

A Prophets Heart Cry: Call a Sacred Assembly

by Shane Idleman

A sacred assembly is a time to seek God with urgency and desperation, consecrate a fast, and cry out to God, with the goal of achieving purity, unity, and God's presence.

Duration: 30:23

Scripture: Joel 1:14, Zephaniah 2:1

Topics: "Desperation for God", "Unity in Prayer"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the urgent need for a Sacred Assembly, drawing from the book of Joel, where God calls His people to gather, fast, and cry out in desperation for His mercy. He highlights the importance of unity, purity, and a heartfelt pursuit of God, especially in times of national crisis and personal turmoil. Idleman warns against complacency and encourages believers to seek God with all their hearts, reminding them that true revival comes from sincere prayer and repentance. He stresses that God is gracious and merciful, willing to relent from judgment if His people turn back to Him. The sermon serves as a call to action for the church to engage in fervent prayer and seek God's intervention in their lives and nation.

Transcript

The Sacred Assembly is from the book of Joel, where God would say, okay, we've reached a point here of almost no return. You need to call a Sacred Assembly, call the leaders into the church, consecrate a fast, and cry out to God. And there's not a formula, well, you know, let's do this, let's have, you know, open mics for prayer.

There's no formula. And often you'll see that when the Holy Spirit is leading or guiding, there's not a clear-cut, you know, example to follow. All we know is that God hears desperation.

God hears the cries of His people. God hears brokenness. And so that's what a Sacred Assembly is.

And I wanna just read from Zephaniah of all places. Zephaniah, and this isn't even Joel. Gather yourselves together, oh undesirable nation, before the decree is issued, or the day passes like chaff.

In other words, he's saying, before God's judgment falls, before the decree is issued, before the Lord's fierce anger comes upon you. And these are hard things to say, but they're in the Bible. And I made a commitment to the Lord years ago that I've gotta preach His Word or I don't wanna preach at all.

We don't just only go after the hard stuff. We bring in the pleasantries and the encouragement. But it's the totality of God's Word preached in all its fullness is where the power of the Spirit can really change and challenge the hearts.

And he says here, before the Lord's fierce anger comes upon you, before the day of the Lord's anger is here, seek the Lord, seek the Lord, all you meek of the earth. He's not calling the arrogant and the proud at Washington, Sacramento, Hollywood. He's calling God's people.

Come, you meek of the earth, those who have upheld His justice and begin again to seek righteousness, seek humility, that it may be with you, that you'll be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger. In other words, God can spare His remnant. God can save His remnant.

God can answer the prayers of His people. And there's something special. And I know, I say it myself, so please don't misunderstand, but I can do this at home, Shane.

Yeah, me too, I do it all the time. But there's something uniquely different when I have to pull my flesh here, get ready and minister to God's people and come in corporate prayer where two or three are gathered, there I am in the midst of them and where we say, Lord, this is so important. This unity is so important.

And so there's four things that encompass a sacred assembly. There's urgency. There's urgency.

Everything else can wait. Everything else can wait. I've got to find God.

I've got to seek Him. I don't know about you, but I've got to hear from Him in these dire times. I need to know what is God's will.

There's an urgency. There's always an urgency to seeking God. Today is the day of salvation.

Harden not your hearts when you hear His voice. There's always an urgency. And I believe we've become very complacent.

There's not an urgency. Business as usual is not gonna cut it in these dire times. And so you'll see something like that, it's urgent.

Hey, we just had a men's breakfast this morning. Richard did worship and Gary gave an incredible message and there's an urgency. And then there's also a desperation.

Guys, this is key to individual revival in your own heart. Desperation. What does desperate people do desperate things? They come to church on a Saturday.

They schedule things in. They're gonna miss some meals and instead they're gonna pray. They're gonna get a point of prayer out in their wall and begin to pray over those points.

They're gonna do things differently. They're gonna repent and get their hearts right before, I'm so desperate, God, I've gotta hear from you. I'm gonna put my TV in the closet for a while.

I've gotta hear from you. I'm getting your word out. I've got to hear from you.

And of course, it's a priority. It matters. It's on the calendar.

And I know I have to be here obviously, but nothing else could take this away tonight. I had to be here. Even if I wasn't speaking, it's on there.

This is the priority. Purity, and of course, purity is a very important part of a sacred assembly. It's getting our hearts right before God.

