

Truly Clean

The Meaning of Lent

Isaiah 58:1-12 *NIV*

Bible Lesson & Activities for Children



THE **SUNDAY SCHOOL** STORE

There's Dirt on Your Face!



The season of Lent can be an important and meaningful time of contemplation and gratitude. This lesson discusses Ash Wednesday and how we remember that our sins have been forgiven. Use dirty things to emphasize how God cleans us on the inside. Lent is not just about acting sad or giving things up, but recalling what Jesus does for us and passing His love onto others.

The blood of Jesus covers all of our sins and cleanses us from the filth of sin. God desires our hearts and wants us to love His children. Fasting is fine, but it's more important to love and serve the Lord and others. He has already forgiven us and promised eternal life. During Lent, we consider our sins, but more importantly remember how God loves and forgives us.

Passage: Isaiah 58:1-12

Target Audience: Kindergarten-6th grade

Materials Needed: Things that make someone dirty (mud, syrup, glue, tar, etc.); construction paper/cardstock; chalk; ash or pastel crayons; paper towel tubes; pipe cleaners; Bibles.

More Resources Online

- Watch the [video demonstration of the object lesson](#).
- Watch the [video example for the craft projects](#).
- Watch the [video Bible story "The Temptation of Jesus"](#) from Saddleback Kids Club
- Watch the [video Bible story "Isaiah, God's Story"](#) from Crossroads Kids
- For more free illustrations, visit [Christian Clip Arts](#) and [Ministry-To-Children](#)

Object Lesson (5 minutes)

Greet children and discuss things that make us dirty...

Hello, Children of God!

I have a few items with me today, and I want you to see if you can find out what is alike with all of them. What is the common factor between these things? *Display several items that could make someone messy or dirty. Examples include sticky syrup or other messy foods, actual dirt/mud, craft supplies, etc.* What do you think is alike about all of these things? That's right, they can all make you dirty! All of these things will create a mess of some sort. So how can I clean up? If I have syrup all over my hands and I talk about cleaning it, does that solve the problem? Of course not. I have to actually wash my hands or wipe up the mess to help do anything about it.

Here's another question though: How can I clean messes on the inside? We know that we are sinful and that we do things we shouldn't. Can we fix this on our own? No. Soap doesn't get rid of the sin stains that we have. Only God can get rid of the "heart dirt." Sometimes we try to do things that will make us feel like we are being better or "more holy", when it's only Jesus who does that. Nothing we do or say makes us any better or more special.

We are entering the season of Lent. This can feel like a less cheery time than usual, but it's an important and wonderful part of the church year. Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. Perhaps you go to a service at church and receive the sign of a cross in ashes on your forehead. Or you might see someone else with this. In older times, people would use ashes as a sign of repentance, covering themselves to remember how dirty they were and to be sorry about it. We often say that the ash reminds us that "we come from dust, and to dust we will return." That all sounds pretty bleak, but there's actually a wonderful element of hope that comes with it. We are sinful and dirty, yes, and on our own we can't fix that. But

Jesus takes all of that dirt away! God loves us so much that He wants to make us clean and new again. He wants to forgive us and be close to us, and He makes that possible. Just like we wash our hands with soap or wipe the ash off our faces, He washes us with the blood of Christ. During Lent, we consider how amazing it is that our sins have been forgiven and that Jesus is with us still.

Sometimes people give up things at this time, to contemplate their faith or how they have been redeemed. This is called "fasting." People might give up things like chocolate, using social media, or something like that. But fasting doesn't make us any better or worse, and it's not necessarily what pleases God most. In Isaiah 58, He says that it's not enough to just fast and talk about our faith. We should live it out. It's more important to love and serve and give to others than to make ourselves miserable with sacrifice. Lent isn't just about denying ourselves but about devoting ourselves more to God and others. Again, this doesn't somehow earn our way to salvation. Helping people doesn't win us Heaven. Jesus did that work already. But because we see what He's done for us, we can love and serve others. We realize that we are unclean and need God. We call to Him for help knowing He answers and saves us. We want to tell others of His love, but we want to demonstrate it by loving those in need.

This Ash Wednesday, we can give thanks to the Lord for His love and salvation. We can consider our sins and be glad that He takes them away. And whether or not you give up candy, we can find ways to draw closer to God and to the people He loves. Jesus makes us clean!

Prayer: (Invite the children to repeat each line)

Dear God,

Thank you for taking our sins away

And giving us new life.

Help us to remember and honor you

Now and always.

