

Ash Wednesday - 2024



LIFE GROUPS

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Preparing Our Hearts for Holy Week

Wednesday, February 14, 2024 is Ash Wednesday. On the Christian calendar this begins the “countdown” to Holy Week, Good Friday, and Easter. From that day, it is 40 “regular” days and 7 Sundays until Resurrection Sunday. This season is called Lent, a time of reflection and building our relationship with God. Use this guide and the video to invite God to search your heart in a new way this season...

Watch Pastor Scott’s Ash Wednesday Video clip:
Eagle Naz YouTube Channel in the EN/Core Series Session 2 playlist

*In Scripture, ashes are associated with a reminder of our mortality, and that life is precious, fragile, and fleeting - **Read Genesis 2:7 and 18:27***

*Ashes also are part of the ritual of repentance and mourning for sin - **Read Job 42:1-6 and Daniel 9:3-6***

Ashes on forehead and right hand -

Traditionally, believers receive the Imposition of Ashes, a mark of the cross on the forehead or right hand, made from ashes of a burned palm frond (often from the previous year’s Palm Sunday service) mixed with olive oil. The ash cross reminds us of Jesus’ death, and that He suffered for our sin. This is also a season of repentance and giving up things that distract us from faith. There is a note of future victory as we remember whose Kingdom we serve. Pastor Scott mentioned these verses:

Read the Shema Prayer in Deuteronomy 6:4-15

- *Shema means “hear and understand” in Hebrew. God wants His people to know that He alone is God, and that they serve Him only.*
- *Note in the verse when and where God wants us to talk about His words and teach them to our families. How can your family do this?*
- *Note where they “bind” His words - on their hand and foreheads. This symbolizes they belong to God alone and serve only His Kingdom.*

Now read a similar exhortation to the Early Church in Revelation 13:16

- *Note where the “mark of the beast” was placed! The early Christians knew this symbolized a choice they faced everyday - would they worship Caesar or Jesus? Serve Rome or God’s Kingdom?*
- *What challenges of allegiance do we face as believers today?*

Consider - what can you “give up” for Lent that demonstrates your allegiance to Jesus over the World? How can you bring more of His words into the daily life of you and your family?

Bring it Home!

Ideas for how your family can make Ash Wednesday and Lent more meaningful this year:

- Wednesday is also Valentine’s Day, a great day to remember Jesus’ love for us! Talk about a creative way to celebrate Jesus’ love also - include some cross-shaped cookies with the heart-shaped ones!
- On Wednesday, you could place ashes on your hand or forehead, or make a small paper cross that you carry with you until Easter. Place the cross on your refrigerator or bathroom mirror as a daily reminder of Jesus’ death and sacrifice of love for us.
- The *Shema* Prayer reminds us that even our everyday routine is an opportunity to worship God and love Him with all our heart, soul, and strength. We’re encouraged to write His word on the doorposts of our houses. Pick a “family verse” to memorize between this Wednesday and Easter and post it around your house!
- Pray together about someone you could invite to church on Good Friday or Easter! Consider family, friends, teammates, school, etc.