Getting our hearts right before God. You might have come in with tons of sin, maybe besetting sin, and this is the time to lay all that down at the altar because God renews and revives those who are broken. And then finally, I wish I could even talk more about this.

Unity does not come naturally. It comes supernaturally. We miss how critical unity is to God truly moving.

God doesn't move in a divided heart. He doesn't move in a church that's divisive and there's gossipers and backbiters. It could be that an unforgiving, critical, arrogant, divisive hearts are hindering another powerful move of God's Spirit.

Many argue about the carpet while the house is burning down. So in short, a sacred assembly is when we say, guys, we're just gonna meet on a Saturday. We don't know what to expect.

We wanna get our hearts right. If there's a critical heart in me, I need to lay this at the altar. If divisive, arrogant, besetting sin, and it's when we come and we pray for each other, we unite and we call a sacred assembly.

Basically, a point has reached such a high level of depravity that God's people are sick inside and they just have to come and they have to seek the heart of God. And we'll read in Joel that the locusts had come and devoured the whole land. Chewing locusts, gnawing locusts, flying locusts, locusts, all kinds of things.

And there's no other hope but to come and cry out to God. So again, there's no blueprint. We're not gonna follow this set of plans or do this.

We're just here. God, would You move? Would You speak to us individually and show us these areas we need to work on? Or give us hope. Anybody need hope in these dire times? Anybody praying for prodigal sons and daughters and maybe a difficult marriage? Guys, it's amazing to see what the enemy is doing in these times.

I've got friends that are well-known, some of them pastors, some of them itinerant speakers, and they travel and their marriage is falling apart and crumbling. Almost, they might go to divorce court if something doesn't happen. Others are back into an addiction.

Others are, and the enemy is just working overtime to try and to take out his church. And that's why it's so important to call something like this. So that's what it is.

And why it's different is, this might be a little unfamiliar to some of you. It might take you a little while to get used to. Personally, I love it.

But there's not gonna be lyrics on the screen. No lyrics on the screen. Richard's just gonna lead us in worship.

Bow your heads. Come to this altar. Kneel if you'd like.

Stand and pray. And begin to just ask God to show you things in your life. Encourage you.

Let the lyrics. Basically, Richard has come to just worship, bring an atmosphere of worship. And so it's not corporate worship, singing together.

It's worship now coming and penetrating your heart. Covering you in worship. And ministering to you in worship.

And that means the songs could change. The lyrics could change. The structure could change.

You might camp out at a song where we want God to speak to us profoundly during this time. And then I'm gonna come up and I'm gonna speak from this book of Joel briefly. And then we're gonna go back into worship.

And it's just a time to really see what God says to us in this critical time. And I know in my own heart, I mean, many of you have heard the sermons. These sermons don't come from the website or Pastor Central.

They come from times of extended times of prayer and worship with God. And He begins to pour into my heart. And could it be that He would pour into your heart about things that you're dealing with in your work? In your marriage? Decisions you need to make? Discerning God's will? This is a time, I don't think we hear from Him as clearly just driving down the road, busy.

Everybody's trying to get someplace somewhere. I don't think we hear from Him as clearly as when we sit and we wait on Him. He says, hear this.

Hear this, you elders. And give ear, all you inhabitants of the land. So this is the Lord speaking to the people.

It often begins with leadership, whether in the home or in the church. Have you noticed how much praying for revival has been going on of late and how little revival has resulted? I believe that the problem is we've been trying to substitute praying for obeying and it simply will not work. And so back again to Joel, he said this.

Has anything like this happened in your days or even in the days of your fathers? And I have to look around us and say, I don't think so. Where we're at as a nation is alarming. And he said, tell your children about it.

Let them tell their children and their children another generation. And we are to speak of the goodness of God. Also His judgments though.

We need to warn people about those judgments. And he goes on to say what happened? What the chewing locust left, the chewing locust, they would gnaw at things. Any problems gnawing at your life? Just start gnawing at your life.

The swarming locust has eaten. They have overwhelmed the crops. And what the swarming locust have left, the crawling locust has eaten.

They've surrounded all of the crops and we feel surrounded right now. We feel overwhelmed right now. And even what the crawling locust have left, the consuming locust has eaten.

Basically, all hope is gone. The crops were destroyed. Their livelihood devastated.

