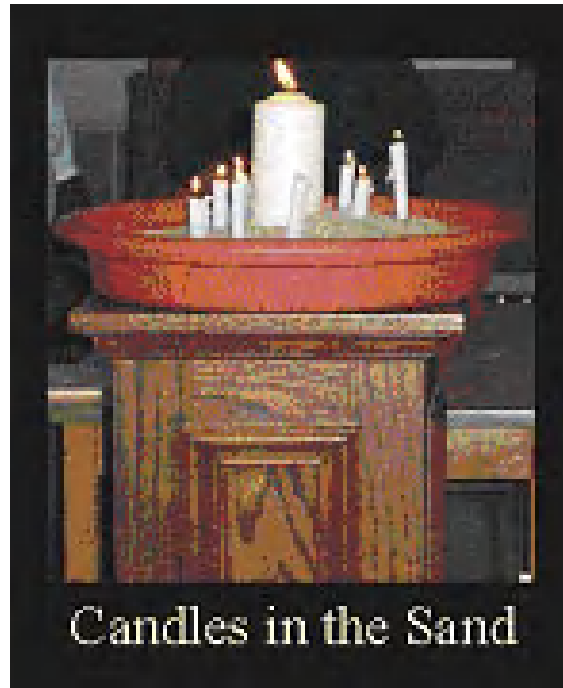


Candles in the Sand

A Tradition of Giving Thanks

Bible
Basics
Layer of Understanding



A Tradition of Giving Thanks.

In everything
give thanks.
Be joyful always,
Pray continuously,
For this is God's will
for you in
Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:18

Giving Thanks



Jesus Heals the Ten Lepers

Ten Healed of Leprosy

Luke 17:11-19

Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”

When he saw them he said, “*Go show yourselves to the priest.*” And as they went, they were cleansed.

One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus feet and thanked him – and he was a Samaritan.

Jesus asked, “*Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?*”

Then he said to him, *Rise and go; your faith has made you well.*”

- The lepers were completely ostracized from Jewish society. They were made unclean by their disease, they were outcast, and they were at the absolute bottom of society!

They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice,
“Jesus, Master have pity on us.”

- Lepers could not enter the city, lepers could not approach healthy people.
- You can always call out to Jesus (prayer) and Jesus is never at a distance too far away to be called upon. Jesus is always accessible.

When he saw them he said, “*Go show yourselves to the priest.*”

- The only way that these men could rejoin society was for the Pharisees, the priest to inspect them and to deem them clean. Only after the priest deemed them clean could they rejoin society and worship in the Temple.

And as they went, they were cleansed.

One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus feet and thanked him –

- Only one out of ten of the lepers returned to give thanks to Jesus and praised God!
- The fact that the Samaritan returned to thank Jesus may indicate that he had received salvation in addition to the physical healing all ten had received. *NIV Note 17:19*

and he was a Samaritan.

Now – These days when we speak of a “Samaritan” or a “Good Samaritan” we are thinking of the Samaritan from *The Parable of the Good Samaritan – Luke 10:25-37* a stranger who does a good deed, something helpful to another stranger, sacrificing for another with no thought or intention of payment or reimbursement.

Then – A Samaritan was a despised enemy and hated foreigner to the Jewish people.

Then he said to him, *Rise and go; your faith has made you well.*”

- This may also be said, “your faith has saved you.”
- We would like to think of ourselves as the one healed leaper, who returned to thank Jesus, but too often we are like the nine leapers who did not return to give thanks to God.
- **Often we do not count our blessings.**
- **Often we are not truly thankful for the blessings we have received.**
- **Often after our prayers are answered, we forget to give thanks; we move on to the next problem!**
- **Often we forget how blessed we really are.**
- **Often we are not grateful for what we have.**
- **Often we do not realize that things could be a lot worse.**
- **Often we do not appreciate what we have.**
- **Often we forget to give thanks for a present.**
- **We are all guilty.**

Returning

Dear Lord,

I have come back to thank you Lord.

**I have come back to thank you for *Your Grace*
that brought me to you.**

I have come back to thank you for
Your Unconditional Everlasting Love.

Your love is beyond my imagination and understanding.

I thank you Lord for the *Gift of Your Son, Jesus Christ my Savior,*
who gave up His life to save me.

This Gift dear Lord is beyond my comprehension.

