

Praying before Meals *by Gary Taylor***Why is this faith practice important?**

Jesus was onto something when he said, "Do this in remembrance of me" while breaking bread with his closest friends. *Companion*, of course, literally means *with bread*. So much of human bonding happens around the meal table.

When it comes to children and families, studies show that children in households that eat together four or more nights per week are less likely to encounter social difficulties like school expulsions or drug use. The more a household talks about their lives and shares the journey, the better individuals feel supported to face life's inevitable challenges.

When we intentionally invite God into meal times, we remind children and adults how God is intimately involved in *all* of our lives. Furthermore, we demonstrate how to connect with God regularly and sincerely.

**What materials are needed for this practice?**

While there are no materials necessary for prayer, you might consider a book of prayers or a prayer cube to help get started. See the next page for examples.

**How to do it**

**Make it normal:** As a start, an adult may speak the prayer, and then over time invite others to add a prayer. Later, other household members may take turns leading. Like anything, this will take time, but with repeated practice, it will become more comfortable. I love that praying with my teenagers is a normal thing in our household.

**Give thanks:** Expressing gratitude to God, day in and day out, is the surest way to remind ourselves that we are infinitely loved and unfathomably blessed.

**Pray for others:** Praying for God to heal or protect someone specific helps the family hold that person in mind and feel that they are helping them too.

**Pray for strength and guidance:** Praying that we use our gifts to help others, every day, reminds us that we are to do good in the world.

**Ways to pray:** Praying out loud, especially from the heart, helps children and adults learn that prayer doesn't have to be perfect to be worthy of God. On the other hand, traditional prayers offer a chance for connection. Sometimes our family sings the doxology or even a Christmas carol verse as our prayer.

### Resources for this practice



#### **Table Graces and Family Graces**

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[www.forwardmovement.org/Products/2261/table-graces.aspx](http://www.forwardmovement.org/Products/2261/table-graces.aspx)



#### **Prayer Cube**

by Creator Mundi

[www.creatormundi.com/product/the-original-mealtime-prayer-cube/](http://www.creatormundi.com/product/the-original-mealtime-prayer-cube/)

### About the author

*Gary Taylor is head of school at Trinity Episcopal School in New Orleans. Gary married his college sweetheart, Karen, in 1991. They have three children: Charlie, Wendy and Theo.*