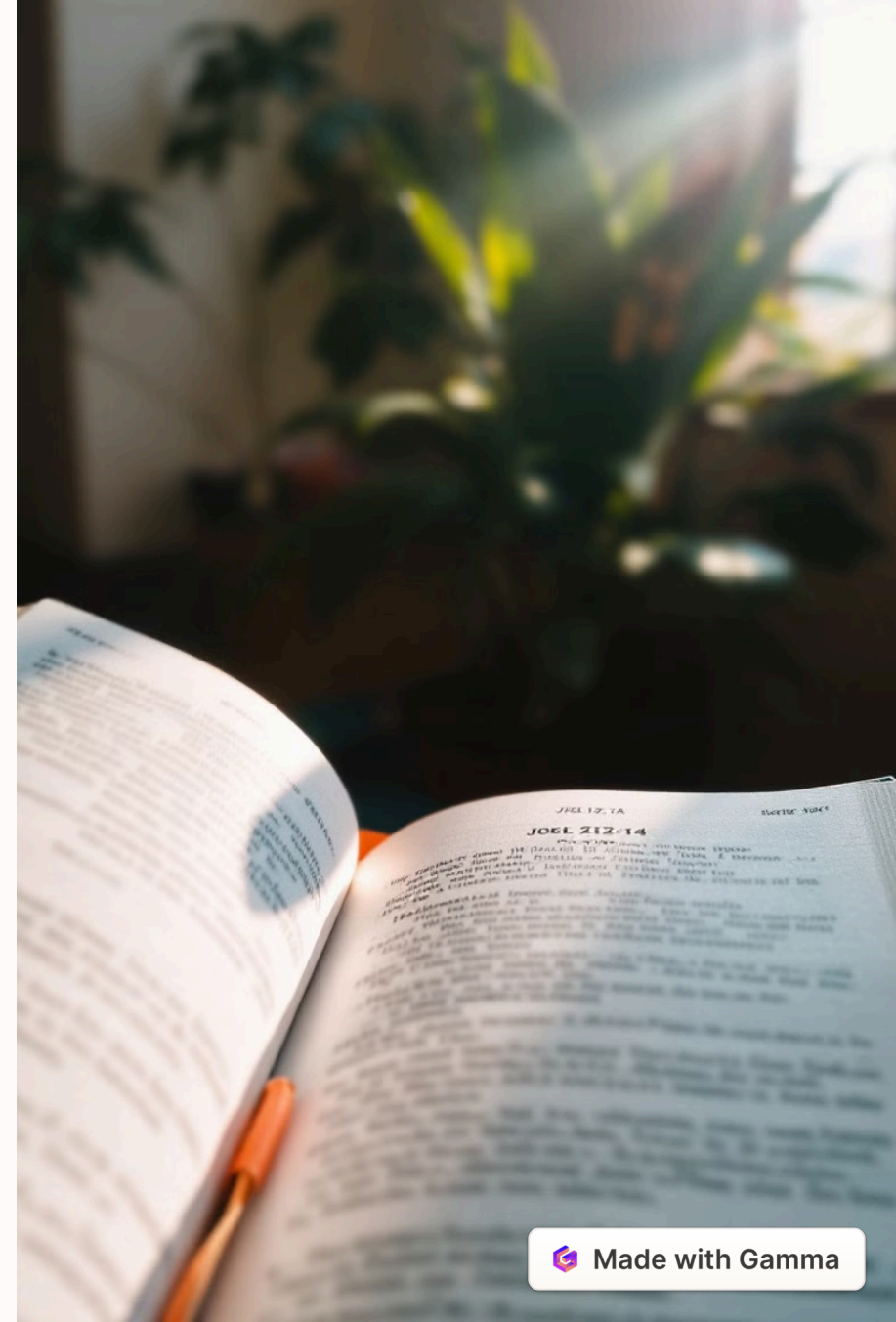


Even Now - Return Unto Me

Dr. James Allen

A Lenten sermon based on Joel 2:12-14 that invites us to hear God's timeless call: "Return to me with all your heart." As we prepare for Lent beginning March 5, 2025, we reflect on Christ's 40 days of fasting and prayer in the wilderness.



Understanding the Lenten Season

1

Ash Wednesday

March 5, 2025. Christians receive ashes as symbols of mortality and repentance.

