

# Before We Eat

**W**hy do many believers pray before meals?

They are thankful that God has provided food for another day and another meal. Jesus is our example where he told his men to feed the crowd.

**But Jesus said, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." They said to him, "We have only five loaves here and two fish." And he said, "Bring them here to me."**

**Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing.**

**Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied.**

**And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.** (Matthew 14:16-21 ESV)

The remarkable detail here is that Jesus offered this blessing over

five loaves and two fish while the goal was to feed thousands. But every Bible reader knows that the food supply expanded to amply meet the need and tip the waiters, too.

Even when there was no miracle involved, Jesus set the example of giving thanks for the food. As he dined with two men on the road to Emmaus, he prayed before the meal.

**When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them.** Luke 24:30

It was at that point his fellow-travelers recognized their companion to be Jesus.

After Jesus returned to heaven, giving thanks at mealtime was simply part of Christian living. When Paul was being taken to Rome on a ship, it looked to the 276 passengers like they would all drown. Paul said they would not be harmed and then took food and thanked the Lord for it right in front of the pagan passengers.

**And when he had said these things, he took bread, and**

**giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat.** Acts 27:35

Even in spite of the danger and terrible circumstances, Paul paused to give thanks to God before the meal.

Paul included thanksgiving in his writings:

**. . . giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .** Ephesians 5:20

That would include giving thanks for our food. Praying at meal time with thankful hearts helps us center our minds on the Great Provider and reminds us that he controls the food supply.

Because the food is provided each day, there is no problem in repeating our thanks at each meal. We approve of God supplying our needs and he approves of repeated thanks for it.

**We** pray in restaurants. Several times each year, someone notices our family or group praying before the meal and choose to pay our tab. We take that as a sign of approval from others.

When I'm invited to join with those who do not pray, I speak up at the right time and say that it is our custom to thank the Lord for the food and then lead out in prayer.

We have a community event where thanksgiving is always asked before the meal. Someone began the practice years ago and it is now expected.

It is time to count our blessings as depicted in this photo.



Not everyone on earth has second helpings. Maybe even the first helping is limited. There will be no dessert. No one in the photo is overweight. Starvation is near for many men, women and children in South Sudan.

So yes, we must thank the Lord for the fine meals we have and give thought to helping the starving in less fortunate places in the world.

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