



God of
NEW LIFE
We Belong to you

A Guide for
Ash Wednesday
and the
Season of Lent

INTRODUCTION

What is Ash Wednesday and Lent?

Ash Wednesday marks the first day of Lent. Ash Wednesday is a day we set aside to pray and ask God's forgiveness. In some churches you would have the sign of the cross marked on your forehead with ashes. It begins the season of Lent, and calls us into self-examination and contemplation about the mystery and grace of God's mercy leading up to the celebration of His resurrection.

Most people are aware that Lent is a time of giving up a particular vice, bad habit, or something dear (like chocolate) for a period of 40 days. Lent is really a 40-day season (Sundays are excluded) of prayer, repentance, fasting, and alms giving (or acts of service) that ultimately leads to celebration. We are to have an awareness that sin separates us from God and of what it cost Him to be reunited with us. In Hebrew to repent means, "to return, as if turning back to something you've strayed or looked away from." In Greek, to repent means, "to change one's mindset." Lent is designed, through prayer and reflection, to cause a turning towards God seeking greater intimacy with Him. *Daniel 9:3-Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking Him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.* We want to let the things we pray, confess, reflect or fast from turn us towards His face and heart. To let go of our old nature and enter in to His NEW Life for us. As we do this, we will have greater understanding of who He is, who we are, and who we are to be to the world around us.

Tips for using this book:

-This book starts on Ash Wednesday and then has 6 weekly sessions. Ash Wednesday is on March 5th, and the weekly sessions start on March 9th. Read through the session before the week starts, like a Saturday or Sunday, to see what your acts of service and fasting will be. You can choose to fast a certain thing for the entire 6 weeks, but there will also be weekly fasting suggestions for you as well. It is your choice how you'd like to do the fasting. You don't need to do the Prayer/Reflection/Repentance at the beginning of the week. You complete that part whenever you'd like. It's just to give you a start on what the fasting/acts of service will be for you.

-Carve out a specific day or time to walk out your journey. You can do as much or as little as you want. Keep to it as best as you can, but life happens, so flexibility is always there.

-There are exercises that want you to draw or be creative. Some may say, 'I'm not really gifted that way.' Give it a try. The goal is to be listening and looking for something to surface in an unexpected way, not critiquing your artistic ability. Sometimes the Lord speaks to you in a new way through it. If you're still not comfortable just use written words. Make them different shapes, colors, or sizes.

Items needed for Journey:

-Notebook of some kind. Any kind will do but having a normal size paper will be good for creative exercises.

-Something fun to write with. Markers, colored pencils, crayons and one exercise calls for paint. No need to buy anything if you don't want to, just use what you have on hand.

-Access to Internet through computer or mobile device.

ASH WEDNESDAY

-Start your time today by listening to Repent!2 on Meditations for Misfits. You can find this on either Spotify or iTunes apps under Podcasts, or you can find it on the website, **fredgrewe.com** and click on Sermons under the Bird header. Just scroll down the episodes and press play on Podcast #146. It is about 20 minutes long.

-Take some time after listening to this to sit and ask God to show you any areas in your life that keep you from feeling His love and acceptance. Could those areas be from how someone else felt about you or treated you? Write these areas down in your notebook. You can draw walls or boxes around these areas. Think about the truth of how God sees you: a treasured child, loved, accepted, worthy, beautiful, and precious. Listen to what He has to say about you. Write those words around your boxes or walls. Ask “Abba” to “change your thinking” about those areas, and whenever you feel those areas pressing in on you, replace it with the truth of how God sees you.

-When you think about God and who He is do you see Him as a loving Father or someone else? Do you need to “change your thinking”? Spend some time writing down how you think about who God is. If you find that your viewpoint about God is something other than Him being a loving Father and loving and accepting you just as you are, write down those negative viewpoints on small pieces of paper. Get a fireproof bowl or a place where you can burn those pieces of paper. (Be safe!) Before lighting the pieces of paper, ask God’s forgiveness for any negative viewpoints that you have of Him. Ask Him to help you “change your thinking” and see Him as He truly is. Ask Him to help you feel His unconditional love and acceptance. If God has highlighted an area of sin that you feel you need to confess, pray and ask His forgiveness and write it on a piece of paper to burn as well.

