

# Small Group Guide: Ash Wednesday - Beginning the Lenten Journey

## Opening Prayer

Begin your time together by inviting God's presence and asking Him to open hearts and minds to the work He wants to do during this Lenten season.

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## Icebreaker Question

Share one thing you've tried to change in your life before. What made it hard to stick with? What helped you succeed (if you did)?

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## Key Takeaways from the Sermon

1. **Two Roads to Walk:** We can either walk the way of the world (seeking satisfaction in temporary things) or walk the way Jesus calls us to (seeking God first).
  2. **The World's Satisfaction is Temporary:** The things we pursue in the world—comfort, possessions, status—never fully satisfy and always leave us wanting more.
  3. **Jesus' Example in the Wilderness:** After His baptism, Jesus spent 40 days in the desert, choosing to put God first above all earthly desires and temptations.
  4. **Lent is About Returning to God:** This 40-day journey asks us to return to God, focus on spiritual health, and replace worldly desires with His presence.
  5. **Repentance Means Changing Direction:** Repentance isn't just feeling sorry; it's actively turning away from one thing and toward God.
  6. **Replace, Don't Just Remove:** When we fast or give something up, we must replace it with prayer, Scripture, and time with God.
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## Discussion Questions

### Understanding the Message

1. **The pastor mentioned that we develop patterns and routines to make us comfortable and happy. What are some patterns or routines in your life that you turn to for comfort or satisfaction?**

2. **Read Matthew 4:1-11 (Jesus' temptation in the wilderness). How did Jesus respond to each temptation? What does this teach us about where to find true satisfaction?**
3. **The sermon says that even when everything is going well in life, we can still feel something is missing. Have you experienced this? What was that like?**

### **Personal Reflection**

4. **What "little gods" might you be worshiping—things you've been finding too much meaning in? (Examples: phone, food, work, relationships, entertainment, control)**
5. **The pastor said, "We were dust, and to dust we shall return." How does remembering our mortality and dependence on God change your perspective on daily life?**
6. **When you feel hungry, anxious, or uncomfortable, what is your first instinct? How might Lent help you develop a new first response?**

### **Application and Action**

7. **What is one specific thing you feel called to give up or fast from during Lent? What spiritual discipline will you use to replace it? (prayer, Scripture reading, service, etc.)**
  8. **The sermon mentions "spiritual disciplines" that help us see and hear God more clearly. Which spiritual discipline do you want to develop during this Lenten season?**
    - Prayer
    - Scripture reading
    - Fasting
    - Solitude
    - Service
    - Worship
    - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  9. **How can this group support you in your Lenten journey? What accountability or encouragement do you need?**
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## **Practical Applications**

### **This Week's Challenge**

Choose ONE of the following to commit to this week:

#### **Option 1: Replace a Daily Habit**

- Identify one daily habit that distracts you from God (social media scrolling, TV, snacking, etc.)

- Each time you're tempted to engage in that habit, spend 5 minutes in prayer or reading Scripture instead

### **Option 2: Create a Lenten Prayer Rhythm**

- Set three alarms on your phone for morning, midday, and evening
- When the alarm goes off, pause and pray: "Lord, help me desire You more than anything else today"

### **Option 3: Fast and Pray**

- Choose one day this week to fast from one meal
- Use that mealtime to pray, asking God to reveal what needs to change in your heart

### **Option 4: Join the "Five and Five" Journey**

- Download the church app and engage with the Lenten resources provided
- Invite one other person to do it with you for accountability

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## **Scripture for Reflection**

**Matthew 6:33** - "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

**Psalms 51:10** - "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

**Matthew 4:4** - "Jesus answered, 'It is written: Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

**Joel 2:12-13** - "Even now, declares the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning. Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate."

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## **Group Activity Option**

### **Confession and Commitment Circle**

1. Give each person a small piece of paper
2. Have them write down one thing they want to repent of or one thing they're giving up for Lent
3. In a time of silent prayer, invite everyone to symbolically surrender that thing to God

4. (Optional) Have members share what they wrote if they're comfortable
  5. Pray over each person, asking God to give them strength for the journey ahead
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## Closing Prayer Points

Pray together for:

- Courage to walk faithfully through the 40 days of Lent
  - Strength to resist temptation when it comes
  - Hearts that hunger for God more than anything the world offers
  - Grace when we stumble and fall
  - Transformation from the inside out
  - Eyes to see how God is working in and through this season
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## Before Next Week

- Check in with at least one group member about how your Lenten commitment is going
  - Journal about any struggles or victories you experience
  - Come ready to share one way you experienced God's presence this week
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## Leader Notes

- Be vulnerable about your own struggles with worldly attachments
- Emphasize grace—Lent is about drawing closer to God, not earning His love
- Remind the group that falling doesn't mean failing; getting back up is part of the journey
- Consider creating a group text or chat to encourage one another throughout the week
- The "Five and Five" program mentioned should be highlighted and explained if your church offers it