



ASH

WEDNESDAY

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

Instructions:

- Devote 30 minutes of your Wednesday evening to scripture reading, prayer and reflection questions as a household.
- As you prepare your family for worship, consider the environment. Today is Ash Wednesday; dim the lights, sit on the floor, light a candle, perhaps put some mellow instrumental music on in the background.
- Parents, be ready to modify the lesson to help your kids engage and understand as best they can.
- Each person will need a piece of paper and an instrument for writing or drawing.
- Finally, grab a Bible.

Opening:

Kids: Draw the cross of Jesus

Today is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of a time called, *Lent* that lasts 40 days (not including Sundays). It starts today and ends on a day we call *Good Friday*. Good Friday is the day Jesus was arrested and died on the cross for us. Today we get our minds, our hearts and our household focussed on the beautiful love Jesus showed us on Good Friday. For the next 40 days we want to be thinking, talking and praying a lot about what Jesus did for us on the cross and why it was so important that he die for each of us.

Opening Prayer:

"Lord, right now we take a moment to center our minds and our hearts on you. We want to honor and respect your loving sacrifice on the cross through this time together. Holy Spirit, lead us to be present with you, to be convicted over our sin and to be more thankful and in love with Jesus today. Amen."

1st Reading

Read Isaiah 5:1-7

Kids: draw a picture of the grape vines in the story.

A vineyard is a fancy way of talking about a grape farm. Grapes are grown then used to eat, make juice and most importantly, wine. In this story, God plants a vineyard of grapes, but when he goes back to look at what he planted, he doesn't find what he was hoping for. In the story, instead of big delicious and juicy grapes, God finds wild grapes- small, sour and shriveled up grapes that are no good for anything. It reminds me of another plant used for food called sage. Sage is a common herb used in all kinds of cooking. In Nevada we have a form of wild sage called *sagebrush*. Even though it grows everywhere, it's not good for anything. Imagine planting a big garden and all you get was a bunch of sagebrush!

This story is not really about grapes or wine or a farm. It is about you, and me and our sin. In verse 7 we are told the meaning of the vineyard and the grapes; we are the vineyard, our lives are the grapes. God created us to do works of righteousness, obedience and love. He created us to glorify him in everything we do. Yet we are wild, we are rebellious, we are sinful in our very nature. If we squeezed all of the righteousness from our lives, we would maybe have a few drops of juice, but not enough to fill the cup of God. We have fallen short of God's good plans for us.

We have a sin problem. And it's not just what we do or don't do that is sinful. It's who we are- we are wild. In our nature we are sinful. Paul says in Ephesians 2, that "by nature we are children of wrath." Because of our sinful nature we do not naturally please God or love God. Naturally, we are enemies of God.

Reflect:

- How are you aware of your sin nature? In what ways do you naturally rebel against God?
 - Take 5 minutes to write your thoughts down. Kids, draw a picture.

Prayer:

"God, our Master and our creator- you have made us and placed us here on this Earth to do righteous works for your glory, yet we each have failed many times. We are wild by nature. We don't just need you to help us, we don't just need to try harder or do better. God, we need you to completely rescue us- to transform us from who we are and to atone for us from the consequences of our sinful nature. By our very nature we are sinners, of our very nature we repent. May you get the glory you deserve"

2nd Reading

Read Isaiah 53:4-6

What God could have done with his vineyard is not what he has done. God could have destroyed us, he could have judged us, he could have abandoned us. Instead, the Bible says he was *crushed* for our iniquities.

"Crushed" is a very unique word. And it is used to describe a grape. To get the juice out of a grape and make wine, it must be crushed. Jesus did not come into our world to be a good teacher, or a coach or a famous person. Jesus came into the world to be a savior and a substitute. He was crushed in our place.

Jesus was crushed for our iniquities. *Iniquities* are sins. Instead of destroying us for our sins, Jesus died for our sins. By our nature we are wild and rebellious and sinful. But Jesus is God and by his nature he is perfect and righteous. Jesus poured out his life to fill our cups, and to fill the cup of God.

Because of what Jesus Christ did on the cross we are forgiven, and God is satisfied. But the text says one more thing, "by his wounds we are *healed*." Our nature needs to change, and Jesus begins a process of healing as we turn from our sin and turn to him.

For this reason we value Lent as an important time for us to repent and to reflect on our sin- and not just that we sin, but that by nature we are sinners. And Lent is a time to reflect on the incredible power, love and grace of God found in Jesus Christ.

Reflect:

- Write down a short prayer of repentance and thanksgiving.
- Kids, draw a picture of your prayer.

Closing Prayer:

- Close your household in prayer, inviting each member to participate with the prayer they wrote or drew.
- Close your prayer time with these words: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23) Amen.

What's next?

- Find somewhere to put your papers with prayers and drawings as a reminder through Lent of what Jesus has done for you and how to pray for one another.
- Consider fasting. Fasting from food is a tradition the church has long practiced during this season. Consider setting a weekly reminder in your phone to fast from food one day or one meal per week.
 - Need a resource on fasting?
 - Listen to this short teaching on [fasting](#) by Pastor John Mark Comer.

