



Ash Wednesday At Home

BEFORE

GATHER

- Paper and pencils or crayons
- Large bowl or dish with some water
- Towel to dry hands
- A small amount of dirt

PREPARE

- Quiet the space. Put distractions away.
- Consider playing quiet music or lighting candles.

If you're leading others, take time to calm your own heart. In families, things often do not go as planned. Your people may be grumpy or wiggly today. Be gentle with them and with yourself.

PRACTICE 1: TURN

READ & REFLECT

During the season of Lent, we set aside time to consider the ways we are living. Some parts of our lives may be getting in the way of our ability to love ourselves, other people, the world, or God. Sometimes it can be uncomfortable or upsetting to think about those things. Lent is a time set aside to not only think about them, but to change them, which we sometimes call "repentance". The word "repent" means to turn.

The Jesus followers in Corinth were struggling to find unity and harmony in their church. There was a great deal getting in the way of love. Paul wrote them a letter confronting them, and it upset them--but resulted in change. In his next letter, Paul wrote this:

"Now this type of deep sorrow, godly sorrow, is not so much about regret; but it is about producing a change of mind and behavior that ultimately leads to salvation. But the other type of sorrow, worldly sorrow, often is fleeting and only brings death. Look at what is happening among you! Notice how authentic and diligent you have become because this godly sorrow has been at work in your community. But there's more: your desire to clear your name, your righteous anger, your respect, your longing, your zeal, and your concern for justice. All these demonstrate how you have been made clean." (2 Cor 7:10-11 VOICE)

DO

Take a piece of paper and fold it in half or draw a line down the middle. On one side, write or draw things you'd like to turn away from. On the other side, write or draw the things you would like to turn towards.

Look at your lists and ponder the direction you would like your life to take.

PRAY

Come, Holy Spirit. We receive your invitation to turn, to rest, and to be safe. Return us to Christ, and guide us toward your path of renewal and love. Amen.

PRACTICE 2: WATER

READ & REFLECT

Lent is not only about thinking about repenting, or turning around, but about inviting God to transform and renew us so that we can bring deeper love into our lives, the lives of others, and our world.

After King David of Israel did a terrible thing, he repented and asked God to change him. He sang this song to God:

*Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.*

Wash away all my iniquity

and cleanse me from my sin.

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;

wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

Let me hear joy and gladness;

let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

Hide your face from my sins

and blot out all my iniquity.

Create in me a pure heart, O God,

and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me from your presence

or take your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation

and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

(Psalm 51:1-2; 7-12 NIV)

DO

Dip your hands into the water. Notice how it feels against your skin.

Is there something you would like to be washed away? Is there something you would like to see made new? With your finger, write or draw it on the surface of the water.

PRAY

Gracious God, by water and the Spirit you claimed us as your own, cleansing us and giving us new life. With a new and right spirit, help us to dismantle any defenses that divide us from you and others. Amen.

PRACTICE 3: ASHES

READ & REFLECT

God is Creator. God forms us out of “dust and ashes” — the raw materials of the earth under our feet and the same molecules that formed the stars in the heavens. In Hebrew, the word for ground is “adama” and the word for man, or human being, is “adam”.

Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. (Gen 2:7 NIV)

God fills us with the breath of life, so that we can be living beings. The breath in our lungs is a close and ever-present reminder that we are linked to God, the source of love and life. The ashes remind us of who we are — people formed from dust and ashes. They also remind us of whose we are — children of God and disciples of Jesus Christ.

DO

Feel the earth with your fingers. What color is it? Does it have a smell? Feel the breath in your body. Put one hand on your chest and one hand on your belly and take a few deep breaths. Listen to the sound and feel your body move as the air comes in and out of your lungs.

You may pray as you breathe:

Inhale, then say: ***Lord Jesus Christ, son of God.***

Exhale, then say: ***Have mercy on me, your beloved child.***

When you are ready, place ashes or dirt in a cross shape on your forehead or on the back of your hand. You may say, “From dust you come, and from dust you shall return.”

PRAY

Thank you, God, for forming me out of dust and ashes, and breathing life into me. Fill me with your Spirit. Amen.