I have turned around Lord,

**I have come back to thank you
for the *Forgiveness of my Sins.***

I return to thank you Lord,

for all of the blessings you have bestowed upon me.
Everything I have achieved; you have given me.

I have turned around,

**I have come back to thank you Lord,
To thank you for all things.**

In Jesus Christ name I pray.

Amen

Candles in the Sand

A Tradition of Giving Thanks

The purpose of “Bible Basics”
is to help us to recognize and see
God’s miracles in our everyday lives.

Narrator:

The purpose of *Candles in the Sand* is to begin new traditions of Giving Thanks to God. Luke 17:11-19 tells us the story of the *Ten Healed of Leprosy* where only one of the lepers returned to Jesus Christ to thank Him for being healed. We like to think we are like the one leper who returned, but too often we are like the nine lepers, which were healed and never returned to give thanks to Jesus.

Candles in the Sand is an opportunity for us to stop, turn around, return to Jesus, and thank Him for the many blessing in our lives. This is a time to remember that we are not our own, but that we belong to God.

Thanksgiving can truly be more than shopping, cooking, football, and more shopping. Christmas can be a time of compassion; not consumption.

We are celebrating *Candles in the Sand* right before Thanksgiving, right before the holiday season begins. The idea is that if we focus on God, focus on what is really important in our lives, the people in our lives and count our blessings the holidays will have True Meaning.

Introduction:

- Welcoming
- The Meaning of Candles in the Sand
- Rules/Format, and Safety
- Departing in Peace

Candles in the Sand a Tradition of Giving Thanks is a beautiful candle lighting ceremony that can be celebrated any time of year by any number of people. It is also hoped that families will make *Candles in the Sand* a family tradition at Thanksgiving, Christmas, Anniversaries, or even at family reunions.

For smaller groups you can use one Christ/Triune God Candle for one shallow container of sand.

For churches and larger groups a Holy Father Candle, Christ Candle, and Holy Spirit Candle may be used. For even larger groups you can have several circles working through the ceremony simultaneously.

Shallow containers filled with sand should secure the “Christ” candles and the smaller 4” prayer/remembrance/blessing candle when placed in the sand. These candles can often be purchased reasonably at Christian supply stores.

SAFETY should always be a primary concern! The “Christ” candles should be placed in the center of the containers. Participants need to be told to start to place their prayer candles toward the center of the container and work out; you do not want people reaching over lighted candles to place their candle! When the room is darkened, please get help lighting and placing your candle if needed; then you may raise up the names and say a few words about them if you wish. Candles in the Sand is symbolic; it truly doesn’t matter who lights the candle for you; it’s what is in your heart that counts.

An adult must supervise all children!

Each participant will be given prayer candles. After the speaker finishes you will be invited to light a candle in love and remembrance. Each person may light a candle. It also may be appropriate for more than one person, a couple, or a family to light one candle.

You may light your candle in silence;

God will hear your prayers
and God will know their names.

But you are encouraged to say their name or names
and place your candle in the sand.

You may say a few words about them if you wish.

Departing in Peace: At the end of the ceremony the candles will NOT be blown out. They will be allowed to burn down. Everyone is invited to stay if they wish to pray, to meditate, to sing, to listen, and to strengthen, and to comfort one another.... After all of the prayer candles have burned down the “Holy Father” candle, “Christ” candle, and the “Holy Spirit” candle will be extinguished. If you need to leave please do so quietly so those remaining in prayer will not be disturbed.

Candles in the Sand

A Tradition of Giving Thanks

Reader 1:

Opening of the Bible: We open this Bible to remind us that all talks here are based on Scripture, the Truth, and the Word.

**In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.**

John 1:1

Introduction: Opening Prayer

Reader 2: We gather to give our gratitude and thanksgiving up to God.

**“Sing praises to God, O you faithful ones,
and give thanks to God’s holy name.
For God’s anger is but for a moment,
God’s favor is for a lifetime.
Weeping may linger for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.”**

Psalm 30:4-5

Reader 3: We remember that God is the giver of all gifts; God is our comforter in times of trial; God brings people into our lives to love us, teach us, care for us, and to soothe our pain.

Reader 4: We light this candle to remember God's gifts, God's blessings, God's bounty in our lives, and we light this candle to remind us that God is with us.

***“For where two or three come together in my name,
there am I with them.”***

Matthew 18:20

Light the “Holy Father” pillar candle in the container of sand.

