

Long Dark Night

By Lee Yates



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The Christmas holiday season is filled with stories and songs of joy, but often people's hearts are filled with sad memories. Lighting a candle in the midst of darkness is an ancient tradition and a healing response for today.

For
Young Adult

Season
Winter

Needed

Large candle, lighter or matches, Bible or Bible app

Prepare in Advance

- Decide if you will do this activity alone or with friends.
- Make a copy of this activity for each person.

Activity Plan

1. Place your candle in a spot where it can be used throughout December. At a set time each evening or as desired throughout the holiday season, pause for a time of prayer and devotion. Follow the steps below:

Opening Prayer:

God, people are singing of hope, while many have none. People are singing of peace, when many people only know pain. People are singing of love, while others are all alone. People are singing of joy, while others can't remember what joy feels like. Help me name my own feelings as I spend this time with you. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Psalm 42:1-3

As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When shall I come and appear before God?
My tears have been my food day and night,
while they say to me all the day long, "Where is your God?"

Confession of Feelings:

Name the things you are worried, angry, or confused about.
Name the things you claim as "bright spots" or "lights" in your life.



Scripture Reading: Psalm 42:5:

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation.

Light the Candle

Silence:

Sit in silence to allow your heart to respond to God's presence with you.

Scripture Reading: Romans 8:18-28, 31-32, 34-35, 37-39

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.

²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴

For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?

²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. ²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Song:

Come nearer Lord Jesus, as dark shadows fall
Our hearts long for your touch, so to you we call.
Reach round us with your arms, give warmth in the night,
For comfort and new hope are found in your light
– sing to the tune of *Away In a Manger*, lyrics use with permission

Closing Prayer:

*May the protection of God comfort me.
May the courage of Jesus sustain me.
May the tenderness of the Spirit embrace me.
Amen.*

2. After the closing prayer, extinguish the candle when you are ready. Watch the smoke dissipate. Remember that the candle's light speaks of God's presence with you now, and that like the smoke, God's presence spreads beyond you in ways that are often unseen.