-Read Psalm 103:8-14. Read it in several translations. Maybe write it out in your notebook. Think about having your sins being removed “as far as the east is from the west”. These verses speak about how great His lovingkindness and compassion is towards us; meditate on that.

-EXTRA: Listen to *The Father’s Song*, by Upperroom. (Look up song on YouTube or a Music app) It is a lengthy song, listen as long as you’d like-someone does start talking about 11 minutes in, which is where I usually stop it.

WEEK #1

PRAYER/REFLECTION:

-Begin with a breathing meditation. Breathe in deeply enough that your belly expands with air. It helps if you put your hand on your stomach to feel it expand. Breathe in for 7 seconds and as you do think "Be Still." Pause. Then exhale through your mouth for 7 seconds and think, or say out loud, "Know that I am God." Do this for 3-5 minutes until you feel centered and ready to engage with God.

-Use YouTube or a music app to listen to the song, *Flood and Flame* by Justine Law.

-Read 1 Cor. 5:17 in several translations. The word new in the Greek is "Kainos". Strong's Biblical Dictionary translates this as: a new kind, unprecedented, novel, and unheard of. Vines Biblical Dictionary defines it as: New as to form or quality, of a different nature from what is contrasted as old. I like the Passion Translation-Now, if anyone is enfolded in Christ, he has become an entirely new person. All that is related to the old order has vanished. Behold, everything is fresh and new.

Meditate on this for several minutes. He is the God of New Life, enfolding you. The old order has vanished. Poof! Gone! You are a New Creation in Him.

Draw a curvy strand of DNA, or to make it simpler, draw a ladder. What in your life seems like it's part of the "old order" that you'd like to see change. Write these things at the bottom of the ladder or strand. Next, spend a few minutes thinking about the New Creation you are because of Christ. Listen for Holy Spirit to speak into how He views you. Write those things at the top of your strand or ladder. Next, take a black marker and cross off those things that are the old order that have vanished. Next time the enemy comes in accusing you, remind him that you are part of God's DNA now-the old is gone.

FASTING:

This week pick a meal, or specific food to fast from. You can also choose to just fast for an entire day. As you do this, give thanks for our easy access to food and pray for those who are poor and hungry.

ACTS OF SERVICE:

Send a card to someone you know who's going through a difficult time, or call someone that you haven't talked with for a long time.

EXTRA: Look up the podcast, Pray as you Go, and listen to that day for prayer. (Can find the podcast on iTunes app store or pray-as-you-go.org on the internet.)

WEEK #2

PRAYER/REFLECTION:

-Repeat the Breathing exercise from week #1. This time as you inhale, think “Create in me” and as you exhale, think or say out loud “a clean heart.”

-Listen to the song, *Pieces (live)* by Bethel Music (Look up on YouTube, or music app.)

-Next, think about the state of your heart and draw a picture of it. Is your heart in pieces? Are some places in your heart darker? Have you started building a wall or guardrail around some or all of your heart? Maybe your heart is singing for joy? Be as honest as you can.

-Whatever the state of your heart, ask the Lord to help you to give this heart completely to Him. Ask Him to show you how He sees your heart. Ask for His help in any changes that you’d like to make to your heart as you journey through this season of Lent.

-Read Psalm 51:10-12 then turn this into a prayer. Pick a word or line to take with you during this week. It can be as simple as ‘renew me’. You can put it on a sticky note and have in your car, bathroom, or somewhere you’ll see it as you go about your week.

FASTING:

This week fast from a favorite drink for a day or several days. Say a prayer of thanks for our easy access to water and pray for those who don’t have access to clean drinking water.

