

Lent: upon this rock

A YOUTH-LED WORSHIP SERVICE



As a new year breaks the surface, the church is headed toward Lent—a time of reflection in advance of Easter. One important role the church can play in transitioning people from an old year to a new one is to lead them into a time of renewal.

This quiet, meditative prayer service will help your congregation “clean away” memories of the past year, then point the way to restoration.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Rocks—lots of them. You'll need one rock for every expected participant in the service. You can get garden-variety rocks from your local home improvement store (check the garden section), or you can send a rock-collecting team out in the weeks before this service.

- Candles—this service works best in dim light, but you need enough light to read by.

- Chalk—sidewalk chalk is best.
- Water—poured into buckets on every table.
- Soap—simple dishwashing soap works fine.
- Sponges or rags—paper towels won't work well.
- Altar—you'll need a table at the front of the worship area to build an altar. If you have a teenager who knows something about engineering (or is just

good at stacking Oreos at snack time), ask him or her to stay at this table to make sure the stack of rocks is firm and won't fall during the service.

MUSIC SUGGESTIONS

Prior to the Service—Play some nice instrumental mood music—try the albums *Vespers* or *Benediction* (both from Ark Records) by Jeff Johnson.

During the “Cleansing” Portion of the Service—Here are some options for the quiet portion of the service when participants are cleaning rocks: “Have Love” from Lost and Found’s new album *Pronto*; or “O God Where Are You Now” from the David Crowder Band’s new disc *A Collision*; or, if you’re feeling brave, try “Don’t Let Us Get Sick” from the Warren Zevon album *Life’ll Kill Ya*. (Jill Sobule has a nice version of this song on the Warren Zevon tribute disc *Enjoy Every Sandwich*.)

THE SERVICE

Before the service have your kids collect rocks, and then brainstorm words that represent the problems people go through every day. For example: stress, illness, abuse, school, work, arguments, and so on. Have kids use sidewalk chalk to mark one word on each rock.

It will be difficult to do this service in your sanctuary—it works well in your fellowship room or hall after a Lenten Supper if your church has one. Whatever space you choose, just be sure you can dim the lights and use candles. You’ll need to choose teenagers ahead of time to pray, read the Scripture passages, and deliver the responsive readings.

Begin with the congregation sitting at tables. Have your youth group kids bring in the rocks in baskets and set them in the center of each table.

Have a student leader start the service in prayer by praying something like: **Please join me in prayer. Father God, we’re tired and weary from carrying**

these boxes of rocks—our cares and worries—around. We know you’ve said you’ll carry our burdens, but we don’t really believe you. Forgive us when we cling to them, God. We’re so afraid of what may happen that we hold onto our problems and pains like they were life preservers, when all they really do is weigh us down. We’re ready, God. We’re willing to let go and give our cares to you and trust that you know what to do with them. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Have a student leader read this responsive litany:

Say: **Please respond to each statement with “We give them to you, Lord God.”**

God, we’ve kept these rocks with us. (*We give them to you, Lord God.*)

Some of us have more than others. (*We give them to you, Lord God.*)

Some of us carry them by the handful. (*We give them to you, Lord God.*)

Some of us need to rent a truck. (*We give them to you, Lord God.*)

We don’t need them. (*We give them to you, Lord God.*)

We just don’t want to let go. (*We give them to you, Lord God.*)

We don’t know how. (*We give them to you, Lord God.*)

We’re afraid of what will happen if we let go of them. (*We give them to you, Lord God.*)

We define ourselves by our problems. (*We give them to you, Lord God.*)

We compare ourselves to others by our problems. (*We give them to you, Lord God.*)

It’s time to stop doing this. (*We give them to you, Lord God.*)

We hold them out to you. (*We give them to you, Lord God.*)

Take them from us. (*We give them to you, Lord God.*) **In Jesus’ name, amen.**

Have a couple of student leaders read aloud John 13:1-9 and Philippians 4:13. Then have a student leader read aloud this version of Psalm 51:

I have never been this low, God. I’m not asking you just to forgive me. I need to be picked up and dunked in an ocean of forgiveness.

I didn’t just mess up my own life.

I messed up others’ lives as well.

Mostly I have wronged you.

You have every right to punish me.

I will accept your decision.

Let me start over now.

Let me say I’m sorry for everything I’ve done since I was born.

Give me a clean slate.

Wash me clean and hang me to dry like white sheets on a clothesline.

Clean my mind.

Clean my heart.

Don’t take your presence away.

Take me back to when I was happy without all this baggage.

Give me a chance to show others.

I’ve been a beggar. Let me show the others where to find food.

