



Cherish All Children

Pray + Educate + Connect + Act

Wednesday Prayer – Ash Wednesday

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; in your great compassion blot out my offenses. Wash me through and through from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin. Psalm 51:1-2

This week I reflected on a play about many of the unhealthy aspects of masculinity that exist in our culture; aspects that can lead to harmful behaviors such as shutting down, acting out, committing violence in relationships, and even purchasing another person for sexual acts. Scenes were shared from a men's group, men who had engaged in purchasing sex and been caught. Once the deep harm of their actions was made known to them, they sought mercy, forgiveness, and renewal. This group, "Men Breaking Free", brings survivors of sexual exploitation and trafficking together with perpetrators to do the hard work of mercy, forgiveness, and renewal. With extreme grace, these survivors are showing the great compassion and mercy of God.

In this Psalm, we hear David, King of Israel, crying out for mercy after the prophet Nathan points out the evils David has done to Bathsheba and her husband, Uriah. David has engaged in coveting, stealing, adultery, and murder. David has "been caught" by God who sends Nathan to declare this to him. David's destructive behaviors, including sexual sin, are now out in the open and his plea is for complete renewal.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Psalm 51:10

God's powerful grace brings forgiveness, and while there are consequences, David is allowed to go forward with God's mercy, steadfast love, and great compassion. Our human nature may make it difficult for us to embrace the forgiveness side of those who exploit children and youth. We may need to give this one to God, and pray for the transformation that raises all to new life.

Dear God of immeasurable grace, enter our hearts as we begin this season of repentance and renewal. Have mercy on us as we work through our own sinful nature, and grant us the grace to support others to go forward in truth, seeking your forgiveness. Amen.

Today's Wednesday Prayer was written by Joy McElroy, Cherish All Children Executive Director.

Here is a series of [six Lenten Prayers](#) we encourage you to use in your Bible studies, worship, or personal prayer time to keep the safety of children and youth in our hearts, minds, and actions.