ACTS OF SERVICE:

This week take someone groceries, pay for someone’s food in a drive-thru, or bake/cook something for someone.

EXTRA: Go to **www.sacredspace.ie** and use that website to guide you through prayer.

WEEK #3

PRAYER/REFLECTION:

-Try to be by a window or somewhere you can look outside and see creation. Begin thanking God for His creation. Tell Him all the different things that you like about what He has made.

-Look up and read at least 3 of these verses of who God says you are.

I am: Called by name from before the foundation of the world. (Is. 43:7)

Created to be the reflection of His glory. (Eph 1:12)

Exalted to the right hand of God the Father Almighty, joint heir to the Kingdom of God with Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:17)

A son/daughter of God (Rom. 8:14, 16-1 John 3:2)

Seated with Him in heavenly places (Eph 2:6)

Blessed with all Spiritual Blessings (Eph 1:3)

A partaker of His divine nature (Gal. 3:13)

Strong in the Lord and in the power of His might (Eph 6:10)

The dwelling place of God (Eph 2:22)

-Spend some time thinking about who God has created you to be. Write down your gifts, good character traits, and what you like about yourself in a random pattern on the page. Use your markers and give words different colors, styles or sizes. Next, do the same for the things you'd like to work on or grow in. It doesn't just have to be shortcomings that you see in yourself, but can be areas of faith, or maybe something new you want to learn. Draw leaves around the words you've written down. Connect the leaves with branches.

-Listen to the song, *This Close* by Steffany Gretzinger & Chandler Moore, to close out your time of prayer.

FASTING:

This week try a fast from sound. It can be for just a day or for several days. Anytime that you would normally listen to the radio, music, or the news, replace those moments with silence, but allow your thoughts to turn to God during that time. You can also choose to pray for Christians in the world that are being persecuted for their faith during that time.

ACTS OF SERVICE:

Look for an opportunity to pray for a coworker, neighbor, or a stranger. Pray for them right then if they are open to it. Or give an encouraging word from the Lord to someone, it can be as simple as telling someone that God loves and cares for them. If you are sheltering because of Covid-send your prayer in a letter or give someone a call.

Extra: Take a walk alone in nature and sing or pray aloud to God.

WEEK #4

PRAYER/REFLECTION:

-Light a candle and invite Holy Spirit to come and be with you. Relax and become aware of God's presence.

-Put on the song, *Hovering* by Alberto Rivera. It's instrumental and can be playing as you do the Examen. Or you can just have silence as you go through the Examen.

-This week we are going to practice a form of prayer called the Examen. It is a prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God's Presence and discern His direction for us. It is helpful to do this prayer at the end of your day, or at the beginning of the day (you'd be reflecting on the day that happened previously).

The Examen- You'll be looking for a high and a low point in your day with Holy Spirit as your guide. We'll start with the high point:

Awareness : Ask God to show you the moment today for which you are most grateful, which gave you strength, in which you felt most energized and alive, etc. Mentally walk through your day. Try to focus on just one if several pop up.

Experience: Step back into this experience and enjoy it again. Let God give you life through the remembrance. Thank Him for it.

Discernment: Ask God to show what about this moment made it life-giving to you. You may want to journal what He shows you. If He doesn't show you anything, just rest in His love.

Now we'll do this again with the low point in you day.

Awareness: Ask God to show you the moment today for which you are the least grateful, where you experienced sadness, shame, failure or anger, where you felt the energy being drained from you, etc.

Experience: Step back into that experience and relive it without trying to change or fix it. Be honest with your emotions. This would be a good place to journal your emotions.

Discernment: Ask God what it was about the moment that made you feel that way. Again, journal anything you feel He might be showing you. Then ask for His comfort and love and sit in silence for a while. End the time of prayer with thanking God for whatever you experienced throughout the day.

FASTING:

This week pick a day or several days to fast from Social Media. No Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat, etc. Each time you are drawn to that activity, pray for a missionary.

