

Long ago, people learned to measure time not by clocks, but by flame. A single candle marked the passing of moments quietly, without pause. Even now, it reminds us that time does not announce itself as it moves forward. It does not ask for permission, nor does it wait for us to be ready. Whether we notice it or not, each moment slips into the past and becomes part of our story.

As the candle burns, the flame remains constant while the wax disappears. Each drop of fallen wax marks a moment gone, never to be recovered. The light does not stop for hesitation, nor does it slow for regret. It continues whether it is used wisely or wasted entirely. The candle asks for nothing. It simply burns, offering light until there is no wax left to sustain it.

We often assume we have more time, more chances, more light. We postpone our goals, delay difficult conversations, and convince ourselves that tomorrow will always come. Yet the candle shows us otherwise. It reveals that time is limited and that its value lies not in its length, but in how it is used. What remains is not the amount of wax left behind, but what the light allowed us to see and do.

The candle also teaches us something about shelter. Many people think of shelter as a place built from walls, roofs, and doors. While these structures may protect us from rain, wind, and cold, they cannot shield us from uncertainty, fear, loneliness, or the passing of time. A house may provide comfort, but true shelter often comes from something deeper. It is found beyond walls.

One form of shelter is purpose. When people know what matters to them, they gain a sense of direction that helps them move forward even when life becomes difficult. Purpose provides stability when circumstances change. It reminds us why we continue when obstacles stand in our way. Just as a candle's flame guides a traveler through darkness, purpose guides us through moments of confusion and doubt. It does not stop time from moving forward, but it helps us make meaning of the moments we are given.

Another form of shelter is found in the people around us. Throughout life, we depend on others for support, encouragement, and understanding. A friend who listens, a teacher who believes in us, a parent who offers guidance, or a community that welcomes us can create a sense of belonging that no building can provide. During difficult times, it is often these relationships that help us find strength. Like a candle lighting another candle, one person's kindness can bring light to someone else's darkness.

I have come to understand this idea in my own life. As I prepare to enter my senior year of high school and begin thinking seriously about college, I often find myself wondering what the future will hold. The decisions ahead can feel overwhelming, and there are moments when uncertainty creates stress and self-doubt. During those times, I have learned that shelter is not found in having every answer. Instead, it is found in the support of family, the encouragement of mentors, and the sense of purpose that guides my goals. Knowing why I work hard and who I can rely on gives me stability, even when the path ahead is unclear. Those experiences have

taught me that shelter is not always a place. Sometimes it is the confidence, faith, and support that help us move forward despite uncertainty.

Shelter can also be found in memories. The moments we share with others remain with us long after they have passed. A conversation, a lesson learned, or a simple act of kindness can continue to provide comfort years later. Though time carries every moment away, it cannot erase the impact those moments have on us. The light of the candle may fade, but what it illuminated remains.

For many people, shelter is also found in faith. Faith provides hope when answers are unclear and peace when circumstances seem beyond our control. It reminds us that our lives have meaning beyond what can be measured by clocks or calendars. Faith teaches patience during hardship and gratitude during times of ease. Like a candle shining in darkness, it offers guidance when the path ahead cannot be fully seen.

The light of the candle is not measured by how long it burns, but by what it illuminates. In the same way, our lives are not defined by the number of years we have, but by the impact we make, the relationships we build, and the good we choose to do. These things become a refuge when challenges arise. They remind us who we are and what truly matters.

But it is not enough to watch a candle burn. It is for us, the living, to decide what we will do while the flame still stands. Will we let moments slip away unnoticed, or will we act with intention? Will we allow time to pass by, or will we give it purpose? Every day presents a choice. We can spend our time chasing things that quickly fade, or we can invest it in what brings meaning, connection, and growth.

The flame will eventually die. The truth cannot be changed. What can be changed is whether its light mattered. Time, like the candle, asks nothing of us except that we choose how to use it before it is gone. And perhaps that is where we find shelter beyond walls: not in the promise of more time, but in the purpose we discover, the people we cherish, the faith we hold, and the meaning we create with the light we have been given.