

# LENTEN LITANY

## **Opening Prayer**

O Lord, open my lips

**and my mouth will declare your praise.**

You do not delight in sacrifice, or we would bring it,

**You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.**

Our sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit:

**A broken and contrite heart,**

**O God, you will not despise.**

**The Confession:** Merciful God, we come to you today realizing that we are not how you want us to be. Help us let go of the past, that we may turn toward you and live again the life of faith. Help us confess our fear and hatred, our anger and self-pity. Lift the burden they place on our shoulders. Help us set aside our guilt and enter a season of healing. As we pray and fast today, help us to become simple people that we may see you plainly. As we wear the ashes of lent, help us to rid our lives of the leaven of sin. Create in us a pure heart, O Holy Spirit, and restore to us the joy of your salvation. Amen



**Purify my heart, Let me be as gold and precious silver**

**Purify my heart, Let me be as gold, pure gold**

**Refiner's fire, My heart's one desire, Is to be holy,**

**Set apart for You, Lord I pray to be holy,**

**Set apart for You, my Master, Ready to do Your will.**

**Purify my heart, Cleanse me from within, And make me holy**

**Purify my heart, Cleanse me from my sin, deep within.**

**The Assurance:** Surely Jesus, in his body on the cross, took up our pain and carried our sorrows. He was sacrificed for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. (Isaiah 53 4-5) Upon him, the Lamb of God, they laid the sins of the world and by his wounds we are healed. (1 Peter 2: 23-25) As high as the heavens are above the earth so great is God's love for those who trust in him, as far as the east is from the west so far has God removed our sins from us by the blood of Jesus (Psalm 103).

**For God so loved the world he made; God gave his own beloved son**

**All who believe in him will live; Not die, but live forevermore.**

**God did not send Christ to the world; That he might then condemn us all**

**But that the world by Christ's own blood; Might then be ransomed from the fall.**

## **Prayers of the People**

*God of new birth, we praise you*

*for being the giver of life and the victor over sin. We praise you*

*for the evidence of new life we see in creation...*

*for our baptism and union with Christ ...*

*for the promise of the new creation ...*

*God of new birth, we acknowledge*

*that all of life is in your hands, so we pray*

*for creation and its care .....*

*for the nations of the world, especially ....*

*for our nation and those in authority ....*

*for our community and its leaders ...*

*for the global church and those who minister ...  
for Hope International Church and our ministries ....  
for persons with particular needs ...*

*We pray all these things in the name of Jesus. Amen*

***Sign of the Ashes (Leviticus 6:10-11)***

*We make our journey to Easter wearing the sign of ashes. As the priests carried the ashes from the atonement sacrifices and the pleasing aroma offerings outside the camp each day to remind the people that their sins are forgiven and remembered no more so we remember the gracious sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. The ashes remind us that the sacrifice of Jesus restored our peace with God, our peace with self, our peace with others, and our peace with the world. With the ashes of the Jesus sacrifice we are truly sanctified and brought to complete unity so that the world may know the love of God (John 17:17-23).*

*Jesus said: As I myself was sanctified and sent into the world,  
so send I you into the world.*

*And so today we rid our lives of the leaven of sin so that the world will know we are sent  
and the world can see the power of Easter.*

*Invite everyone to come forward for  
the imposition of ashes on hand or forehead saying  
“consider yourself dead to sin and  
alive to God in Jesus Christ.”*

***The Thanksgiving Song***

***We give thanks for our salvation; in the grace of Christ we're found.  
We are brought from isolation into lives of those around  
All together we lack nothing as Christ's work is now revealed.  
God is faithful and has called us into fellowship with him.***

***Let our speech reflect our oneness, echoing the words you said.  
Keep us selfless in our actions, leading others where you led.  
End divisive motivations, give us peace in unity  
That surpasses understanding and restores us perfectly  
We are baptized into Jesus. Barriers topple from within  
Equally, the water frees and cleanses us from all our sin.  
Jesus Christ is not divided; we are baptized in one name.  
Unified in our redemption, Christ's salvation to proclaim.***

## ***The Thanksgiving Offering***

## THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD



Leviticus 23:1-8  
Deuteronomy 16: 16-17  
Exodus 12:1-20

A month before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the people of God are busy cleaning out the leaven and the yeast hidden in their homes. Not only are they forbidden to eat leaven during the eight days of the feast, all leaven had to be removed from their homes. Even the mold on the walls must be disinfected. The power of the feast depended on the purity of the home and the purity of the people. Let me share with you some of the instructions given on the web for cleaning out the leaven, and purifying the home from yeast.

