

Prayer and Incense

Burn incense or a scented candle and observe what happens. Use the *For Reflection* or *Discussion* questions to think about how incense (or a candle) is like prayer.

Procedure for Incense:

1. Make an incense holder by putting a dab of clay into a ceramic candleholder or onto a plate.
2. Stick the incense into the clay so that it stands upright.
3. Light the top with a match.
4. What do you notice?



Procedure for Using a Scented Candle:

1. Put the candle on a glass, ceramic or metal surface.
2. What happens when you light the candle?

Note: If you are doing this as a group activity, try to use a candle or incense with a subtle scent in case any of the participants have a sensitivity to strong smells.

For Reflection or Discussion:

- Fire from a match lights the incense or the candle. What initiates prayer? (What does *fire* symbolize in the Word?)
- What does the rising smoke illustrate about prayer?
- What does the smell of incense filling the room correspond to? (Hints: A *room* symbolizes an inner part of your mind where you keep your thoughts about the Lord and heaven and *smelling* symbolizes insight or perception.)
- Did you notice anything else about incense that taught you something about prayer?
- The Lord told the Children of Israel to build an altar of incense to use in the Tabernacle. The high priest burned incense on it when people were praying to the Lord. The Rev. Robert Jungé writes that the incense burned within the Tabernacle is like the secret prayers we offer to the Lord, in contrast to the open prayers we say with everyone in church. They are the secret prayers that go up to the Lord from the heart of everyone who loves Him. These prayers go up to the Lord like the smoke of beautiful incense.



Optional Follow-up:

Light a candle or burn incense when you are talking with the Lord in prayer—especially when you are speaking from your heart in your own words.

NOTE: For safety's sake, do not leave a burning candle or incense unattended. Please put out the candle or incense when you are finished.

(This activity was originally published in a Family Lesson on the Birth of Samuel.)