Until the Dawn

CHILDREN'S PRAYER CALENDAR

About this Prayer Calendar

Use this prayer calendar to build an intentional bedtime ritual with your child, centered around conversation and prayer. There are 24 conversation question strips that you can progressively turn into a prayer chain or Christmas countdown. Cut out and color the rhyming bedtime prayer, then display it near your child's bed so you can repeat the prayer each night. Grow closer to God and each other with this nightly prayer routine.

Instructions

1. Cut out the bedtime prayer poster, color it, and place it near your child's bed.
2. Prepare supplies for your prayer chain. Cut apart the 24 question strips and place them in a basket near your child's bed. Don't worry about keeping them in order. Keep tape or a stapler nearby.
3. Each night, choose one question from the basket to prompt conversation.
   Note: If children are hesitant to open up, you might answer the question first.
4. After your conversation, form the paper strip into a loop and close it with a stapler or tape.
   Note: On subsequent nights, thread the strip into the previous loop to form a chain.
5. Say the bedtime prayer together. For non-readers, you might make it a repeat-after-me prayer.
6. If you use this as an Advent calendar, you can hang your completed paper chain on your Christmas tree!
   Note: Alternatively, you could create a paper chain ahead of time, hang the chain near your child's bed, then pull off a link each night to "count down" the days until Christmas.

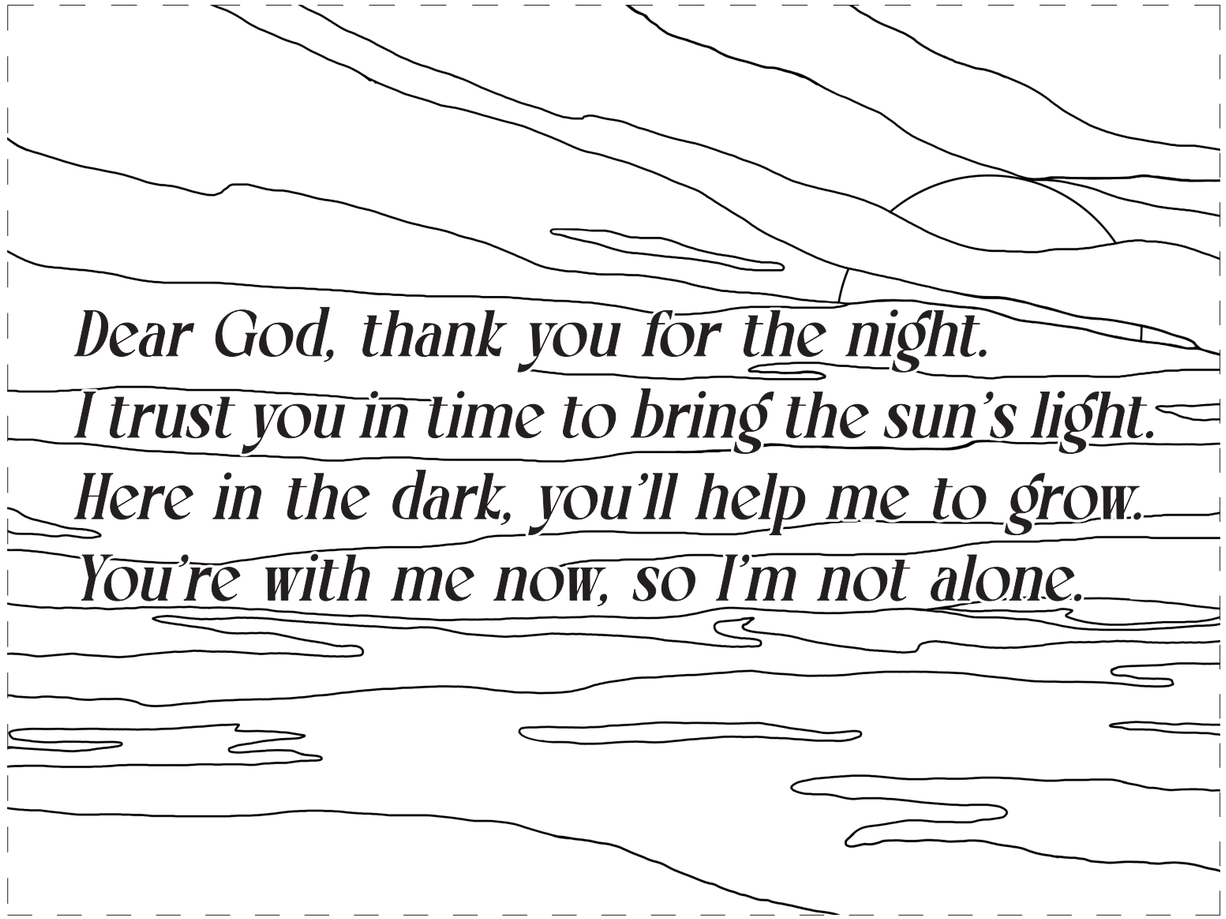
Tips for Talking to Children About the Dark/Night