2

40 Days

A period of prayer, fasting, and spiritual discipline (Sundays not counted).

3

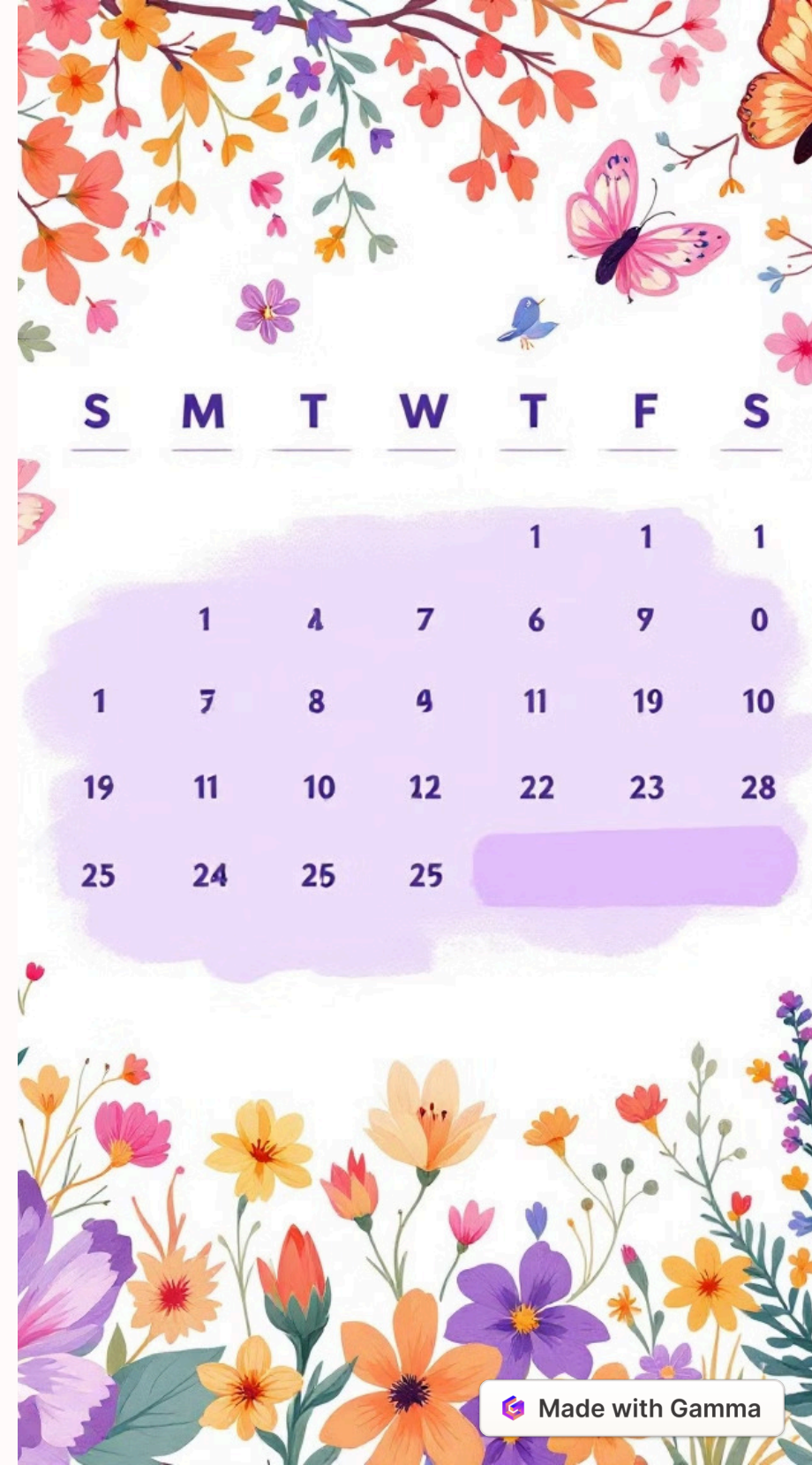
Holy Week

Includes Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday.

4

Easter Sunday

April 20, 2025. Celebrates Christ's resurrection.





The Call to Return

"Even Now"

God's invitation stands regardless of how far we've strayed. There is no "too far gone" with God.

