

Birthday Prayers and Blessings *compiled by Matthew Kozlowski*

Why is this faith practice important?

Birthdays, when viewed through a Christian lens, allow us to celebrate and value God's gift of life. Indeed, when we honor the day of someone's birth, we make at least two major theological claims:

First: all life comes from God, and every person is literally a gift from God. This is something to tell each other over and over: "Your birth was a gift; You are God's intention!"



Second: each year of life is another opportunity to live in God's love, and live into God's call. On a birthday, we should feel deep gratitude, and also a sense of holy responsibility. We begin another 365 days with the chance to love and serve God, and love and serve others.

What materials are needed for this practice?

Cards, cakes, candles... by all means! But also, an intentional time to pray for, and bless the birthday person. Having a prayer or blessing typed out, or printed in a book, can be a big help.

How to do it

Declare God's love: Birthdays are a great time to say "I love you," especially to children. But don't forget to say "God loves you," and "Jesus loves you." I try to say this to my daughters at least once a day. It's not just a platitude; it is a theological affirmation! The God of the universe *loves you*.

Give thanks for the birthday person's life: If you are gathered for household prayers, or for a birthday celebration such as a meal, thank God for the gift of birthday person. Notice the importance of language here. It's not, "Dear God, we thank you for Tanya's birthday today." But rather, it's, "Dear God we thank you *for Tanya*, your beloved child. Thank you for the gift of her life."

Bless the birthday person: You've thanked God for the gift of life, but you're not done yet. Now you get to specifically and individually bless the birthday person. This is all about making a big deal. Stand up, lay your hands on the birthday person's head or shoulders. Use one of the prayers or scriptural blessings on the following page.

Then bless the person in the name of God, or in the name of Jesus, or in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You can either say "I bless you..." or "You are blessed..." In both cases, whether clergy or lay, you are conferring God's blessing – a most holy and life-giving act.



Home Practices

Our picks for building faithful households

Resources for this practice

Birthday Prayers

God of all creation, we offer you grateful praise for the gift of life. Hear the prayers for _____, your servant, who recalls today the day of *his/her* birth and rejoices in your gifts of life and love, family and friends. Bless *him/her* with your presence and surround *him/her* with your love, that *he/she* may enjoy many happy years, all of them pleasing to you. We ask this through Christ our savior. Amen.

As printed in the United Methodist Book of Worship

O God our times are in your hand; Look with favor we pray, on your servant _____, as *he/she* begins another year. Grant that *he/she* may grow in wisdom and grace, and strengthen his/her trust in your goodness all the days of *his/her* life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Written by Charles Price; printed in the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer and the Presbyterian Book of Common Worship.

Scriptural Blessings

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Romans 15:13

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep... make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 13:20-21

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

Numbers 6:22-26

For more ideas on blessings: check out another Home Practice entitled “Bless One Another at Home” (<http://www.buildfaith.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Bless-one-another.pdf>)

About the author

Matthew Kozlowski manages, writes, and edits for Building Faith. He is an Episcopal priest living in Alexandria, VA with his wife and two young daughters.