



General Topics :: Will you please say grace?

Will you please say grace? - posted by TrueWitness, on: 2012/5/12 15:19

This post is somewhat pedantic and nit-picky but it is something that has baffled and sorta annoyed me for a while now.

There you are sitting at the family Thanksgiving table about to enjoy the delicious meal that was lovingly prepared. Mom bows her head and says to Dad, "Papa, will you please say grace."

Say what? you think to yourself. Then Dad gives a prayer of thanksgiving over the food before the food is served and eaten. Oh, you think to yourself, she was asking him to say a prayer of thanks over the food and our being blessed.

I'm not sure how this phrase, "say grace" originated but it makes no logical sense whatsoever. Grace is something good we RECEIVE FROM GOD. I don't even know what it means for a person to "say grace" unless it means to say the word "grace."

This is not a hot-button topic with me. I'm just curious to know if anyone knows how this phrase came into being. When I hear it I don't try and correct the person or make an issue about it. Most people have grown up hearing it so frequently they don't even flinch because they know what the intended meaning is. I just find it decidedly ODD.

Re: Will you please say grace? - posted by Compton (), on: 2012/5/12 19:16

Hi TrueWitness,

Your question is actually rich in Church history:)

The Christian roots of saying grace probably go back to a Jewish traditional prayer of gratitude before meals for blessings called the "birkat hamazon" It is based on Deuteronomy 8:10 "And thou shalt eat and be full, and thou shalt bless Jehovah thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.." This prayer is to be spoken after the meal, and in English is roughly translated "grace after meals".

Jesus practiced this type of prayer as recorded in John 6:11. "Jesus then took the loaves, and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted."

It might have been in Acts 27:35 that we first see how the prayer was continued over into the Church by Paul. "And when he had said this, and had taken bread, he gave thanks to God in the presence of all; and he brake it, and began to eat."

This practice of thanking God for food, either before or after the meal, was continued by the early church leaders such as Tertullian who wrote, "We do not recline at a banquet before prayer be first tasted -- in like manner prayer puts an end to the feast " (De orat., xxv).

Why is it called grace today? More than likely, it was the Early Christians that called this prayer "gratiae or gratia", which is the Latin translation of "thanks."

Blessings,

MC

Re: - posted by DEADn (), on: 2012/5/13 15:29

There was a time when I used to pray before I ate but I had an incident happen that stopped me from doing such a thing. When a certain service was over the church held a dinner for everyone. The pastor prayed his thing and we ate. When I got home I ended up throwing up the very food I ate. Apparently the food didn't agree with me? I was a bit traumatized and perplexed about it. Why would I throw up if the food was 'sanctified' by the pastor praying over it? I have had a few people give me reasons but they just didn't come across as genuine answers.

John

Re: - posted by richrock, on: 2012/5/13 15:40

I'm not a huge fan of saying grace as such - my reasoning is that if we say grace for food, then what are we ungrateful for? I would rather discipline myself to give God praise for anything and everything - not just food in particular.

I'm probably wrong here somewhere, but it's my 2p worth.

Re: Will you please say grace? - posted by Lysa (), on: 2012/5/13 17:34

I do not pray over my food unless someone asks me or expects me too! I have been wondering (maybe someone can help me out here), if our lives (prayer and the word of God) is what sanctify's the food we eat? I've only wondered about that, I'm not trying to make a doctrine out of it!!!

1 Timothy 4.4-5 says

4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

I was just wondering, I usually praise the Lord for it more than I pray for the food, if that makes sense!

God bless,
Lisa

Re: , on: 2012/5/13 18:42

"Say Grace" are a collection of short prayers that are premeditated and memorized.

One such prayer we used to pray at school was, "God is good, God is great, thank you for our food, bow our heads we must be fed, give us Lord our daily bread Amen".

Other graces are short songs which are pretty nice to hear.

The word "grace" has nothing to do with saving grace, it's a word used for a collection of short prayers, probably a carry over from Catholicism. But the saying of prayers over a meal is as old as the hills.

Re: - posted by roadsign (), on: 2012/5/13 20:14

Quote:
----- When a certain service was over the church held a dinner for everyone. The pastor prayed his thing and we ate. When I got home I ended up throwing up

Surely this would not be a reason to give up on grace! Quite the contrary! Perhaps more prayer is needed regarding our eating rituals - especially at church! After all, they can get quite laden with hazardous contents - not only microbes, but calories, cholesterol, toxins, additives, etc, etc. And since overweight is a social epidemic.... perhaps returning to the "table" on this matter of praying over our food consumption is in order. It does, after all, seem strange to give thanks for what may be contributing to our deaths.

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On another matter: There can be surprising benefits to the grace ritual. For example a friend of mine has a carpentry business, and being an evangelical believer he always recites a grace before lunch. His employee, a pagan, one day asked him, "What do you get out of saying grace?" He hesitated. Then she responded gently, "I wondered because I noticed that over the last while you have been quite bad tempered and short." He admitted that she was right. He acknowledged his inconsistency. He also told her he never expected to be exhorted by a pagan. He had assumed it was to be the reverse. This event was a beautiful expression of humility and honesty on the part of both people. He was humbled and she gained more respect for Christianity. God was glorified.

... all because of a mumbled grace.

Diane