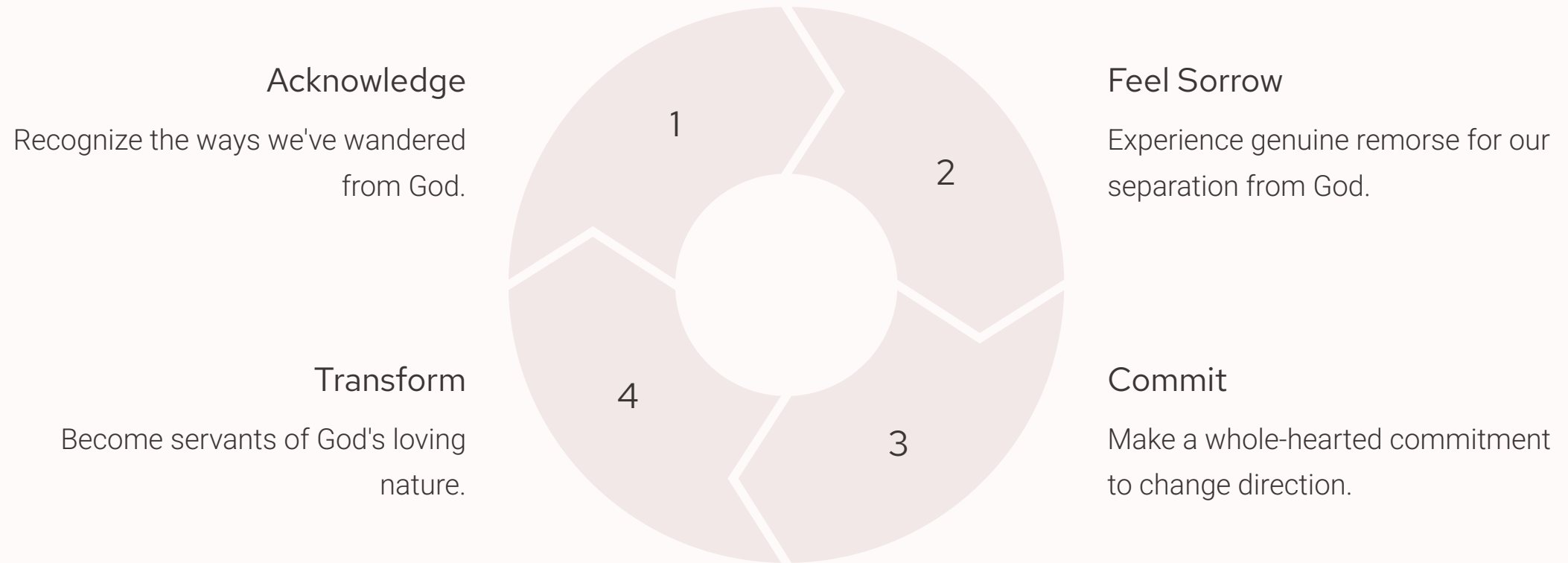
Universal Invitation

God's call is for everyone, at all times, in all situations.

During Crisis

Like Joel's audience facing locusts, we face personal struggles and global challenges.

The Nature of True Return





The Character of God Revealed



Gracious

God extends favor and blessing even when undeserved.



Compassionate

His love is like a mother's — deep, nurturing, and forgiving.



Slow to Anger

God is patient, giving space for repentance and growth.



Abounding in Love

His covenant love persists despite our unfaithfulness and our 'Even Nows'.



The Promise of Blessing



New Beginnings

What looks like an ending can become a beginning with God.



Renewal

We experience spiritual renewal when we return to God.



Unexpected Blessings

God withholds judgment and bestows unmerited blessings.



Our Lenten Journey

1

Self-Examination

Honestly assess our hearts and confess our shortcomings.

2

Recommitment

Dedicate ourselves to prayer, meditation, and scripture once again.

3

Action

Perform acts of love, generosity, and justice as evidence of our return.

4

Release

Let go of whatever separates us from the love of God.



Practical Steps for Lent

40

Days of Focus

Set aside this season for intentional spiritual growth.

1

Return to God

Make one sincere commitment to draw closer to God.

3

Spiritual Practices

Engage in prayer, fasting, and worship.