

PRAYER AS A PATH TO HEALING

Significance of a prayer candle in healing, illness and disability

EXPERIENCE

In every culture, we are exposed to different kinds of ways of coping with health, illness, and disability. Growing up, I was never exposed to any religious practices as my parents never imposed them on my siblings and me. It wasn't until the loss of a family friend that I was exposed to the practice of prayer to help with healing, disability and illness. My family friends would light a candle, kneel, close their eyes, and stay there until they had finished praying to God to help them through this hard time. This method helps them get through a hard time in their lives and offers a glimmer of hope to keep going. This opened my eyes to the idea that it's not only medical practices that can help us heal, but also spiritual healing. I have begun to pray to help me with any hard times I face and help me feel like everything is going to be ok.



CULTURE OF PRAYER AS ILLNESS

When faced with a diagnosis, many factors beyond our control affect a person's physical and emotional well-being. Many patients often experience distress and later can develop psychiatric disorders such as depression and anxiety (Turner & Kelly, 2000). Prayer often is used as a positive coping mechanism that enhances mental health and provides comfort to patients during chronic illness (Jors et al., 2015). The use of prayer is perceived as showing that god is present and a trusted confidant during life-threatening illnesses (Hamilton et al., 1689). Many of the impacts that follow the diagnosis of illness and disability cause a spiral of not knowing what to do with your life and a fear of the unknown. When we lost my family friend, the use of candles and prayer helped provide a sense of hope for the future and a sense of comfort.



CULTURE OF PRAYER AS HEALING

Healing from illness, or tragic experiences, is something that many people struggle with facing, while they try to adjust to the physical, emotional and mental damage the traumatic experiences hold. It has been shown that prayer is one of the most frequently used contemporary and alternative medicines (Jors et al., 1). Most people who take part in prayer report their healing as an effect of that prayer, reflecting the relationship between divine healing and secular medicine, as well as the belief in God's ability to perform miraculous healing (Dein & Brown, 27). For many who endure pain and suffering chronically, they pray for some relief temporarily to help keep going (Jors et al., 1). Moving forward and healing while carrying the grief of the loss of my friend was something that dwelt on my friends, family, and myself for years, but prayer has helped us see that there is still hope for peace and happiness in the future.

HISTORY OF PRAYER CANDLES

Prayer is defined as “communication by humans with the sacred of holy God. ”(Hamman, 2025). Prayer is seen as a way to understand yourself within a vibrant network of circulating healing energy (Weisenfeld, 1026). A popular part of prayer is using a candle. Prayer candles were found in the tombs of saints dating back to the 200s (Rockhold, 2022). Many of the tombs were found underground, so these candles were used to provide light and also to symbolize the faith embedded in the walls (Rockhold, 2022). In personal prayer, candles are seen as an object that allows you to reflect on “ways Jesus has brought light to your life. Then you can bring to mind people you want to pray for and ask for the light of God's love to shine on them.” (Rockhold, 2022). After the prayer is complete, the person usually blows out the candle and says the Lord's name. These candles are also used in many church services and at shrines and other religious sites. Prayer candles have deep roots in ancient religious practices and are seen as a symbol of divine light and personal offerings.



CULTURE OF PRAYER AS HEALTH

The definition of health is highly subjective, depending on one's personal understanding of what it means to be healthy. A person's lifestyle has a significant impact on health, but social well-being is the most important factor (Government of Canada). Prayer has been associated with many health outcomes, such as living longer, improved quality of life, better coping with illness, and improved mental health. (Olver, 11). When going through traumatic experiences like the loss of a family friend, prayer helped improve her family's spiritual, emotional and physical well-being through their grief and as they continued with their lives (Olver & Dutney, 2012). Healing prayers are very common conversations with God that many partake in to ask God to assist them in getting back to a state of wellness, and they also use healing prayers to pray for the recovery and guidance of those around them through difficult times (Hamilton et al., 1692).



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