



On the Way With Jesus

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE
PART I – ASH WEDNESDAY, LENT 1-5

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Unless otherwise noted, all quotations are from
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On the Way With Jesus: With Gratitude and Humility

ASH WEDNESDAY

READ: MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-21

1. What three spiritual practices does Jesus address in Matthew 6:2-4, 5-6, and 16-18?
2. Note that each spiritual practice is introduced with “whenever you” (Matthew 6:2, 5, 16, NRSV), indicating that for Jesus and his followers, each was a common and expected expression of faithful living. What similarities do you notice in Jesus’ instructions for all three? Which of the three do you commonly practice, and why? Which are not as familiar to you, and why not?
3. From Matthew 6:1, 19-21, what basic principles apply to all three spiritual practices?
4. The opening of this sermon contrasts our carefully curated pictures on social media with the reality of daily life, and notes that “The technology to curate our lives online may be relatively new, but the impulse to re-arrange our lives and show them in the best possible light is an ancient one.” (page 10) Adam and Eve are given as one example. What other examples of this concern for appearances can you identify in Scripture, online, and in day-to-day living?
5. The sermon applies Jesus’ teaching in this portion of Matthew to Ash Wednesday:

Like any worship service or spiritual practice or good deed, Ash Wednesday might also become an occasion for pride and showing off. Just as we might give or pray or fast to impress others, we might come to Ash Wednesday with that same tendency to make ourselves look good and give ourselves a pat on the back for taking part. But that would miss the whole point of Ash Wednesday as a solemn remembrance of our human frailty and a time for confession and repentance. (page 13)

How will you live out this call for authenticity on Ash Wednesday, during this Lenten season, and throughout the year?

On the Way With Jesus: In the Wilderness

LENT 1

READ: MATTHEW 4:1-11

1. “In Hannah Hurnard’s classic allegory, *Hinds’ Feet on High Places*, little Much-Afraid leaves her home in the Valley to journey to the High Places at the invitation of the Great Shepherd.” (page 15)
In your own journey through life, what have been some of the high places? When have you been in the wilderness? Where has life taken an unexpected turn for you?
2. What event takes place in Matthew 3:13-17? Then instead of entering immediately into public ministry, Jesus is led by the Spirit into the wilderness. In what way might this have been an unexpected turn?
3. This sermon ends with a prayer: “*Great shepherd and guardian, we give thanks for your example in the wilderness, meeting trial and temptation with faith, perseverance, Scripture, and wisdom.*” (page 19)
What three temptations did Jesus face in the wilderness, and how did he answer them? How might his example help you in dealing with the temptations you face?
4. What takes place in Matthew 4:12-17? How might Jesus’ time in the wilderness have prepared him for what would follow?
5. Jesus’ time in the wilderness was a time of solitude, a time to withdraw from the crowds and be alone with God. What role does solitude play in your spiritual life?

On the Way With Jesus: On the Mountaintop

LENT 2

READ: MATTHEW 17:1-9

1. For Peter, James, and John, the mountaintop became a place of spiritual significance as they saw Jesus transformed before them and in conversation with Moses and Elijah. What did they learn about Jesus? What did they learn about themselves?
2. What mountaintop experiences have you had in your journey through life, where you have encountered Jesus in a new way and/or when you learned something new about yourself?
3. When Jesus and his disciples came down the mountain, they rejoined the crowd, and Jesus healed a young boy (Matthew 17:14-18).
Who are the people and what are the concerns that God has placed in your path?
Make a list to pray over at the end of this sermon's study.
4. "Mountaintop experiences and emotions don't last forever. A real world is waiting and clamoring for attention. Someone needs a touch of compassion. Someone needs a word of healing. . . . We can't stay on the mountaintop forever. Nor can we personally meet every need that's part of our clamoring world today. But we can listen to Jesus." (page 24)
How might listening to Jesus help us to discern among the different needs in our world today?
5. Listen to Jesus:
 - a. Re-read Matthew 17:1-9. What does Jesus say to the disciples and so to us?
 - b. Spend some moments in silence.
 - c. Pray over the list of people and concerns from question 3.
 - d. How else might you listen to Jesus?

