

FEBRUARY 22, 2023
ASH WEDNESDAY



Return to the God of steadfast love.

ASH WEDNESDAY BIBLE READINGS

Take time to read and reflect on these Bible passages as part of your Ash Wednesday observances.

Wednesday	Joel 2:1-2, 12-17	A call to repentance
	Psalms 51:1-17	Have mercy on me, O God
	2 Corinthians 5:20b–6:10	Messengers of Christ
	Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21	Giving, praying, and fasting

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.

Joel 2:13b (NRSV)

PRAYERS AND BLESSING

A Prayer for Ash Wednesday:

Holy God, you have compassion on all you have created. Give us repentant hearts that lead us back to your grace and mercy through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mealtime Prayer:

Dear God, for this food that sustains us and your love that frees us to receive forgiveness for our sins, we give you thanks through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:

May the God of steadfast love have mercy on you through Christ our Lord.



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HYMN FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

*Change My Heart,
O God*

ASH WEDNESDAY MILESTONES

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

CARING CONVERSATIONS

Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- What makes it hard to admit you made a mistake?
- How does faith in Christ free you to acknowledge that you need God's forgiveness?

DEVOTIONS

Read: Joel 2:1-2, 12-17.

Ash Wednesday is a time of repentance, a particular time to return to God and God's goodness. Joel observes how God's people have turned away. Their relationship with God is in disrepair. The consequences of this broken relationship are catastrophic, like a mighty army swooping down upon them. Joel tells the people to run to God instead of hiding. Why? Because God "is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishment" (v. 13). Ash Wednesday leads us back to the awe of God and God's goodness. The description of God's steadfast love is a persistent theme in the Old Testament, one that should bring us hope, not despair. Joel knows the challenge that lies in the hearts of the people, preferring to live in denial than to acknowledge their brokenness and need for God. Ash Wednesday calls us to move beyond denial and to acknowledge our sin that only God's steadfast love can cure.

Discuss: How is Ash Wednesday a gift of God's steadfast love for you?

Pray: **Forgiving God, help us to acknowledge our brokenness and our need for your steadfast love and faithfulness that our lives may be restored through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

SERVICE

Jesus calls us to serve our neighbor in love. Based on the Daily Bible Readings for this day, how might you help someone find hope, not despair through God's steadfast love?

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and lasts for 40 days. It is a time to focus on repentance and our relationship with God. It is a time for Christians to add a Lenten spiritual discipline to their daily rituals. Fasting, daily devotions, daily prayer, and a Lenten calendar are examples of these disciplines. Plan what your discipline might be for Lent and consider adding the ritual of this prayer each day from Psalm 51:10 when you wake or when you lie down: **Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. In the name of my Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.**



In addition to *Taking Faith Home*, celebrate milestones in your daily life as an effective faith formation tool. Go to: www.milestonesministry.org