And all of this, because God's people have drifted from Him. And that's why the response is awake. Awake, wake up, you drunkards.

And weep, for a nation has come against my land which should not happen ever in God's plan. As a nation, the enemy should come against God. And this army is strong and without number.

His teeth are like the teeth of a lion. And he has fangs of a fierce lion. Awake, awake, awake.

I wrote something this week, an article. They will fight for your children, will you? You know, who wants it more often prevails from sports to politics to nations, fighting against nations. Who wants it more often prevails.

They prevail. And as God's people, we have to want it more. Lukewarm Christianity is not gonna cut it in these dire times.

Have hearted Christianity. Lord, we want it so much that we're gonna do desperate things. We're gonna cry out to You.

And our actions define what's important to us. How we conduct ourselves, what we prioritize, it defines what is important. The depth of our relationship with God is measured by our pursuit.

You want a deep relationship with God, there's gotta be a powerful pursuit. And as I said many times before, sadly, most Christians are still stuck in neutral rather than engaging in this massive spiritual battle. What happens when a car is in neutral and on a hill? There's no such thing as neutral in our walk.

Neutral's not a good gear. Because we will be pulled by the influence of the world. We need a massive spiritual upheaval.

The battle for the soul of our nation and for the souls of our children. Guys, that's what breaks my heart more than anything else. It's not about us and wanting comfortable living and better things.

It's for look at what is happening with our children. The perversion is something I would have never even imagined even 10 years ago, 20 years ago. This battle will only be won on our knees as desperate hearts cry out to God, period, end of story, there is no plan B. The military can't save us, Biden can't lead us, and Trump can't revive us.

Only God and God alone can fix this problem. And guys, that's why I know we do things like this because it's a little uncomfortable. It's a little challenging.

My flesh doesn't like this. Well, shut your mouth, flesh, you're not in charge. You've been ruling and reigning too much in my life.

You've been telling me how much to eat, how much to drink, where to go, how long to sleep, how rude to be. Flesh, be quiet, and I need you to submit as I seek the heart of God. Passionate prayers that plead the blood have saved my life.

They keep the old chain crucified and the prison doors of the old man locked. Passionate prayers, I don't know about you, but they've saved my marriage. They've led my kids to the narrow path.

They've led to the passion and purpose of this church. If you fell in prayer, you fell everywhere. A man is who he is on his knees and nothing more.

Nothing more. That pursuit of getting back to God. And so God gives a plan to the nation of Israel.

Gurge yourself and lament, you leaders. Well, you ministers before the altar, it's okay to say, God, how did we get in this predicament? We've dropped our sword. We've capitulated, we've compromised.

And God, we need your help again. Lie all night in sackcloth, you who minister to my God, for the grain offering and the drink offering are withheld from the house of your God. In other words, everything is dried up.

And he's calling the people. He's calling mainly the leaders, come, lay down, cry out to God for 30 minutes. There's a desperation, come and cry out to me.

They waited in that upper room for days. And a couple of good reminders. No man is qualified to speak who has not first listened.

As in Jeremiah's day, the shepherds have become dull-hearted and have not sought the Lord. And I know a lot of leaders and a lot of pastors follow the ministry and listen to these messages and it is a call to them. The shepherds have become dull-hearted.

Their heart is no longer sensitive to the desires and the will of God and they have not sought the Lord. A dull-hearted shepherd cannot wield a sharp sword. We have plenty of pastors, but where are the prophets? Where are those who wielded the weapons of our warfare after being trained by the Master? And the same call goes out to you men, even women in your homes.

Where are those who can wield the weapons of our warfare? See, this is where we engage the enemy. Did you know that? This is where we engage the enemy. This is where we pull down heaven.

This is where you can say, devil, you're done with my child. I know they're addicted to this. I know they can't give up this, but Lord, I'm pleading the blood of Jesus Christ.

I'm tired of just watching them ruin their life. I'm tired of my marriage going down the tubes. I'm tired of my own personal spiritual life being dull and dead.

Spirit of the living God, would you revive me? I'm desperate to hear from you. There is no plan B. Oh God, come and visit your people. We need to hear from you.

And oh, thank God for the promises of God. Isaiah 62, these are the ones who I will look with favor. God is speaking to us.

Listen, wake up. These are the ones who I pour out my favor. I will pour out my spirit.

