

Why do we pray at meal times?

Many Christian parents can point to some moment in time when their children asked, “Why do we have to pray before we eat?” This is a legitimate question. Sadly, it is a question that is not even asked in some professing Christian homes because they don’t pray before mealtime. I vividly remember one of my children returning home from a visit to a professing Christian home with the declaration, “Dad, they didn’t even pray before they ate!”

As a young person I remember hearing various people being asked to “bless the food.” Took me a while to figure out the Biblical basis for the request, and I would probably change that just a bit to say, “Bless the God who gave us the food.” So why should Christians pray before they eat? Let me set out three reasons to reinforce this spiritually healthy practice.

First, Jesus practiced it.

- Jesus prayed before the feeding of the 5,000 men. (Matthew 14:19; Mark 6:41; Luke 9:16; John 6:11, 23)
- Jesus prayed before the feeding of the 4,000 men. (Matthew 15:36; Mark 8:6)
- Jesus prayed at the Last Supper (Matthew 26:26-27; Mark 14:22-23; Luke 22:17, 19; 1st Corinthians 11:24).
- Jesus prayed before eating after His resurrection. (Luke 24:30)

Second, the apostles practiced it.

- Paul prayed (in the presence of unbelievers) before eating. (Acts 27:35)
- Paul ate after praying. (1st Corinthians 10:30)

Third, the Bible assumes it.

- Romans 14:6
- First Timothy 4:4-5

I have watched and listened as Christians have struggled with praying before eating in public. They apparently feel self-conscious about bowing their heads in gratitude to God, wondering what the people around them will think of them. Some have even joked that it’s okay to drop a napkin on the floor and then bend over to pick it up and say “thank you” on the way back to a vertical sitting position. Something is amiss.

Let us humbly follow the practice of Jesus and the apostles. Bless God for the food He has faithfully provided. There should be no shame in expressing Godward gratitude.

Pastor Phil Siefkes
Calvary Baptist Church
Sleepy Eye, MN