

Candle Prayers

In my first years as a minister, I was often overwhelmed with the privilege and responsibility of praying for other people. I shared my feelings with a spiritual director and said, “I worry I am forgetting someone who is counting on me to pray for them!” She nodded sympathetically and then taught me this simple practice. “Light a candle,” she said, “and as it burns, you can watch the light radiate and the small bit of smoke rise up, and you will know that all of your prayers, the spoken and unspoken ones, go up to God.” I never forgot that advice, and candle prayers are an important part of my own faith journey. This spiritual practice is very simple, and easy to explain to a child.

Designed for Ages 8+

Materials

Candle and matches, or battery-operated candle

Time Investment: 30 seconds—2 minutes

How To

1. Parent and child (or the whole family) gather in a dim or dark room and light a candle.
2. Say, *“This candle burning is our prayer. Just as the light fills up the dark room, we know that our prayers are lifted up to God. Let’s sit here for a minute and watch the candle and know that our prayers are known by God, even if we don’t know what we want to say or how to say it.”*
3. At the end of a minute or so say, *“Now we are going to end our candle prayer. I will blow out the candle and we will all say ‘Amen.’ We will know that God heard our prayer.”*

Notes

- Use battery-operated candles for homes in which little ones or pets are likely to run around and bump into them.
- This practice can easily be combined with the practice of the sacred meal, in chapter 6.

Variations

- Instead of blowing the candle out, let it burn in some visible part of the house for many hours. Remind the family that it is a visible sign of God’s presence.
- Make the candle prayer specific. When someone has a special need, say, *“Let’s light a candle and know that God hears our prayers.”*
- *“Tonight we light a candle for [name].”*