I will pour it out on those who are humble and contrite in spirit. And they actually tremble at my word. Oh, if we could get reverence back for the word of God.

I remember when the church prayed and fire would fall. I remember when the church would pray and people would walk in, they'd feel convicted under the spirit and power of God. There was reverence, there was respect.

They would tremble underneath that conviction. And I've told you many times before, but maybe some of you need to hear it. This isn't the type of reverence or fear that somebody would have for an abusive person.

It's a reverence and a respect. Best analogy I can think of is I was so scared and I couldn't quit and go home. But many times when I would operate heavy equipment, we'd be down digging deep and I would be right next to a 12,000 volt electrical line.

If I were to cut into that with the equipment, I better make sure my tires are grounded, my rubber's on the ground, my anchors are on the ground, all the rubber of the tires so I don't get electrocuted. Reverence and respect. Oh, I'm not going there.

That type of reverence and respect. God is a holy God, a righteous God. We uphold His Word.

We stand in awe of Him and what He's done. And there's a casualness about Christianity that has crept in and we've lost that reverence. Those who fear His name, He will lead.

And so I'm gonna finalize it here. So Joel said here, God said to Joel, so consecrate a fast which is declare and dedicate a time set aside for shutting the mouth of the flesh. That's what fasting is, is it not? Ah, I gotta eat something, my flesh is controlling me.

And calling a fast is, you know what? I'm not gonna succumb to that voice right now. I wanna hear the voice of God. And you call a sacred assembly.

There it is in Joel 1.14. Gather the leaders, it's important for the leaders to lead the way and all the others to come in to the house of the Lord, your God. Remember, He's your God and you cry out to the Lord. Now of course it's not volume and crying and tears necessarily, although it's a heart's desire God, I've gotta hear from you.

God, you've gotta take this from me. I don't wanna leave here different than when I arrived. It's a costly pursuit.

How many of you know pursuing God is costly? It costs. And so he goes on to say, blow the trumpet in Zion and sound the alarm in my holy mount. That doesn't sound very quiet.

And most of you Bible students know blow the trumpet would be they would have men on the walls and they would see the enemy coming miles and miles away. They could see the dust, possibly the horses and they would take and they would blow the trumpet. What was it for? What would the people do when they heard that trumpet? Oh, let's finish dinner.

Oh, let's put the kids to sleep. Everything stopped, everything. And they would go and they would grab the weapons of their warfare and they would get ready to fight the enemy.

And that's the parallel here. Joel, the prophet, the prophetic voice, like he told Jeremiah, he said, I've called you when you were a youth. Go to who I send you, speak what I put into your mouth.

You will build up, you will root out, you will destroy, you will pluck out and you will rebuild. The voice of that prophetic voice that cuts to the heart. And so you blow the trumpet in Zion, you sound the alarm on the Holy Mount.

That's why sometimes we get a little increase in our volume. There's an urgency, there's a desperation. It's like, hey, watch out, kids, get out of the street.

Here comes a car. There's a desperation, it has to meet the urgency of what's happening. And he's saying here, blow that trumpet, sound that alarm.

Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble for the day of the Lord is coming. It is at hand, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness with morning clouds spread over the mountains. It's jarring, it's explosive, it's passionate, it's intense.

It's like the house being on fire. But don't worry, hope's coming. Hope is coming.

And I just have to share this, because I read this, I could have wrote this. Leonard Ravenhill said, many pastors criticize me for taking the gospel so seriously, but do they really think that on judgment day, Christ will chastise me saying, Leonard, you took me too seriously. Shane, you preach too loud, too hard.

I think I might hear the opposite. And so God doesn't leave the people hanging there. Thank God.

That's one thing I love about God. You can be in the miry clay, and He doesn't say, well, too bad. You finally get what you deserve.

What does He do? Pulls you out, as Gary taught this morning, gives you a new song, and you better sing that song. He pulls you out of that, gets you back up on the right solid footing. And that's why it's so important with this message of God's Word.

Yes, it's hard. Yes, it cuts. Yes, but, but there's hope.

There's hope if they turn to God. And so God says, now therefore, says the Lord, turn to me with a little bit of your heart. That just didn't sound right, did it? Turn to me with a portion.

Give me some of, I just want a little room in your house. He tells the people, turn to me with all your heart, with all your heart. I talk to so many people, but I can't give up that.