It is common for young children to develop a fear of the dark and/or experience a level of separation anxiety if they sleep alone. Here are some ways to help them:

- Creating a bedtime ritual can help children feel safe, since children thrive with routine and structure. Bedtime rituals don't need to be elaborate, and they can incorporate the "must-do" tasks of bedtime, such as brushing teeth and turning off the lights.
- Talk about their fear at a time when they feel safe, such as in the daytime in their favorite place. Ask, "What are you afraid of in the dark?" or "What part of going to bed is the scariest?" Help your child process these fears with statements that validate their feelings without playing into their fears, such as, "That sounds scary, but I want you to know that your room is a safe place," or "I know it's hard to be alone, but we're just down the hall." Repeat these reassurances at bedtime.
- Use nightlights and comfort objects to help your child feel safe. Dim, warm light doesn't interfere with circadian rhythms and can help your child feel calm enough to go to sleep.
- White noise machines or soft, gentle music can help if your child is sensitive to sounds in the night. With a child's imagination, a tree branch blowing against the wall or the creak of the floor outside their room can become a monster.
- Remember, most children grow out of their fear of the dark as their brains develop to better separate fantasy from reality and as they become more independent. Support them, love them, and help them build their confidence, and this phase will pass.

Light and dark imagery has been used to elevate whiteness, so be careful how you frame the dark and the light as you talk with children. Dark is not bad or evil, and light is not inherently a sign of God's presence. Here are some ways you might be proactive in breaking down the association of light with goodness and darkness with evil or danger:

- Talk to your child about the ways in which the dark is good, and all the good things that happen in the dark, like growth, dreams, and stargazing.
- Read books that celebrate the darkness such as *God's Holy Darkness* by Sharei Green and Beckah Selnick, illustrated by Nikki Faison (Beaming Books, 2022) and *Who Needs the Dark?* by Laura Alary, illustrated by Risa Hugo (OwlKids, 2025).
- If your child is interested in science, read more about the ways light works, look at images of deep space, and/or learn about creatures that live in dark places like caves and the depths of the ocean.
- Talk to your child about the in-between kinds of light: twilight, dawn, dusk, glowing, twinkling. Ask them their favorite kind of "in-between" light.



Who are your best friends?

Who makes you laugh the most?

If you could make a new rule, what would it be?

How were you a good helper today?

What are you thankful for?

Who was kind to you today?

What is something you're proud of yourself for?

How were you brave today?

What are you looking forward to tomorrow?

What made you laugh today?

What is something you learned today?

What new thing did you do today?

What is one thing you would change if you could?

How did you solve a problem today?

What was your favorite part of the day?

What do you hope to do or see in your dreams tonight?

What is something you're hoping for?

Who or what makes you feel safe?

What brought you joy today?

What would you like to learn more about?

What was the hardest thing you did today?

What would you like to learn how to do?

How were you kind today?

What is your favorite thing about yourself?