

Growing Spiritually as an Elder Candle and Incense Prayers



Disciples Pray

Candles and incense have been used in religious worship for centuries. The scripture is full of images of light as God's power, fire as a symbol of the holy presence of God, and incense as the way to become aware of God's presence that surrounds us as the incense that is burnt surrounds our senses. Below are several ideas for how you might make your own candles as part of your time together and suggestions for use of candles and incense in worship. You may use the scriptures below as you light your candles as prayers of invocation and calling your minds/hearts to the awareness of God's presence.

Scriptures about light: Gen. 1:3; Lev. 24:1-4; Ps. 27:1; Ps. 43:3-4; Ps. 97:10-12; Ps. 119: 105; Prov. 4:18; Isa. 60:1-3; Matt. 5:14-16; John 8:12; 2 Cor. 4:5-6.

Scriptures about fire: Ex. 13:17-22; Deut. 4:9-14; Jer. 20:9; Luke 3:15-16; Acts 2:1-4.

Scriptures about incense: Ex. 30:34-36; Ps. 141:1-2; Mal. 1:11; 2 Cor. 2:14-17.

Ways to use candles:

- ◆ Have a candle that you light at the beginning and end of each time together that represents your group and its community together
- ◆ Have one candle for each person in the group that is lit at the beginning and snuffed at the end of the session to represent the spiritual presence of each group member. Light the candles of those absent and pray for each one.
- ◆ Take a prayer walk around and carry candles to represent your awareness of the spirit in that place.
- ◆ Use a central candle and light individual candles off that one as a way to symbolize growing light as more people share faith and the central light from which each one of our spirits receives nourishment.
- ◆ Carry lit candles out into the night and form a circle outside to pray symbolizing the power of light in a time of night. Remember our faith makes circles of light and illumination in our world.
- ◆ Each person take a candle home and light it daily for prayer in their own home in a covenant of prayer with group members.
- ◆ Burn a candle (not unattended) in the room where you will meet for some time before the gathering as a sign that God's spirit meets you in that room for prayer.
- ◆ Light a candle as you gather and tell the group what you are letting go of while your group meets together. What are you releasing into the care of God?



- ✦ Light a candle and name a concern which it represents. Ask the light of God to be known in the place of concern.

Ways to use incense:

- ✦ Burn incense before your group meeting to create an awareness that the very air we breath is filled with God's spirit.
- ✦ Burn incense to remember the ancient church who used incense to remember God's presence. Pray in gratitude for the millions who have shared the story of Christ over centuries and preserved the witness of the church until the time when you could hear the Good News of Christ's resurrection.

Ways to make candles:

Craft stores have many supplies for making candles. You can also buy candles in all shapes and sizes at many variety stores and even grocery stores. If you decide to make candles you can experiment with several methods.

- ✦ You can buy candle "gel" at craft stores which you melt and pour into a container and add wick. You can purchase granulated wax which you layer in a container around an existing candle or wick. These are easy to make and the group might enjoy making them together.
- ✦ You can purchase molds, melt wax and pour it into the molds. You can use a tray of sand, make a hole in the sand and pour melted wax into damp sand to make a free form candle. Melted wax can be put into any container that does not melt with heat — shells, flower pots, bowls, glasses, or whatever you think of to use as a container.
- ✦ Another container that makes candles easily is empty milk cartons. They can simply be removed from the candle when it is hardened. Another fun way to make candles with milk cartons is to pour in wax, let it set for until a firm shell is in place, empty the middle wax and take out the form. You can carve a pattern in this hollow candle, replace it in the milk carton and then pour in a second color of wax to make a stained glass type effect.
- ✦ Chunk candles are also easy. Make colored wax cubes and put them in paper cups with wick and pour clear or white wax around them. Simply remove the paper cups when the candles have hardened. You can also use scrapings of crayons for this.
- ✦ Lacy candles can be made by placing a taper candle in a mold and then surrounding it with ice chips and pouring hot wax over this and letting it harden. The wax will have holes where the ice was in the mold.
- ✦ You can apply "whipped" wax to the exterior of candles. Melt wax and let it cool until it has a film on it and then whip it with egg beater until fluffy. Attach the wax quickly with knife or spoon and let it harden.

Use your imagination....

Many books are available in libraries to help with candle making. There is something wonderful about using the candles you have made with love for your worship.

