

Make a Sacred Space at Home *by Emily Watkins*

Why is this faith practice important?

When I was working as a children's pastor I became very aware that I had my little flock of children for only two hours a week. That left 166 hours unaccounted for in the children's week. If then, the home is the primary place where spiritual development happens, how do we create the space to journey through the Christian year together?

One simple way is to create a collection of symbolic items in a central place in the home, such as the kitchen table or on a stand in a main living area. All of these items are placed on a cloth of the corresponding color to the church season (i.e. purple for Lent).



These items remind us of the season, and invite children and adults into meaningful conversation. They can also serve as a guide to other spiritual practices. A variety of interesting and symbolic items invite your family to wonder together about their meaning and God's story.

What materials are needed for this practice?

Pieces of cloth, in seasonal colors: blue/purple for Advent; white/gold for Christmas; green for Epiphany, purple for Lent, white for Easter, red for Pentecost and green for Ordinary Time.

Candle. Bible or prayerbook. Cards with scripture passages. Cross. Images of saints if this is part of your tradition. Flowers or plants. Other symbolic items (an easter egg, a shell, a small dish of water, etc.).

How to do it

Choose a space: Consider a place in a central place in the home, i.e. on the family table or on a stand in a main living area.

Gather items: Explaining and discussing the meaning and symbolism around each item is part of the process. See the suggestions and explanations on the next page.

Mark the time: Use a circle calendar of the church year to show what season of the year we are in.

Gather your household: Join together as a household to read the scripture cards or prayers. We've found every night at dinner works well for our rhythm. One scripture that is a wonderful starting point for this practice is Psalm 23.

Resources for this practice

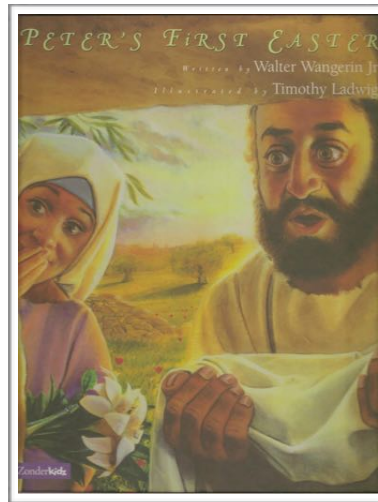
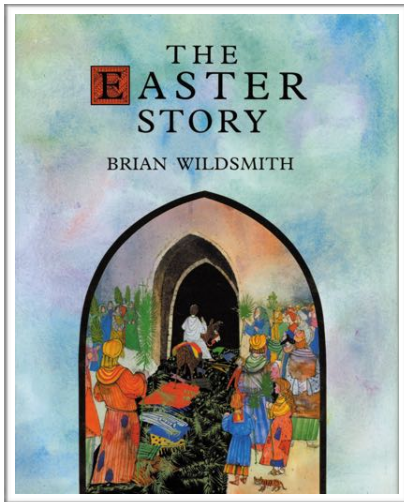
Explanations for specific items

The following are examples of items for Lent. It is important to explain and discuss each item. Of course, throughout the year these items will take on additional meanings, and you will add other items to correspond with the current season.

Candle: The candle is a symbol of God’s presence with us. As I light the candle, I say, “We light the candle to remind us that God is with us in this place, at this time.”

An empty bowl: Explain that the bowl reminds us that Lent is a time of fasting. We fast to help us prepare for the great mystery of Easter. Fasting draws us to prayer and makes the celebration of Easter even more joyful. Older children can be encouraged to write down something they want to fast from and place it in the bowl.

Cross: Take time to look at the cross together and talk about the crucifixion and the resurrection. *The Easter Story* by Brian Wildsmith, and *Peter’s First Easter* by Walter Wangerin Jr. are both wonderful retellings of the events of Holy Week to share as you ponder the cross.



About the author

Emily Watkins lives in Richmond, VA with her husband, Jim, and four little boys, all of whom happily journey the church year with her. Emily holds an M.A. in Applied Theology from Regent College and loves thinking and writing about the church year, Christian education, Godly Play, and the role of imagination in the Christian life. Emily keeps a blog chronicling a few of these thoughts watkinseveryflavorbean.blogspot.com.