I don't, or my favorite, I don't want to get that serious. Listen, we're talking about heaven and hell, light and darkness. The judgment of God or the grace of God.

The narrow path or the broad road. There is no middle ground. Oh, I'd say you're already serious.

You've already made up your mind to not give Him all of your heart. Turn to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. And I don't quite understand the dynamics necessarily, but there is something special when God's people say, you know what, I'm not gonna eat tonight.

I'm gonna spend time with you, God. I'm so disappointed on the direction of our nation and there's so many different things we can mention. And He said, so rend your hearts and not your garments.

What does that mean? It's basically don't go through the motions. And we saw this a lot in the Pharisees. What would they do? Ah! Even when Jesus, you see that, you saw it in the movie Passion of the Christ when Jesus said that He is the Son of God, that arrogant Pharisee ripped his outer garment and that was a sign of mourning and repentance and disgust and they would rip their garments.

And so God says, don't go through the motions. Rip your heart, not your garment. I desire mercy, not just sacrifice.

Jesus said, they draw nigh unto me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the Lord. Return to the Lord and He will deal harshly with you.

Read it for yourself. Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful. Slow to anger.

Oh, thank God. I love when people say, thank God for second chances. I don't know about you, but I'm about on chance number 1,050.

Thank God, Lord. God, we thank You for Your grace and mercy. Slow to anger.

Slow to anger. Great kindness. This sentence really just broke me this week.

And He relents from doing harm. See, unless I'm reading Scripture wrong, I don't think He takes joy in that and wants to do harm. I desire that none should perish, but all that come to the saving faith.

I relent from doing harm. And it could even mean, which we've seen before, that God pronounces something, but then He turns and doesn't do it because His people humbled themselves. What about Jonah, right? Nineveh, 40 days! And God will judge you.

It was decreed. It was going to happen. What happened? God didn't judge him.

Gave him 150 more years. He's slow to anger. Great kindness.

He relents. He stops from doing harm. If His people... Could it be that you could be the difference between your prayer being answered and it being not? I don't want to even get onto this subject because I believe God is sovereign.

Some things, nothing we can do. But some things I believe we can tilt that back in our direction. Joel closes with this.

Who knows if He will turn and relent and leave a blessing behind Him. This is amazing. He's saying that the locusts have judged you.

All of your crop is gone. It's a day of darkness and gloominess. The judgment of the hand of God has fallen.

But if you call a sacred assembly, if you turn to Me with all your heart, you cry out to Me, you rend your hearts, not your garments. I'm graceful. I'm merciful.

I'm slow to anger. I want to turn from the wrath that I've pronounced against this nation. And then it says, who knows? Who knows? If He will turn and relent and leave a blessing instead of judgment.

One of the saddest things I see, I get this not too much, but when I talk about things like this, people love to email, you know, Shane, why are you doing that? You're going against God's will. Haven't you read Revelation? The judgment is coming. We're not supposed to fight against that.

Well, give me a chapter and a verse. The Bible doesn't say that. It says, here's what's coming and here's how you prepare yourself.

How do you know He won't, His judgment will be delayed and He'll turn and leave a blessing instead? I truly believe we are way worse than Sodom and Gomorrah. That is the remnant, God's remnant, God's believing church that is praying and keeping sin even at bay. It could, all hell could break loose.

How do we know? The Bible says contend, do business until He returns. Put on the weapons of your warfare, expose the unfruitful darkness. If my people humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will heal, I will heal their lands.

I will heal their lives. That's why I love what we just sang. Take me past the outer court into the holy place.

And of course, it's the image there in the Leviticus of going into the temple and the outer courts where everyone was at. And it's almost like, as we were singing, I was thinking, I don't wanna be in the outer courts. I don't wanna be where everyone's at.

Lord, I wanna go boldly into the holy place. I wanna go past the brazen altar where the sin-sacrifice is lifted up. I wanna go back past all of that.

And Lord, I wanna enter into the holies of holies and I wanna see your face past the crowds of people and the priests who sing your praise. I hunger and thirst for righteousness, but it's only found one place. Take me into the holies of holies by the blood of the Lamb.

Take me into the holies of holies by the blood of the Lamb. Did you know your family's one bad choice away from turmoil? I've seen it. Character takes a lifetime to build, seconds to destroy.

The enemy's just bringing in addiction, bondage, strongholds. And this is a time where we've gotta seek God like never before.

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