

A PRACTICAL PRIMER ON PRAYER

by

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CHAPTER EIGHT -

TABLE GRACE

"He took bread, and gave thanks and brake it." (Luke 22:19).

A TWIN to family worship is grace. It is another way in which the family as a unit pauses to remember the Creator and Saviour and to thank Him for His goodness.

JESUS, the divine Son of GOD, said grace. At the feeding of the five thousand, **"Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples"** (John 6:11). His example should be sufficient reason for anyone who loves Him.

Grace is the little Christian ceremony which distinguishes man from the animals. When food is put out for animals, the instinct is, except perhaps in the case of trained pets, to be the first and to eat the most. The slight waiting for others and the giving of thanks lifts man above the animals.

Sometime when you are in a restaurant, watch the different people. When the non-Christian family sits down and food is brought, each one starts to eat without regard for the others.

The Christian family, even though they may sometimes omit grace in public, usually automatically wait for one another.

It is best to say an impromptu grace, because that keeps it from becoming formal; but if you can't - the important thing is that you do say it!

If a person is naturally shy and has never had the opportunity to overcome his shyness, it is better to say a memorized grace from the heart than to omit altogether the giving of thanks. It can be varied by learning a new grace from time to time. Even if you say the same petition each day, you can think of what you are saying and repeat it clearly and distinctly, praying not merely with the lips, but also from the heart.

Here are some forms of grace you might use. "Dear Lord, come and be our Guest; let the food we eat be blest." "For this and all Thy other gifts of grace, we give Thee thanks." Or, "We thank Thee, Lord, for this food. Bless it to our use and us in Thy service. In JESUS' name, Amen."

These are all brief because grace should be brief. It is only of value as long as those who listen

give thanks too. At mealtimes people are hungry and the food is growing cold. Human nature is too frail to allow for long prayers before meals.

Usually the father, as the head of the house, asks the blessing. If the father is not a Christian, the mother may ask the blessing; but even a non-Christian should be grateful enough for food to give thanks to GOD.

If one of the formal graces is used, why not have the family say it together? Or you might take turns saying grace. This way it will become natural to all; and if one is asked to say grace in company or when away from home, he will not be self-conscious.

If for some reason the family does not all eat at the same time, those who eat alone should take a moment to bow their heads and thank the Giver of every good gift for the food.

The Early Morning Watch

"My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up" (Psalm 5:3)

The birdies wake at peep of day,
And "Hallelujahs" raise;
They greet the dawn with carols gay,
And their Creator praise.

And little children too, are heard
In prattle sweet and clear;
The aged waken with the bird
When morning draweth near.

The Comrades of the Quiet Hour
Do rise betimes each day;
They know the need of grace and power
To tread the narrow way.

Does Holy Writ a story tell
Of worshipers at morn?
Aye, more than one, we know full well,
Rose e'er the day was born.

To offer prayer and sacrifice,
They rose before the light;
And women, virtuous and wise,
Rose oft, while yet 'twas night.

Wise seers and patriarchs, not few,
Ere dawn their altars raised;
And righteous kings, and psalmists too,

Sang early, "GOD be praised!"

Our Saviour, also, rose and sought
A solitary place,
Where He might meet, in sorrow fraught,
His Father, face to face.

Come, let us rise at morning light
And seek our GOD in prayer;
Praise Him who kept us through the night
And cast on Him our care.

- Pearle M. Sterling

~ end of chapter 8 ~
