



## What does it mean to repent?

### READ JOEL 2:12-13

The prophet tells the people that the Lord wants them to turn back to the Lord now, while they still can. Instead of outward shows of grief, they should actually turn their hearts back to God. God is merciful and compassionate, the prophet says. God is slow to anger, filled with love, and eager for restoration.

### REMEMBER: Joel 2:13a

*Don't tear your clothing in your grief,  
but tear your hearts instead.*

### MORE TO CONSIDER

How can you apply this story to your daily life? Here are a few steps to help you on your journey:

First, pull over. Pause daily and reflect on where you are in your life. What's working and what's not working? How are you feeling? What are you learning? How can daily reflection keep you on the right road?

Second, read the map. How can the Bible, like a good map, help you determine where you are, where you want to be, and how to get from here to there? Sometimes you don't even know you're lost until you read the map! So read. Even better, discuss these stories in a small group.

Third, acknowledge when you're lost. Is the moment you admit it the moment you can begin to turn around? The sooner that you admit you've been traveling down a path that leads you away from God, the sooner you can turn around and head in the right direction.

Fourth, turn around. Can you commit to a U-turn and change your direction ... not just with your words, but with your heart?

**NEXT WEEK: Isaiah 60:1-6**

## ! SURPRISE

DAY 1: The Israelites get lost by worshiping false gods, abusing the poor and powerless, and living self-focused lives. So God sends prophets, people who know the way back to God. Who are our prophets today? Who points us back to God? Could someone claim to point you to God when they're really pointing in an entirely different direction? How do you know who is right? How do you know when you're following a true prophet?

## ! SURPRISE

DAY 2: What happens when different "prophets" claim the word "Christian" for opposing ideals? If we can't agree about what that word means, or what it stands for, how can we find the right direction? How do we know when we need to repent?

## ➔ PROGRESS

DAY 3: Repent means to change your direction. It means to stop moving away from God, make a U-turn, and start moving toward God. Are there any situations in your life that need repentance? Do you need to change direction? How do you know? How do you begin?

## 🌱 RESURRECTION

DAY 4: Is repentance an outward show of remorse? Is it as simple as saying you're sorry? Why does God want your heart in this verse, instead of your grief? Is God asking for something much more difficult than an apology? Are we supposed to feel bad about our terrible behavior when we read this passage? Or is it about something bigger, and better, than guilt? What?

## ! SURPRISE

DAY 5: Does Joel's description of God being slow to anger and abounding in love and mercy remind you of the Jonah story? How? Is this the same good news that was shared in that story? Is it easier to hear in this context, when the one who is lavished with mercy is ... you?

## ? WONDER

DAY 6: In this story, the people are starving. Locusts are eating all their crops and their livestock is dying. Joel tells them that this is God's judgment on their sins, that God is trying to get their attention. What do you think? Is this a metaphor, or does God send hardships to wake us up? Are consequences built in to the way the world works, or does God intervene in our daily lives with obstacles?

## 🌱 RESURRECTION

DAY 7: Is this story ultimately about wrath, or is it about reconciliation and love? How does this story speak to us as we anticipate Christmas?