



LIFE GROUP SERMON NOTES

“Activating the Outpouring”

Ps James Lowe – Mar. 30, 2014

WARM-UP (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. *No right or wrong answers.*

- What is an example of a challenge or difficulty one of your parents faced and overcame?
- What is an example of a challenge or difficulty one of your children faced and overcame?
- What is an example of a challenge or difficulty you have faced and overcome?

WORD (10-15 minutes)

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In the beginning of creation there was darkness and emptiness. Everything changed when God spoke. Light and life came forth. This same pattern is repeated by God throughout human history and is still valid today. When we face darkness or problems or sin, we must do the following:

1. See the problem and the sin.
2. Pray and fast.
3. Position ourselves for God's outpouring.

Then we can expect an outpouring of God's light, life, and blessing.

See the problem and the sin.

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. (2 Timothy 3:1-5 ESV)

This text is as true today as it was nearly 2000 years ago. We must open our eyes to the sin in our own lives and in our society. Only when we become concerned about sin, will we be moved to seek God's salvation and redemption.

Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming; it is near, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness! Like blackness there is spread upon the mountains a great and powerful people; their like has never been before, nor will be again after them through the years of all generations. (Joel 2:1-2 ESV)

The prophet Joel warns the people of God of a coming judgment for the nation's sins. Prophetic language describing economic calamity blends with language that speaks of destruction that will come through an invading foreign army. Both point to God's ultimate judgment of sin that will happen at the end of the age.

We must be like Joel and the apostle Paul. We must awaken to the seriousness of sin and the inevitable judgment of God that will come upon us and others if we do not repent and turn from our sin. Evil flourishes when God's people go into hiding. It is our duty borne of love to be God's voice of warning, of appeal, of righteousness, and of hope, calling people to repentance and reconciliation to God. We are not to shrink back from fear of the repercussions that might come if you speak up for righteousness.

Pray and fast.

"Yet even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster... Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber. (Joel 2:12-16 ESV)

The proper response to an awareness of the seriousness of our sin problem is to repent, and seek God in fasting and prayer. If we will turn back to God and prioritize pleasing him, God will be gracious and merciful, and will forgive our sin. He will even bless us.

Position ourselves for God's outpouring.

Then the Lord became jealous for his land and had pity on his people. The Lord answered and said to his people, "Behold, I am sending to you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations. "Be glad, O children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God, for he has given the early rain for your vindication; he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the latter rain, as before. (Joel 2:18-19, 23 ESV)

When we are restored into a right relationship with God through repentance, fasting, and prayer, God will speak words of comfort, hope, and blessing. Our response of faith and expectation to his words position us to receive the great and wonderful outpouring of blessings he has promised.

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls." (Joel 2:28-29, 32 ESV)

God's outpouring especially involves his very own presence. And where the Lord is, his blessings overflow. The riches of his salvation will overtake all those who come to him, more main with him, and follow him.

PERSONAL APPLICATION (10-15 minutes)

Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related topic for discussion.

- What sins trouble you the most in our communities or nation today?
- How could you/we practically be part of God's answer and solution to these sins?
- When was the last time you specifically fasted and prayed to seek God's mercy and blessing for the sake of your community and/or nation?

PRAYER (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.

- That God would awaken us to any major sins in our lives, our families, our church, our communities, and our nation, and move us to repentance, prayer, and fasting.
- That God would pour out his Spirit upon us and make us a blessing to those around us.
- That God would restore righteousness to our families, communities, and nation, so that our social, economic, academic, and governmental structures would increasingly glorify God.