Reader 5: Jesus Christ who was obedient to God, even death upon a cross, died for us while we were still sinners.

***“I am the light of the world.
Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness,
but will have the light of life.”***

John 8:12

Light the “Christ” pillar candle in the container of sand.

Reader 6:

Our God is the Triune God.
The Holy Father,
His Son, Jesus Christ,
and the “Holy Spirit.”

***“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you;
and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem,
and in all Judea and Samaria,
and to the ends of the earth.”***

Acts 1:8

Light the “Holy Spirit” pillar candle in the container of sand.

*These candles are now referred to as the “Triune God” candles.
After the three “Triune God” candles are lighted;
the room is darkened.*

Reader A: CELEBRATING ALL GENERATIONS.

Every one of us has been nurtured by the generations before us; mentors, people who have made a difference in our lives. Take a few moments in silence and think about the adults in your life who have cared for you that you would like to thank God for. It could be a parent, a grandparent, a stepparent, a family member, relative, a guardian. It could be a teacher, a coach, or a neighbor. When you are ready, take one of your candles and light it off of the center “Triune God” candle in thanksgiving for that person or those persons. Lift their names up to the Lord and put your candle in the sand. You may light your candle in silence; God will hear your prayers and God will know their names. But you are encouraged to say their name or names and place your candle in the sand. You may say a few words about them if you wish.

Give everyone a chance to light one candle and place it in the sand. When everyone has placed their candle move on.

Reader B: FRIENDS. Every one of us has friends who are precious to us and give us joy and support. People in our lives with whom we can laugh and cry. Take a few moments in silence to think about the friends and loved ones in your life that you would like to thank God for. When you are ready, take one of your candles and light it off the center “Triune God” candle in thanksgiving for that person or those persons. Lift their names up to the Lord and put your candle in the sand. You may light your candle in silence; God will hear your prayers and God will know their names. But you are encouraged to say their name or names and place your candle in the sand. You may say a few words about them if you wish.

Give everyone a chance to light one candle and place it in the sand. When everyone has placed their candle move on.

Reader C: LEARNING FROM ADVERSITY. Everyone in this room has lived through a difficult or painful experience, and learned from it and come out stronger because of it. Take a moment to think about those experiences. You may not be thankful that whatever it was happened to you or someone else, but you are grateful for what it taught you, and the strength it gave you. It could be as simple as living through a time when you were teased, or as difficult as an illness, or the death of someone close to you. When you are ready, take one of your candles and light it off the center “Triune God” candle in thanksgiving for what you learned and the strength you developed because of that experience. You may light your candle in silence; God will hear your prayers. But you are encouraged to say a few words, to express your test or your trial; what you learned and how it has made you stronger and then place your candle in the sand.

Give everyone a chance to light one candle and place it in the sand. When everyone has placed their candle move on.

Reader D: GIFTS AND TALENTS. Everyone in this room has gifts and talents given to them by God. We are created in the image of a God who is creative, compassionate, wise, loving, full of energy, and so much more. Take a moment in silence and think about the person on your left. Have you ever seen them before? Do you even know their name? What gifts and talents do you see in them? Are they a good listener? Do they have athletic, artistic, or musical talent? Are they kind? Do they love children, senior citizens, or animals? Do they have a radiant smile? What do you appreciate about this person sitting on your left? When you are ready, take one of your candles and light it off the center “Triune God” candle in thanksgiving for that person. As you light your candle say what it is that you appreciate about them.

Give everyone a chance to light one candle and place it in the sand. When everyone has placed their candle move on.

Reader E: CELEBRATING GENERATIONS PAST. We pray for the Saints; for God’s holy people in our lives. We pray for our loved ones and friends who we have lost; loved ones and friends who have died. We pray for their families; those left behind. We lift up there names to God. We give thanks for their lives and we give thanks for they *are* a blessing in our lives. When you are ready, take one of your candles and light it off the center “Triune God” candle in thanksgiving for the Saints who have been a blessing in your life. You may light your candle in silence; God will hear your prayers and God will know their names. But you are encouraged to say their name or names and place your candle in the sand. You may say a few words about them if you wish.

Give everyone a chance to light one candle and place it in the sand. When everyone has placed their candle move on.

Reader F: RESTORED RELATIONSHIPS. Some of our loved ones, family, and friends are distant and far away; we miss them. Maybe they have moved? Maybe they live across the country? Maybe we need to not put it off and give them a phone call!