We love you, God!

In Jesus name, Amen!

Game & Activities Suggestions (10 minutes)



This passage contains some harsh-sounding words from Isaiah, but it reminds us of our sin and overall the hope of redemption. Start with an activity that uses these themes and gets kids thinking:

- **Get dirty!** Allow kids to do something they naturally enjoy by playing in something dirty, like a sandbox, clay, or pile of mud. Talk about how things make us dirty and we have to wash with soap to be clean. How does God’s love make us clean on the inside?
- **Dust to dust:** discuss ashes and how they used to be used as a sign of repentance. Look at some, if available. You might also consider looking at chalk dust or pastel crayons as a “smudgy” “dusty” item.
- **Dusting relay:** arrange students into two teams and line them up. Have one student from each line race down and sprinkle dust on a shelf or other item. The next student will go clean it up with a rag or duster. Students will continue, taking turns, until all have gone.
- **Service brainstorm:** have students come up with ways to serve others and give to others. To make this a competitive game, write down ideas that students say and see which team comes up with more.
- **Lenten preview:** it’s not just the stuff in your pocket! Discuss Lent with students, if observed by your church family, and why we honor it in the time before Easter.

Explain to students what Ash Wednesday is and how we recall our sins and “dirtiness.” There are several Bible passages that are used during Lent, and one in particular will be explored in this lesson.

Main Bible Teaching

(15 minutes)



This passage does not lend itself to role playing or interactive elements as much, but is easy to read aloud and discuss, looking at the prophet and how his words remind us of our sins and mistakes. Take turns reading with students, or read aloud and explain for younger ones.

Isaiah 58:1-2 NIV *“Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their rebellion and to the descendants of Jacob their sins. (2) For day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God. They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them.*

Explain that God is speaking, through the prophet Isaiah, to His people Israel. They were honoring God with their mouths but not their hearts. On the surface they acted like they wanted to seek and know God, but something was missing. God was about to expose the hypocrisy that was really going on.

Ask: Have you ever known someone who said one thing, but didn't really act it out?

Isaiah 58:3-5 NIV *‘Why have we fasted,’ they say, ‘and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?’ “Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. (4) Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. (5) Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves? Is it only for bowing*

one's head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?

The truth was that the people of Israel were not sincere in their fasting. They had ulterior motives. Explain to students that sometimes people will fast, or go without food or something they enjoy, in order to remember their sins or to think about how they can serve God. It's a practice that has been observed since Bible times. During Lent, a season in the church year, people will sometimes fast by giving up certain things. There's nothing necessarily wrong with fasting, but in this case, the people were doing it to try to win God's favor somehow. They had the wrong idea at the core. It might be like if you fasted during Lent, but only to lose weight rather than sincerely thinking about God. These people pretended to be humble, but were still fighting and hurting others.

Ask: Have you ever given up something for a period of time? Is there anything helpful about it?

Isaiah 58:6-7 NIV *"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? (7) Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?"*

God explains the kind of "fast" He truly wants. Instead of giving something up or fighting or acting humble, He'd rather people share what they have and help those in need. He wants us to have truly repentant hearts and hearts of service, to give to others.

Ask: Do you have opportunities to help other people in your life today? What about as a church?

Isaiah 58:8-10 NIV Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. (9) Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, (10) and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.

God promises to be near to us. We don't somehow command Him with our actions, but He knows when our motives are true. God wanted the people to stop fighting and help one another. If they earnestly and sincerely demonstrated love and not just fasting for the sake of looking good, He would bless them with wonderful things.

Ask: What blessings does God give us every day?

Isaiah 58:11-12 NIV And the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. (12) And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in.

God wants to give us good things. He is with us and loves us. No matter what we do, He will provide for us. But He also wants to see us acting truthfully in what we say. If we fast or try to honor Him, we should do it for the right reasons.

Whether or not you or people around you honor Lent, it's good to consider ways in which we mess up, and to appreciate how God helps us. We make mistakes and can be sinful, unclean, and "dirty." But God makes us new. Lent is a time to reflect on that, but can also be a great time of giving. Instead of fasting, maybe this is a good opportunity to help

others, or to add something like extra prayer or Bible study. We don't do these things to win favors with God, but to draw nearer to Him and show love to His people.

Ask: What can you do a little differently in your life to show love for God and others?

Lent is a season not only of fasting, but of growth and renewal spiritually. It is a great opportunity to give to and serve others and to allow students opportunities to serve the church and community. Remind kids that they can do special things to let God know they love Him, and that they'll likely feel blessed and encouraged along the way! Invite them to practice devotion and service however they can.

