

Remembrance, repentance, renewal

Dan Nelson - pastor

Calvary Chapel of the Ojai Valley

As I was about town this week, I ran into several people bearing the black smudge of ash on their foreheads. This Wednesday is known by many as Ash Wednesday, part of an annual season of remembrance, repentance and renewal.

The Bible speaks a lot on these themes. In the Old Testament, for example, there are many passages exhorting a forgetting people to remember the promises, remember the blessings, remember the deliverance from past suffering and pain, remember the answered prayer, remember God's interaction in your life. It seems that the amnesia that they suffered with is the same malady that we are inflicted with today. We call out to God in the midst of our trial. He meets us in our need and delivers from our despair. We move on, forget, and therefore fail to trust in God's hand at the next sign of trouble. It seems that setting a time aside to "remember" would be good for all of us.

With a clearer mission and purpose in his mind than anyone else could have imagined, Jesus started his ministry with a call to repentance. "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:14). A call to "repent" is a call to change: change your mind, change your decisions, change your behaviors, and change your life. If we listen closely, that same challenge rings through to us today. That is what this season is about to many of God's people: a time of evaluation, a time of choices, a time of realigning one's life with the will of God.

Readers of the New Testament find the promise of God's transforming work of renewal in one's life through Jesus Christ. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17). But this "newness" sometimes seems fleeting in a world of insane busyness and seemingly endless media messaging tempting distraction at every glance. Yet I believe that most Christians desire to "walk in the newness of life" (Romans 6:4). How do you do that? Well for many, that is what this season is about; refocusing one's attention, attitude, and prayer on the things of God and the "renewal" that comes through his spirit.

So maybe you also ran into people this week with black smudges on their foreheads. Maybe you understood what it was about or perhaps you considered it quite strange. My point in this writing is to encourage all of us to set aside time for the things that are really important, and I am convinced that spiritual "remembrance, repentance and renewal" are really important! Our styles may be different, but our need for God's transforming work in our lives is the same for us all.

To read other articles by Pastor Dan visit [Ojai Valley News Articles](http://www.ojaivalleynews.com/articles)

Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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Sunday Worship:

9:00 & 10:45am
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View

Mid-Week Study:

7:00pm Thursday
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View