We may have loved ones, family, and friends who are distant and far away because of an argument, hurt feelings, or family estrangements; broken relationships. Jesus teaches us that relationships are valuable to God. Jesus gave us the *Greatest Commandment* of loving God and loving one another; relationships are important to God. God is a God of many “2nd chances.” When you are ready, take one of your candles and light it off the center “Triune God” candle; pray for the people you need God to heal and restore relationships with. Remember, through God all things are possible! You may light your candle in silence; God will hear your prayers and God will know their names. But you are encouraged to say their name or names and place your candle in the sand. You may say a few words about them if you wish.

Give everyone a chance to light one candle and place it in the sand. When everyone has placed their candle move on.

Reader G: CELEBRATING NEW BEGINNINGS. There is always room in our hearts for more Love to be shared. We celebrate change... new beginnings! We give thanks for new dawns, new days, new weddings, new marriages, new babies, and babies on the way. We give thanks for babies being born and all people being Reborn. We give thanks for the children; they are our hope for the future. We give thanks for new neighbors, new friends, and new visitors and members to our church. We give thanks for new pastors; we give thanks for old pastors. We give thanks for all of the dear people in our lives.

ALL:

We give thanks for the *New Life of Salvation through God's Grace, His Son, Christ Jesus.*

Reader G continued: When you are ready, take one of your candles and light it off the center "Triune God" candle in thanksgiving for that person or those persons. Lift their names up to the Lord and put your candle in the sand. You may light your candle in silence; God will hear your prayers and God will know their names. But you are encouraged to say their name or names and place your candle in the sand. You may say a few words about them if you wish.

Reader H: WE PRAY FOR ALL OF GOD'S PEOPLE. We pray for many people in need that we will never know or meet: the homeless, the hungry, people suffering from poverty, famine, disease, wars, tragedy, and injustice. We pray for people suffering in hospitals, in prison, from drugs, alcohol and other addictions. We pray for people suffering from natural disasters: hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes....

Reader I: We do not know all of their names... But God knows all of their names.

We pray for the many people that we will never know or meet that watch over us, protect us, care for us, and keep us from harm.

Reader J: We pray for our troops, which are all over the world in harms way. We pray for the police and fire departments, the hospitals, doctors, nurses, and paramedics, which are always vigilant to care for us. We pray for the missionaries spreading God's Word and Love to all of the world. We pray for all of those in need, and for the caregivers, and for the peacemakers.

Reader K: We do not know all of their names... But God knows all of their names.

There are not enough candles in the world for us to give thanks for all of our blessing!

We light a candle for ALL People.

Reader ALL:

*For you were once darkness,
but now you are light in the Lord.
Live as children of light.
Ephesians 5:5*

Narrator: Take a moment to look around the room. Notice how much brighter it is than when we began with only a single lit candle. Remembering to lift up our gratitude to God who can make the darkness grow bright. God's light only multiplies as we remember to express our thanksgiving for all our blessings.

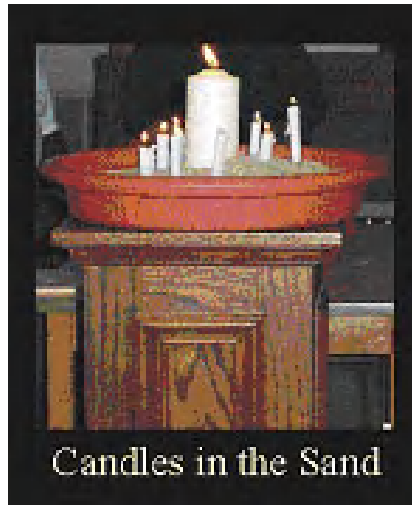
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Closing Prayer:

Benediction:

As you leave this place,
May the living Lord go with you.
May he go behind you, **to encourage you,**
Beside you, **to befriend you in obedient ministry,**
Above you, **to watch over you,**
Beneath you, **to lift you from your sorrows,**
Within you, **to give you the gifts of**
faith, hope, and love,
And always before you... **to show you the way.**
And all God’s people said, **Amen.**

*Dr. Blair Monie’s traditional benediction,
Senior Pastor of Preston Hollow Presbyterian Church.
I believe that the best thing about Blair’s Benediction
is that you don’t leave God at church; God goes home with you!*



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