On the Way With Jesus: Transformed

LENT 3

READ: JOHN 4:5-42

1. Why was Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well so surprising in his day?
2. Trace the changes in the woman's behavior and attitudes from the start of her story until the end. In what ways was she transformed? How did she transform her town?
3. In what ways has your life been transformed by Jesus?
4. "Like the woman at the well, we too can receive living water; we can learn to ask new questions, we can grow in faith. We might not evangelize our whole town or die a martyr's death, but we too can share what we know." (page 31)
How are you active in sharing your faith with others?
What stops you from being more active in sharing your faith with others?
5. In the six weeks before Easter, some observe Lent as a time of fasting by giving up certain foods like coffee or chocolate, or giving up a certain attitude or behavior like complaining or watching television. Even small practices such as these can serve as reminders of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.
In addition to giving up something for Lent, some people also add something that's life-giving, like going for a walk every morning or reading a Psalm every evening. Small practices such as these can serve as reminders of Jesus' offer of life-giving water.
What have you given up during this time of Lent? What have you added? If you haven't yet started, it's not too late to choose something now.

On the Way With Jesus: Sent

LENT 4

READ: JOHN 9:1-41

1. In this encounter between Jesus and a man who had been blind from birth, trace the changes in the man's physical sight throughout John 9. How did his spiritual sight also change in this chapter?
2. How did the man's family respond to the changes they saw in him? What were they afraid of? How did the religious people respond? Why were they so angry at Jesus?
3. Consider how you respond to change. What changes in life have you experienced as healing and positive growth? What changes have made you feel fearful or angry?
4. This sermon refers to another story of healing in 2 Kings 5:1-14 in which a man with leprosy is told to wash in the Jordan seven times, and he will be healed. Read the story for yourself and compare and contrast it with this story in John 9.
5. Some speak of "the church gathered" and "the church scattered," meaning the church gathered for worship and the church scattered into the world during the week. Another way to describe the church in the world is "sent," for we are not only scattered in many different places but we are sent with a purpose.

Like the blind man in our text, we are meant to show the work of God in our lives. . . . Our more immediate tasks may seem laughably simple and small—go wash in the pool, go to school, get to work, do the next to-do on your too-long to-do list, or whatever else has been placed before you this week. But God works in such small things today just as he did for the man who washed in the pool and received his sight. Like him, we have a larger purpose and a longer journey of faith and healing. (page 36)

Think of your more immediate tasks this week. How do they relate to this larger purpose of showing the work of God in your life?

On the Way With Jesus: When The Way Means Staying Home

LENT 5

READ: JOHN 11:1-45

1. While some of Jesus' first disciples travelled with him around the countryside, others followed Jesus while remaining at home. In John 11:1-45, what evidence of faith and friendship can you identify between Lazarus, Martha, Mary, and Jesus?
2. How do Martha and Mary respond to Jesus' delay and eventual arrival? How do you respond when your prayers seem to go unanswered? What can you learn from their response?
3. "One family from our congregation relocated to another town to be part of a Bible study group that they pray will grow into a church. Another family spent some years in overseas ministry, and have now moved to a nearby community to take on pastoral responsibilities." (page 39) When has following Jesus meant travelling or moving for you? When has following Jesus meant staying home for you?
4. "The home of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary was a place of hospitality, rest, and friendship for Jesus and his disciples like no other place mentioned in the gospels. What a beautiful vision for home and family life! . . . Could our homes be places of hospitality and friendship, of preparation for ministry and rest for the weary?" (page 42) What would it take for your home to become that? In what ways is this already happening in your home?
5. If you have given up or added something to your life for Lent, how has the practice been going for you? What are you learning?