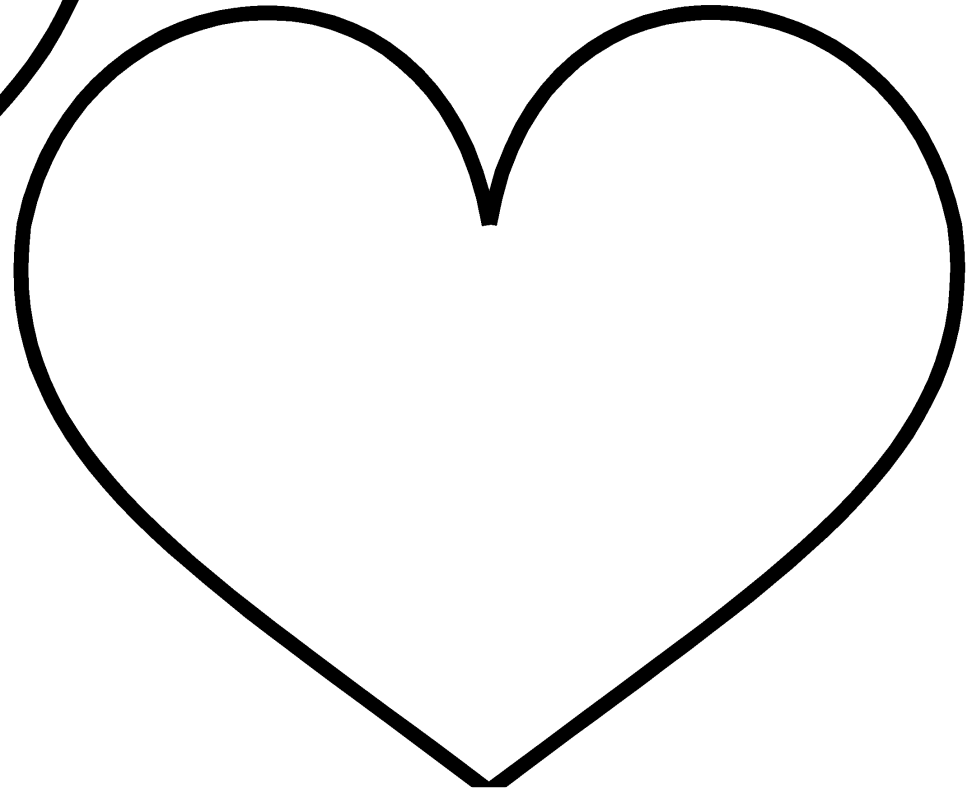




MOURNING

FASTING

WEEPING



BOOKMARK PATTERN

Joel



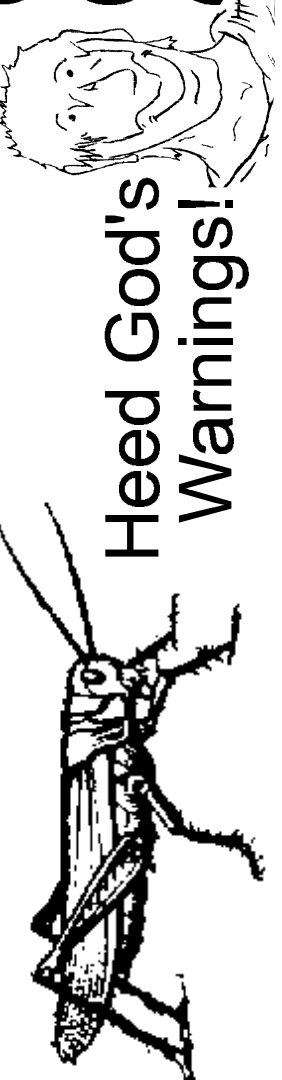
Heed God's Warnings!

Joel



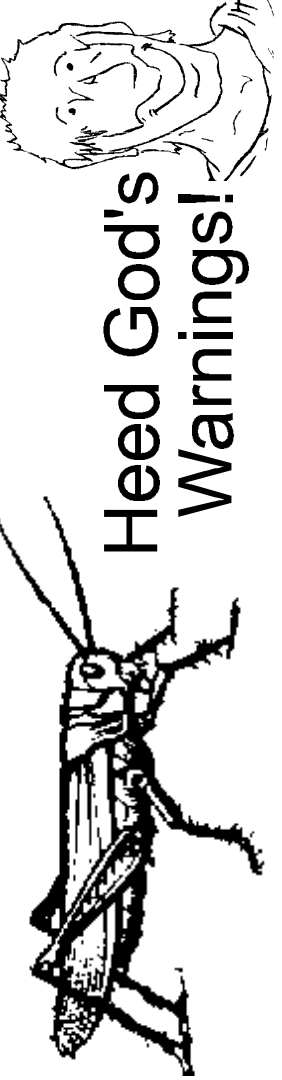
Heed God's Warnings!

Joel



Heed God's Warnings!

Joel



Heed God's Warnings!

BOOK: _____

PROPHET: _____

PROPHECY: _____

PRINCIPLE: _____

PEOPLE: _____

Notes.

BOOK: _____

PROPHET: _____

PROPHECY: _____

PRINCIPLE: _____

PEOPLE: _____

Notes.

October 28, 1996

Dear God,

Your word can serve as a warning to us,
today.

God, my heart is more focused on

more than it is focused on you.

Help me to move the attention that I spend
on _____ to

my relationship with you, for your glory.

Thank you God for warning us when we
need it. I think _____

has served as a warning to me. This is how
it will cause me to change. I will _____

Father I give you some/ part/ all of my heart
so that you may be praised!

Heeding Your Warning,