Craft Activities (15 minutes)

Ash Wednesday doesn't necessarily lend itself too much to cute crafts, but it's not impossible to creatively remember the meaning of the day. These crafts reflect on the beginning of Lent and why we go through the season. A "Giving Bouquet" recalls the importance of serving God and others during Lent. A Chalk Dust Heart reflects on Ash Wednesday and why we call ourselves "dust." Let's get crafty!

Craft one: "Giving Bouquet"

You will need:

- Construction paper or cardstock
- Scissors
- Glue or tape
- Pipe Cleaners
- Paper towel or toilet paper tubes
- Markers or crayons
- Extra decorations (stickers, glitter, etc.)



Procedure:

1. Cut out several flower shapes from pieces of paper. On each one, write a way to serve or give to others, or an activity that can be taken on during Lent to grow closer to God.
2. Poke a hole through each flower and attach a pipe cleaner for a "stem."
3. Decorate the tube with markers, stickers, or other items to be the "vase."
4. Attach verses and captions. Place the "bouquet" in the "vase" to remember ways that we can honor God by caring for His people.



Craft Two: "Chalk Dust Heart"

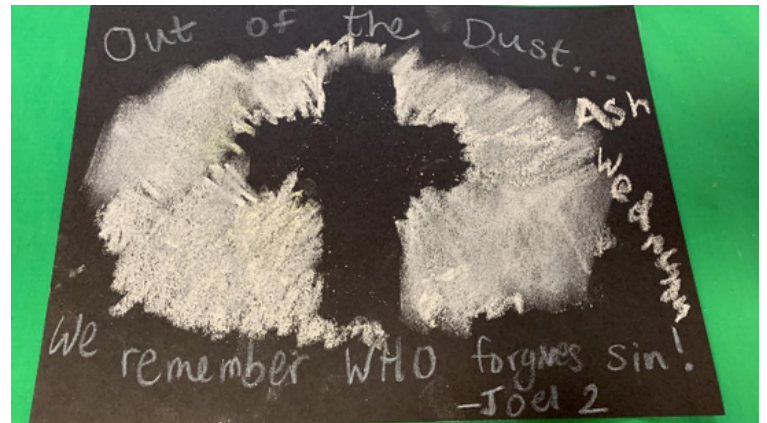
You will need:

- Construction paper or cardstock
- Chalk or pastels
- Scissors
- Markers/Crayons
- String or magnet (optional)



Procedure:

1. On a dark sheet of paper, add verses and captions with a white crayon or chalk. Alternatively, use lighter paper and pastel crayons.
2. Cut a cross from cardboard or cardstock, and place it in the center of the paper.
3. Use chalk to fill in the area surrounding the cross, fanning out to cover much of the paper. Smudge the chalk (or pastels) to make it appear more "dusty."
4. Remove the cross to reveal a cross shape in the center of the "dust." If desired, attach a hanger to remember the meaning of Ash Wednesday.



Isaiah 58:1a NIV

“Shout it aloud, do not hold back.

Raise your voice like a trumpet.





Word Search Puzzle

Voice – Fasting – Trumpet – Jacob – Sins – Righteous

Judgment – Humble – Behold – Wickedness – Yoke – Restorer

H	U	M	B	L	E	D	Z	W	W	Y	D
Y	F	E	F	E	C	V	O	I	C	E	Z
J	X	G	S	Q	H	K	T	C	B	J	R
J	F	T	J	A	C	O	B	K	F	U	E
T	B	L	L	R	F	N	L	E	F	D	S
R	I	M	Z	B	D	A	W	D	A	G	T
H	T	P	Z	N	F	S	I	N	S	M	O
R	P	N	T	R	U	M	P	E	T	E	R
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N	Z	V	L	P	T	B	D	S	N	T	R
K	T	C	W	S	M	O	Z	R	G	K	Q
W	Y	E	P	Q	N	L	Y	O	K	E	I

Word Search Answers

H U M B L E D Z W W Y D
Y F E F E C V O I C E Z
J X G S Q H K T C B J R
J F T J A C O B K F U E
T B L L R F N L E F D S
R I M Z B D A W D A G T
H T P Z N F S I N S M O
R P N T R U M P E T E R
R I G H T E O U S I N E
N Z V L P T B D S N T R
K T C W S M O Z R G K Q
W Y E P Q N L Y O K E I