

# About Losing That Hour, and Other Lost Things



## Quick Backdrop

It's an hour you can't get back. If you have a clock in your room you "spring forward" before you go to bed on Saturday night and "boom," it is one hour later. In the few seconds it takes to change your clock you have lost a complete hour. Gone. Never to get it back.

It gets you thinking about things that are lost that, seemingly, you can't get back. Months spent in bitterness toward someone or something. Consequences from a decision you wish you hadn't made. Regrets. Hurts. Of course, it's not just time that is lost in these situations, but also heart-level things like security and innocence.

Thankfully, and graciously, lost things are nothing new to God and they actually put God in a position to do a few of His favorite things: redeem and restore.

In the book of Joel, one of the lesser known Old Testament prophets made famous when he was quoted in Acts 2, God used the occasion of a massive locust infestation to give His people a vivid illustration of the kind of restoration work He does.

## Digging In

Likely written to God's people prior to Babylonian exile (Joel apparently wrote to Judah, given his references to Jerusalem), the book of Joel provides an awesome picture of God's restoration.

Take a moment to pause on the Joel passage below. Reflect on it. Roll it around in your mind. If it's convenient, print the passage out, grab a couple of different colored pens or pencils, and do these suggestions that will help you ingest the detail.

- Draw your best, but simple, rendition of a locust over references to the infestation.
- Draw a sad face emoji over physical and spiritual/emotional consequences.

## Joel 1:1-12 (selected verses)

<p><sup>1</sup> The word of the Lord that came to Joel son of Pethuel.  <sup>2</sup> Hear this, you elders;  listen, all who live in the land.  Has anything like this ever happened in your days  or in the days of your ancestors?  ...  <sup>4</sup> What the locust swarm has left  the great locusts have eaten;  what the great locusts have left  the young locusts have eaten;  what the young locusts have left  other locusts have eaten.  <sup>5</sup> Wake up, you drunkards, and weep!  Wail, all you drinkers of wine;  wail because of the new wine,  for it has been snatched from your lips.  <sup>6</sup> A nation has invaded my land,  a mighty army without number;  it has the teeth of a lion, the fangs of a lioness.</p>	<p><sup>7</sup> It has laid waste my vines  and ruined my fig trees.  It has stripped off their bark  and thrown it away,  leaving their branches white.  ...  <sup>10</sup> The fields are ruined,  the ground is dried up;  the grain is destroyed,  the new wine is dried up,  the olive oil fails.  <sup>11</sup> Despair, you farmers, wail, you vine growers;  grieve for the wheat and the barley,  because the harvest of the field is destroyed.  <sup>12</sup> The vine is dried up  and the fig tree is withered;  the pomegranate, the palm and the apple tree—  all the trees of the field—are dried up.  Surely the people's joy  is withered away.</p>
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## Going Inward

It seems that Joel 1:12 is the absolute low point of the locust calamity. Take a moment to note how the low point is described. In fact, write it in the space below.

Now think about this for a moment: Reflect on instances in your life when you could easily describe yourself like this low point. Or think about it this way: Identify a time in your life when you felt the same as the farmers in Joel 1 when they looked out and saw nothing but a destroyed harvest, withered fig trees, dried up fruit trees. What periods of time in your personal journey would you describe as a spiritual or emotional wasteland—no forward progress, maybe even spiritual destruction?

Now, watch this. God's people in the book of Joel, went through all manner of reacting to the calamity of the locust invasion: questions, doubts, what-ifs. Their joy "withered away." And somewhere in their searching, they locked onto the traits of God that would see them through the disaster. Then, through the prophet Joel, God shared some sweet news with His people. Take a minute to interact with the passage below. Note any references to restoration or redemption. If it's convenient, print this passage out and draw a smiley over any of these references.

### Joel 2:12-14; 19-27

<sup>12</sup> "Even now," declares the Lord,  
"return to me with all your heart,  
with fasting and weeping and mourning."

<sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> Who knows? He may turn and relent  
and leave behind a blessing—  
grain offerings and drink offerings  
for the Lord your God.

...

<sup>19</sup> The Lord replied to them:  
"I am sending you grain, new wine and olive oil,  
enough to satisfy you fully;  
never again will I make you  
an object of scorn to the nations.

<sup>20</sup> "I will drive the northern horde far from you,  
pushing it into a parched and barren land;  
its eastern ranks will drown in the Dead Sea  
and its western ranks in the Mediterranean Sea.  
And its stench will go up;  
its smell will rise."

Surely he has done great things!

<sup>21</sup> Do not be afraid, land of Judah;  
be glad and rejoice.

Surely the Lord has done great things!

<sup>22</sup> Do not be afraid, you wild animals,  
for the pastures in the wilderness are becoming  
green.

The trees are bearing their fruit;  
the fig tree and the vine yield their riches.

<sup>23</sup> Be glad, people of Zion,  
rejoice in the Lord your God,  
for he has given you the autumn rains  
because he is faithful.

He sends you abundant showers,  
both autumn and spring rains, as before.

<sup>24</sup> The threshing floors will be filled with grain;  
the vats will overflow with new wine and oil.

<sup>25</sup> "I will repay you for the years the locusts have  
eaten—

the great locust and the young locust,  
the other locusts and the locust swarm—  
my great army that I sent among you.

<sup>26</sup> You will have plenty to eat, until you are full,  
and you will praise the name of the Lord your God,  
who has worked wonders for you;  
never again will my people be shamed.

<sup>27</sup> Then you will know that I am in Israel,  
that I am the Lord your God,  
and that there is no other;  
never again will my people be shamed.

### **Putting Into Practice**

God restores. God repays. We all have periods in our lives that—just like setting a clock forward one hour—seem lost, never to be found or to be used in a meaningful way. Thankfully, like we see in the book of Joel, restoring lost things is one of God’s favorite things to do. Here are a couple ideas for putting this into practice.

**Revisit the spot in the passage where God makes His promise of restoration. Write out a personal prayer to God that reflects this promise, asking for God to repay/restore what the locusts have eaten in your life. Consider including thankfulness for how you can move forward because the years of the locusts and the damage they did have been, or can be, restored or redeemed.**

**Write out three or four actions you can take that exhibit trust that God has or will restore what the locusts have eaten in your life. It might help to complete the sentence below. You’ll see some prompts to get the thoughts started.**

**Because I trust that God has restored (or will restore) what the locusts have eaten, I will:**

- walk in the confidence that I ...
- show resolve by ...
- replace regrets with ...
- use healing of my hurts to ...