

ASH WEDNESDAY REFLECTION GUIDE 2026: *Ash Wednesday begins Lent, a season of 40 days (excluding Sundays) prior to Easter. Traditionally a time for reflecting on Jesus' temptation and crucifixion, it is also a season for self-examination, confession, and repentance in preparation for Resurrection Day. Psalm 40 is associated with Jesus' journey to the cross (Heb. 10:5-7). Please prayerfully and patiently read the psalm and reflection below (two sides).*

<p>For the director of music. Of David. A psalm. (NIV, 1984)</p> <p> ¹ I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. ² He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. ³ He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD. ⁴ Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods. ⁵ Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders you have done. The things you planned for us no one can recount to you; were I to speak and tell of them, they would be too many to declare. ⁶ Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but my ears you have pierced; burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require. ⁷ Then I said, "Here I am, I have come— it is written about me in the scroll. ⁸ I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart." </p>	<p> ⁹ I proclaim righteousness in the great assembly; I do not seal my lips, as you know, O LORD. ¹⁰ I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and salvation. I do not conceal your love and your truth from the great assembly. ¹¹ Do not withhold your mercy from me, O LORD; may your love and your truth always protect me. ¹² For troubles without number surround me; my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see. They are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails within me. ¹³ Be pleased, O LORD, to save me; O LORD, come quickly to help me. ¹⁴ May all who seek to take my life be put to shame and confusion; may all who desire my ruin be turned back in disgrace. ¹⁵ May those who say to me, "Aha! Aha!" be appalled at their own shame. ¹⁶ But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation always say, "The LORD be exalted!" ¹⁷ Yet I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me. You are my help and my deliverer; O my God, do not delay. </p>
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1. *I waited patiently for the Lord...* What are you currently waiting for the Lord to do? Take a few moments to cry out to Him, to give whatever it is into His hands, to seek His peace. Let us ask for patience and perseverance in prayer. It is good to wait for the Lord (Lam. 3:21-26).

2. *He lifted me out of the slimy pit...* Think of a pit the Lord has delivered you from. There may be many! One of our hymns declares, “*I was sinking down... Jesus lifted me!*” Let us pause to give Him thanks for the many ways He has saved and delivered us. Thanksgiving is healthy for us (Phil. 4:6-7) and helps us to persevere in the patient waiting of verse 1.

3. *He put a new song in my mouth... many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord.* Who do you have an opportunity to testify to about what the Lord has done for you? Let us share stories of His deliverance, that others might join in celebrating the Lord’s goodness and love.

4. Blessed is the person who trusts in the Lord. Who or what are we putting our trust in? There are many proud and false places we can place our hopes instead of in the Lord. *Lord Jesus, purge us of any phony objects of reliance, and help us to trust fully and ultimately in You.*

5. *Many, O Lord, my God, are the wonders you have done... too many to declare.* The Lord has done more wonderful things than we can count, but let’s not allow that to stop us! What has the Lord done that inspires a sense of *wonder* in your heart? Take a few minutes to meditate on these things. *Restore in us, O Lord, a sense of awe and wonder at all You have done!*

6. *Sacrifice and offering you did not desire... here I am, I have come... I desire to do your will...* That is why we have come to worship. As in the Lord’s prayer, we want His will to be done on earth, in our lives, as it is in heaven. This is the attitude which was visible in Jesus from the manger to the cross (Phil. 2:5-11). *Lord, open our hearts and do Your will in us* (Phil. 2:12-13).

7. *I do not seal my lips... I speak of your faithfulness and salvation.* Now we are back to the song of verse 3. Many things might hinder us from speaking freely of what the Lord has done for us. Lord, whom might I speak to about your faithfulness and salvation, that they might be encouraged and drawn closer to you? *Lord, open our lips, that we might speak!*

8. *Do not withhold your mercy... my sins have overtaken me... be pleased, O LORD, to save me...* The Lord’s deliverance is always mercy. Sometimes, we’re in a difficult situation because of our own sin. Sometimes, bad stuff just happens. In any case, we are called to search our hearts (Ps. 139:23-24) and confess our sins (1 Jn. 1:9); the Lord is compassionate and gracious (Ps. 103). Luke 18:13 is a fitting prayer for Lent: *Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner!*

9. *May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you!* We pray that the psalmist’s experience in verse 3 would become our experience as well. We sought the Lord, and He answered us. May we respond with gratitude and joy. Maybe you’re not feeling that joy today. That’s okay! Pray that the Lord would bring deliverance, and bring you to a place of singing again.

10. *Yet I am poor and needy... O my God, do not delay!* At the heart of Lent is the recognition that “we are weak but He is strong.” We approach Good Friday and Easter with prayers for deliverance. The cross and resurrection are God’s gifts to desperately needy people like us.