



Each week of Lent we will focus on some object that is found in our daily lives and look at how it can remind us of Jesus and his love for us, his desires for us. These sheets are to help you carry the theme throughout your week, so don't feel you have to do everything one day! Today, we start with Ash Wednesday and ashes.

What is Ash Wednesday and why ashes?

Ash Wednesday is the day the season of Lent starts in the Christian church. It is called Ash Wednesday because on this day, many people go to church and receive ashes in the shape of a cross on their forehead to remind them that this life on earth isn't perfect and neither are we. Ashes have been used since biblical times as a way to show sorrow for something. So, we use the ash crosses as a symbol to remind us that even though we aren't perfect Jesus loves us and died for us.

Questions to ask your family:

- **Where do you find ashes in daily life?** (*fireplaces, campfires, etc.*)
- **Why do you think people have used ashes to show they are sad about something?** (*Ashes come from things that have burned up and by spreading them on skin the ashes are black and so remind us of sadness or sorrow*)
- **If you receive your ashes at a church, you often hear the words “from dust you are and to dust you will return” said as someone puts the ash cross on your forehead. What do you think they are talking about when they say this?** (*Here on earth, we all live and we all die. When our lives come to an end here, our bodies are either buried or we are cremated – we become dust again, so these words help us remember that our life here on earth will one day end, but life with Jesus never ends*)

Something to do:

- **Ash crosses on your foreheads**

Take the ashes packet you received with this sheet and pour the ashes onto a plate

- Place a small amount of cooking oil in a small bowl or cup.
- Talk about why ashes and why ash crosses on our foreheads
- Maybe share what it's been like for you having the ashes on your forehead before
- Say a prayer asking Jesus to remind you how much he loves you
- Have each person dip their finger in the cooking oil then dip their finger in the ashes. Have them each turn to someone else in the family and put the ash cross on their forehead saying either: from dust you are and to dust you will return or for littles: remember Jesus loves you this much (as you make the sign of the cross on foreheads)

Additional Activity: Labyrinth Meditation

For this meditation, we will use the labyrinth page, the scripture refrain page, and ashes or black paint.

For Individual Use:

- Please sit at a table or other flat surface. Place the labyrinth in the middle of the table or surface. Near the paper, have prepared ashes or black paint available for use and the scripture refrain page.
- Place your finger at the entrance of the labyrinth. Read through the first scripture, then move your finger through the labyrinth. When you reach the center, dip your thumb in the ashes or paint. Then, make the sign of the cross in the middle of the labyrinth. Say the refrain: "From dust you came, and to dust you shall return."
- As you trace your way back out of the labyrinth, reflect on the scripture passage and notice any intentions that come to mind that you may want to set for this Lenten season.
- Repeat with the rest of the scripture passages. When you finish your journey, write out your intentions and say a prayer.

For Family Use:

- If you use this with a group, designate one or more readers of the scripture passage, Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21.
- Gather around a table or other flat surface. Place the labyrinth in the middle of the table or surface. Near the paper, have prepared ashes or black paint available for use and the scripture refrain page.
- Invite each person in your group to use their finger to "journey through the labyrinth." If your group has more than four, invite two participants to journey the labyrinth together.
- Start by placing one finger at the entrance of the labyrinth, and when the reader begins to read the scripture, move your finger slowly through. When each participant reaches the center of the labyrinth, they will dip their thumb in the ashes or paint and make the sign of the cross in the middle of the labyrinth.
- Together, all will say the refrain: "From dust you came, and to dust you shall return."
- Pause between each of the four breaks after the refrains as the participant finishes tracing their finger through the rest of the labyrinth.
- When you finish your journeys, you may complete the activity by setting any intentions for Lent and closing with a prayer.

For Young Children:

- Explain simply: Today is Ash Wednesday, a special day when we remember that God made us and loves us. During Lent, we think about ways we can be closer to God and kinder to others.

SCRIPTURE & REFRAIN: MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-21

CONCERNING ALMSGIVING

Reader: Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Refrain Together: Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

CONCERNING PRAYER

Reader: And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Refrain Together: Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

CONCERNING FASTING

Reader: And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Refrain Together: Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

CONCERNING TREASURES

Reader: Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Refrain Together: Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Journey through the
LABYRINTH

