

Christmas Eve CANDLES

By Mariah Welch and Lucy Stevenson Ewell
(Based on a true story)

This story happened in Finland.

Joska and his family walked quietly through the snow. It was Christmas Eve, and they were doing one of their favorite traditions. Every year, people in Finland visited the cemetery to light candles on the graves of their loved ones.

Lots of bright candles glittered in the dark. Even though it was cold, they made the cemetery feel cozy and peaceful.

Joska's parents led them to a grave. "Who's this?" his little sister, Aasa, asked.

"This is my great-uncle," said Mum.

Turo, Joska's older brother, pointed at the dates on the stone. "He was born over a hundred years ago!"

"Yes. But he's still part of our family." Mum pulled out a candle. "Do you want to light it, Joska?"

Joska nodded and lit the candle. Then he carefully put a metal lid with holes in it on top. It would keep the wind from blowing out the flame. He placed the candle on the ground in front of the grave. The soft, glowing light looked beautiful.

They went to the next family grave. Joska held Aasa's hand as they walked.

The whole cemetery twinkled like it was full of stars.

"Why do we light candles on the graves?" she asked.

"Because it's important to remember our family members," he said.

"Even if they lived a hundred years ago?" Aasa asked.

"Yes," Dad said. "All our aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents are part of our family. We're all one big family because of Jesus Christ."

Mum got out another candle. Turo helped Aasa light it.

"But why do we light the candles at Christmas?" Aasa asked.

Joska thought about that for a minute. They could light candles at the cemetery any other day. Why Christmas Eve?

"Maybe because Jesus is the Light of the World," Joska said.

Mum smiled. "That's a great answer. I think you're right." She helped Aasa put her candle in the snow next to the grave. "It's because of Jesus Christ

that we can be with our family forever. And because He lived again, all of us will live again too."

They all stepped back to look at the lights. The whole cemetery twinkled like it was full of stars.

Joska's heart felt warm as they walked back to the car. When they got home, they would open presents and play games. But right now, Joska was glad he could have this quiet time with his family. He would always be grateful for Jesus's light. ●

Why did Joska and his family light candles on Christmas Eve?