

SUPPLIES:

- Bible
- Sacred Candle & Matches/Lighter

WELCOMING GOD:

Gather together, and welcome God into this time and space through the lighting of a candle. Take this moment to pause briefly and sit quietly in this light for a few moments allowing time for everyone to relax their body, mind, and spirit for this time. In these moments, the invitation is to become aware of God's presence with and amongst you as a family.

Sharing with God and One Another:

Say: "If anything is on our minds that makes it difficult for us to focus, let's share it now and then let it go."

-Whoever leads this portion might share what is on his or her mind to model this. Give time for each person to respond. When everyone who desires to has responded, invite everyone to place their hands out and lift them up as we give these distractions to God

OR

you can invite the family to pray together as one person leads saying the following:

Dear Loving God,

The One who knows our hearts, celebrates our victories, grieves with us during our losses, and gives us the strength to overcome our challenges. Please help us to let go of the distractions we name now, so that we can openly share with our family and may encounter you in a special way today. Our distractions are: (let there be silence here, so everyone has an opportunity to name aloud what is distracting them).

In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Encountering God:

Read: Read aloud Acts 1:3-11

- Take turns reading the scripture or have a different family member read the scripture each week.

Acts 1:3-11

"After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs,

appearing to them over the course of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. 'This', he said, 'is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.' So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?' He replied, 'It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.'"

Encountering Each Other:

Discussion Questions:

- What is something you wait for excitedly?
- What is the first thing you do when you receive good news?

Say: After 40 days and many appearances to people who followed him, Jesus tells them all that they will be his witnesses. Witnesses do two things: they see and they say. They tell the stories of what they see. They tell what the excitement is about. They tell their stories of good news. In this story from Acts, there was already lots of news to witness to: Jesus kept appearing. Jesus promised them the Holy Spirit. Jesus told them that God would restore the kingdom to Israel—that God's kingdom would come on earth. But they had to wait, and while they waited those ten days, they witnessed.

Discussion Questions:

- Imagine you were an early follower of Jesus who got to see him appear after the resurrection. What story might you have told?
- What do you think it might have been like to wait between the time that Jesus was taken out of their sight and ten days later when the Holy Spirit arrived?

Say: While they were waiting, Jesus' early followers were told to quit looking up. Jesus wasn't gone forever, and they had hope. Now, they have a different story to tell. And, we know their waiting was not in vain. The Holy Spirit came! Their hope was fulfilled! That fulfilled hope was a new story to tell! God gives us stories to tell, ways to witness to God's faithfulness every single day.

Discussion Questions:

- What gives you hope?
- What story do you tell about God?
- How can you tell your story about seeing God at work in the world?

Encountering God Together:

Say:

May we pray together as a family...

- Let us share our prayers for the world: for our country and leaders, for other countries and their leaders...
- Let us share our prayers for the church, ministers, and spiritual leaders...
- Let us share our prayers for our teachers, first responders, friends, and others in the community...
- Let us share our prayers for our family and our own specific needs...

If you would like to record the people for whom you pray, use the next few lines to do so:

*You can also record these requests in a family prayer journal if you are using one.

Encountering Transformation Together:

Pray aloud together:

God, we welcomed you here and read Your Word,
we prayed and we spent time with you,
we rested in your love for us,
and we did this all together.

Now, we promise to love one another and others as you love us.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

Blessing One Another for our Encounters with the World:

Invite family members to bless one another using any of the examples below or their own blessings.

Examples:

“I love you. God loves you. I pray God blesses you.”

“God loves you exactly like you are—and so do I.”

“I love the gifts God has given you and how you bless the world with them.”