ACTS OF SERVICE: Pray this week for 3 people who aren't following God.

EXTRA: Listen to the Psalms on the audio of a Bible app. for 15 minutes a day. Or on a music app you can listen to Poor Bishop Hooper as they have recorded all the Psalms into songs.

WEEK #5

PRAYER/REFLECTION:

-Start this week out by reading John 14:9-20.

The disciples are begging to be shown the way and when Jesus answers that He is the way, the disciples come back with, 'Show us the Father'. Jesus then says that if we have seen Him, we have seen the Father. He tells them, I am in the Father, and the Father is in me. And if we believe in Him, we will do even greater works than He did.

What a profound thing to ponder. That we would do greater works than Jesus did. How can this be?

He then begins to reveal the work of the Spirit in our lives, and gives us this wonderful mystery-John 14:20: In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. Contemplate that for a few minutes.

-Play the song, *Come and Behold* by Upperroom from a music app or YouTube in the background while you get out a 3 different colors of acrylic paint or use 3 different crayons to do a meditative exercise with art. Instructions will be for paint, but you can adapt as best as you can if using crayons.

-Paint 3 circles close to each other in 3 different colors and make it wet and thick so it doesn't dry too quickly. Using your finger or a Q-tip, think about John 14:10 where Jesus says I am in the Father, and drag paint from the 1st circle into the top of the 2nd circle. Next, drag paint from the bottom of the 2nd circle into the 1st circle as you think about Jesus being in the Father. Move to the 3rd circle and think about John 14:20 and do the same for Jesus being in us (dragging from top of 2nd into 3rd circle), and us being in Jesus (dragging paint into bottom of 2nd circle from 3rd circle). Feel free to play around with the paint as you meditate on these scriptures. As you look at the finished piece, ask Holy Spirit to bring a greater understanding of this mystery and realization of Christ residing in us, that we are one with Him.

FASTING: This week spend a day or several days fasting from some type of entertainment: TV, video or computer games. Each time you are drawn to want to do that activity, instead think about turning your heart and face to God.

ACTS OF SERVICE:

Takes someone's cart back at the store, donate food to the food pantry, or do a chore for a family member.

EXTRA: Listen to or read from the book of Acts this week as you hear about some of the works that the first Christ followers did after Jesus' resurrection.

WEEK #6

PRAYER/REFLECTION:

-Start off today with some nice instrumental music in background. (Salt of the Sound Meditations Vol. 5 is really nice.) Today we will “enter His courts with Thanksgiving” (Psalm 100:4)

-Begin today by writing in your journal ways that you are grateful for who God is in your life, who He is to you, and how your life is different because of Him being in it.

-Next, using your imagination, imagine your heart with a door on it. Open up the door and go in. Inside is a nice room with a comfortable couch, and Jesus is sitting there waiting for you. Sit down with Him and ask Him what He'd like to talk about. Perhaps there is something heavy on your heart that you'd like to talk about. This is your own special time to be with Him. Maybe you'd like to talk about what's been going on with you during this season of Lent, or just sit quietly with Him. Ask Jesus how He feels about you and write down what you hear in your journal.

-As we approach Good Friday, spend some time thinking about the sacrifice that Jesus made for all of us. Record in your journal what you might be thinking and feeling. Next, go back to the exercise that we did in Week #1. Think about your heart and draw a picture of it. How has it changed or grown since the beginning of Lent? Pray and offer up your heart to Him and thank Him for what He has done in you during Lent.

FASTING:

This week pick a meal, or specific food to fast from. You can also choose to just fast for an entire day. As you do this, give thanks for our easy access to food and pray for those who are poor and hungry.

ACTS OF SERVICE:

Spend some time thinking about important people that are close to you and what you love about them. Think about traits in them that you are thankful for. Write down your thoughts and send them out to them. Do this for 1-3 people.

EXTRA: Go to pray-as-you-go.org and scroll past the daily meditation and pick out a guided examen or another type of prayer you've never tried before.