Take this weight off of me, God.

I’m sorry for what I’ve done.

Let me make you proud of your servant. Amen.

At this point have your teenagers bring out buckets of soap and water and sponges and place them on the tables with the baskets of rocks. Tell participants to each take a rock from the basket and clean it—not just the chalk word, but also the dirt from all corners and crevices.

As people work on their rocks, say something like: **This action is a ritual. It has meaning. It’s not just about wiping dirt and chalk off a rock. It’s about symbolically cleaning the dirt out of our own lives so that we can move on.**

As people finish cleaning their rocks, have them bring them forward to the altar and pile them, then go back and clean another rock if they want to. It’s important that all rocks are cleaned and none are left in the baskets. Play one or more of the music suggestions or have your group members provide the music. >>>

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»» After all rocks are cleansed, have a couple of students read aloud 1 Peter 2:6 and Ephesians 2:20.

Then have a student leader read this

responsive litany:

Say: **Please respond to each statement with: "God is our foundation."**

We have been cleansed. (*God is our*

foundation.)

God has taken our trials and turned them into lessons. (*God is our foundation.*)

God has taken these rough rocks and turned them into stepping-stones. (*God is our foundation.*)

God has taken our pain from us and used it to further his kingdom. (*God is our foundation.*)

He is our beginning. (*God is our foundation.*)

From here God can build on us. (*God is our foundation.*)

So that his church will grow. (*God is our foundation.*)

So that his word will spread. (*God is our foundation.*)

So that we can begin again. (*God is our foundation.*)

So that we can start over. (*God is our foundation.*)

So that we can face tomorrow with hope instead of dread. (*God is our foundation.*)

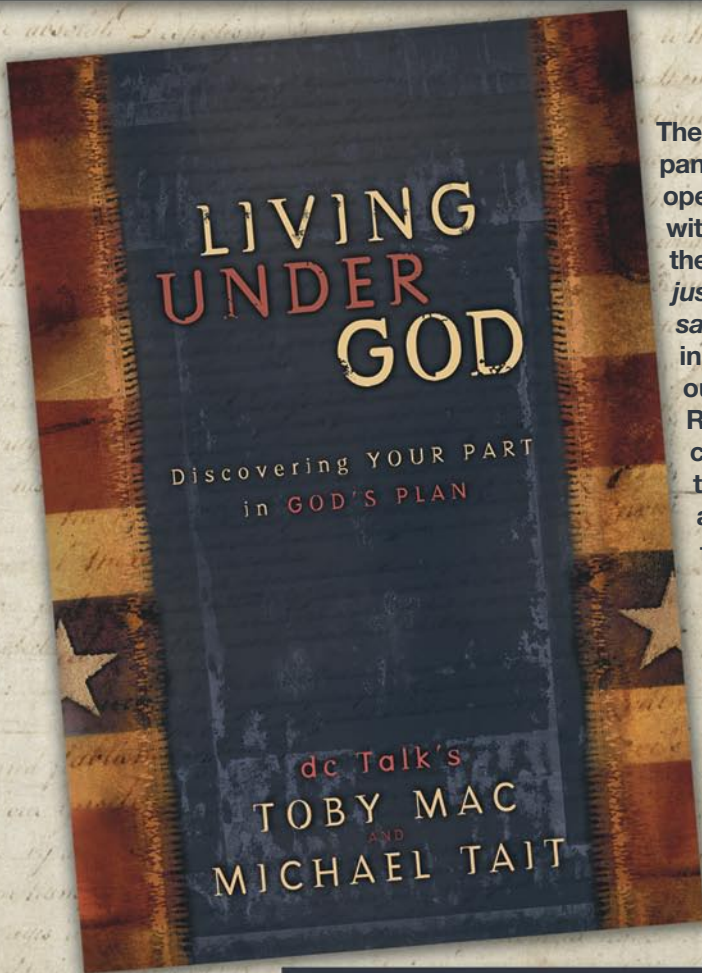
Laughter instead of sorrow. (*God is our foundation.*)

Wisdom instead of stupidity. (*God is our foundation.*)

Openness instead of selfishness. (*God is our foundation.*) **In Jesus' name, amen.**

Have a student leader end the service in prayer by praying something like: **God, you have taken off our sackcloth and dressed us in joy. You have taken away those things that hold us down and have freed us to dance. You have given us another chance to be what you created us to be, to realize our potential, to be fully yours. Go with us now; let us feel your presence. Let us walk away from the pains that held us back and use them to build new lives in your presence. In Jesus' name, amen. ■**

What Part Will You Play?



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