Begin the process a month before Passover – that is this week (March 14 – 18). We suggest that you begin by going through your cupboards, your pantry, your freezer and your refrigerator. Check ALL labels (you will be surprised where you will find leaven) and move these items to the front and top so that you can use them up. The last couple of days before the feast move the remaining leaven foods to your countertops so you can clean the cupboards and the pantry inside and out. Consider donating any unused foods that are unopened to a local food bank. Begin your cleaning in the rooms least likely to have any food in them, and once clean, declare them off limits to all food. As the week of Passover and Unleavened Bread arrives, you will find most of your leavened food has been eaten and only the kitchen, dining room, refrigerators, and freezer areas are left to scrub clean. And don't forget to search the drawer under the oven, the toaster, the cookie jar, crumbs in the cookbooks and recipe box, the baby booster seat, your computer keyboard, the cars, your pockets and the vacuum cleaner. Anything with baking soda or baking powder, yeast, leaven or fermented grains must be expelled. Yeast and leaven could be hiding anywhere. So be diligent in your search and get rid of it all.

As you clean and remove leaven from your home, ask that the Ruach HaKodesh (Set-Apart – holy- Spirit) also show you areas of your life where leaven may be hidden. This is how the Jewish people even today are getting ready for Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread starting April 19 and going through till April 25 when we as Christians celebrate the Holy Week of Good Friday and Easter.

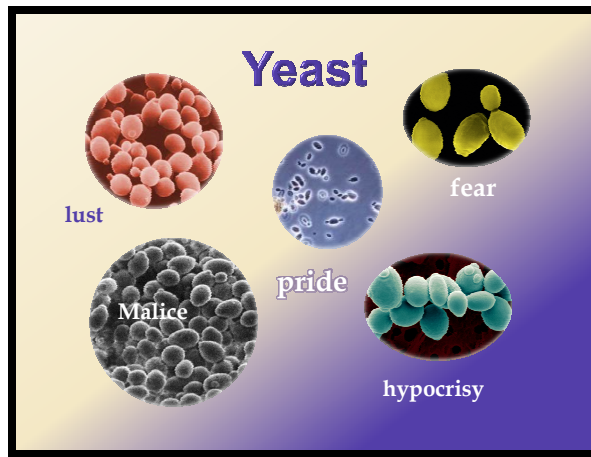
The reason I'm telling you about this God designed OT practice and Jesus endorse exercise of cleaning out the leaven is because some people think that the observance of the Christian Calendar – the observance of advent or lent - is unimportant, man made, and has nothing to do with our experiencing God. What the Bible teaches is that accessing the Glory and the blessings and the power of God has everything to do with the sincere heart observance of the feasts. God commanded his people in Deut 16:16 and in Leviticus 23: Three times a year all the households, especially the heads of households were to appear before the Lord at the temple or the tent of meeting. In the first month of the year they had to appear for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, in the third month for the Festival of Weeks or Pentecost and in the seventh month for the day of

Atonement and the festival of Tabernacles. It was during these seven feasts that they offered their God designed worship and their God designed offerings and experienced peace. By celebrating the seven feasts they lived into the mission and presence and the seasons of God. The time table of God. By participating in the worship of the seven feasts they experienced God with them. In New Testament times it is no different. It is by living into the teachings, and into the work, and into the events of Jesus life that we experience God with us. It is by living into the life and celebrating the life of Jesus that we access the grace and truth and power of God contained in the Holy holies.

Lent is that seven week (excluding Sundays) 40 day preparation period to prepare for Good Friday and Easter. To prepare to access the power of the cross and the power of the resurrection, the power of Easter. This is not just a human invention it is based on the teachings of Leviticus. On a God ordained and God centered pattern of life. On Good Friday, Jesus was crucified as God's Passover lamb, our sins were forgiven once and for all and atonement was made; and for God's people Easter starts the seven day feast of Unleavened Bread – a festival of life flowing out of the glory of the Holy of holies, a life raised and leavened by the Holy Spirit. The Lord's Supper is a Passover feast. And so for over 15 centuries the church has invited the follows of Jesus to mark themselves with the ashes of grace on Ash Wednesday and to observe the cleansing and purifying process of Lent not as a condition for experiencing God's Amazing Grace but as an expression of thanksgiving, as a response to what God has done in Jesus for us. The 40 days of Lent can be a prayerful expression of our devotion and our love for God.

The apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians speaks about how we can make preparation for the Feast of Unleavened Bread today. Paul says in 1 Cor 5: 6 Your boasting and your pride are not good – they are infectious yeast. They can destroy the glory of the church. Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch – a purified community as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

The Holy Spirit during lent and throughout the year invites us to engage in a diligent search for the yeast of pride, and malice and wickedness in the nooks and crannies of our lives, and our hearts and our relationships. As the Jewish women search for the infectious yeast in their homes and do everything to get rid of it before Passover; so we are invited to search out our hearts and our actions for the crumbs of pride and the spores of ill-will and jars of lust. These are the things that pollute and infect and ruin the community and the atonement and the forgiveness and the peace that the Jesus sacrifice accomplished. Get rid of pride and the desires to harm others or ignore others. Put an end to satisfying your own sensuous and materialistic desires. This expelling the yeast of sin creates a Holy of holies people and sanctified community, it makes us into a tent of meeting where the spirit of God dwells and can do its work. We the followers of Jesus are the unleavened bread of the Easter festival and Easter tide.



Paul calls us to expel what is wicked and sinful and community destroying from among us, to expel the leaven that kills and to replace it with what? With sincerity and truth.



To spice up our lives with integrity and grace and love and humility. That's celebrating the feast of unleavened bread today.

Jesus himself said in Luke 12: 1 watch for the yeast, watch out for the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy. This too can kill the joy of your salvation. This too can ruin the knowledge and the assurance of forgiveness and being accepted. This too can ruin the body of Christ. Hypocrisy is living life behind a nice mask. It's giving everyone the impression you are really holy and religious and in control and got it all together and don't need anyone. Jesus says don't be fooled. The yeast of hypocrisy may be deeply hidden behind the actor's mask, but there is nothing that is hidden in the nooks and crannies of our heart that will not be made known, that will not have its infectious effect. It will come to light soon or later.

What causes hypocrisy? Jesus says the yeast of hypocrisy grows in the heart of fear. Fear of what others will say, fear of what others will do, fear of not having enough. Hypocrisy grow is heart full of worry about food and drink and cloths and status. The yeast that kills and destroys grows in heart that has forgotten God and the sacrifice God made when he gave his only son as the Passover lamb.

This week as we begin the season of lent I challenge you and I challenge myself, to search for the crumbs of yeast in our lives. I invite you to make a sincere and truthful search for the spores of leaven that ruins the whole batch. Is there a touch of pride that needs expelling, what about those crumbs of ill-will, or that disposition of caring less about others. Is there some baking soda of greed in your heart, or some fermented hypocrisy holding up your appearance? Are there pockets of fear motivating you and shaping your life? Pray to the Holy Spirit to show you where the yeast is and how to get rid of it.

To help us in this search I invite you during this time of lent to meditate on the events of the cross - to start reading the story of Jesus journey through the stations of cross recorded in the gospel of John starting at chapter 13. I invite you also to read Luke chapter 12 where Jesus helps us search the heart and also prescribes a recipe for celebrating the Feast of Unleavened Bread. A recipe of expelling fear, and worrying, and posturing, and giving in to selfish desires and instead trusting God. Knowing God as our loving father who knows what we need, who knows even the number of hairs on our head.



**Lenten Challenge**

**Trust God**

**Do not worry**

- Get rid of the yeast
- Meditate on the cross
- Read John 13-19
- Read Luke 12

**Be not afraid**

The graphic features a central image of a person with arms raised in a cross shape against a sunset background. The text is arranged in a structured layout with colored boxes and a list of instructions.

And all during this Lenten period I encourage you to remember the sign of the ashes. The sacrifice has been made, the sins are burned. The ashes remind us it is finished. It's now just a matter of celebrating the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The bread of ordination, fellowship, and communion with God.