

# Reflections for Ash Wednesday

**History:** Our thoughts about Ash Wednesday are often shaped by our religious heritage. Some of us remember Ash Wednesday as the day we went to church and got an ash cross smeared on your forehead. Others might remember it as the day after Mardi Gras (or Fat Tuesday). Some of us remember it as a day other people observed.

Observed by many Western Christians, including Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, Ash Wednesday is thought of as the beginning of Lent (a period of fasting, repentance, moderation and spiritual discipline). Ash Wednesday typically emphasizes two themes: our sinfulness before God and our human mortality.

Our focus at Canyon Ridge has been on repentance (in fact, we've often referred to our observance of Ash Wednesday as our Repentance Service).

## Scripture Reading: Psalm 51: 1-17 NLT

Although King David was called "a man after God's own heart," he wasn't above getting tangled up in adultery, lying and even murder. What made him a man after God's own heart? Great faith in God, love for God's law, willingness to repent when found astray and an eagerness to be right with God.

David wrote Psalm 51 to reflect on the time Nathan the prophet came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba (see [2 Samuel 11:1-12:13](#)).

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**1** Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love.

Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins.

**2** Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin.

**3** For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night.

**4** Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight.

You will be proved right in what you say, and your judgment against me is just.

**5** For I was born a sinner—yes, from the moment my mother conceived me.

**6** But you desire honesty from the womb, teaching me wisdom even there.

**7** Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

**8** Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me—now let me rejoice.

**9** Don't keep looking at my sins. Remove the stain of my guilt.

**10** Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me.

**11** Do not banish me from your presence, and don't take your Holy Spirit from me.

**12** Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you.

**13** Then I will teach your ways to rebels, and they will return to you.

**14** Forgive me for shedding blood, O God who saves; then I will joyfully sing of your forgiveness.

**15** Unseal my lips, O Lord, that my mouth may praise you.

**16** You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one. You do not want a burnt offering.

**17** The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.

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**Reflect:** Spend some time prayerfully thinking back on the last season.

- When I think back on the last season of my life, these are the areas where I settled for something less than God designed me for:

- These are my relationships that need mending:
- These are the things God was prompting me to do and conversations God was prompting me to have that I put off or avoided:

**Imagine:** Prayerfully think forward about the next season.

- What step could I take to get *that* area more in line with God's design for me?
- What do I need to do in order to begin mending *that* relationship?
- What do I need to do or what conversation do I need to have?

**Declare:** Ask God to help you take the next step(s) you need to take.

- Prayerfully ask God to point out the right next step(s) to take.
- Write an "I will...." statement declaring your commitment.
- Consider who you might need to share your commitment with.
- Thank God for His unfailing love and forgiveness (1 John 1:9)