Peanut Butter and Jelly Prayers

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INTRODUCTION

There's a prayer just for peanut butter and jelly sandwiches? Who knew? In this book of prayers for meals at home and on the go are prayers for a good old PB&J, macaroni and cheese, and yes, even a prayer asking God to bless fast food and those who make it and serve it.

In our fast-paced society, some people quickly dismiss the family meal as a thing of the past. But architects and realtors will tell you the kitchen and dining areas remain important focuses of any home. Peruse the “cooking” section at your local bookstore or notice the number of TV cooking shows, even television channels devoted entirely to food. Apparently people are still making meals and eating them together.

Child Trends Data Bank reports that almost half of American teenagers eat with their family nearly every day. And the
news is even better for younger children between ages six and eleven: more than half of them enjoy a daily family meal. Good for these families—and good for these growing children. Families who cook and eat together not only tend to eat more nutritious foods, but they have better family relationships.

In fact, there is a new emphasis on the family meal. Parents or caregivers (and kids) in this busy society are recognizing that mealtime may be the only time they slow down, and one of the rare times of the day they have to connect. They’re turning off televisions and cell phones and actually talking to one another. Incredible—and crucial!

What is most crucial for Christian families is inviting the presence of God at that meal. When we gather as the community of faith in our various churches, we also gather “at table.” And when we do, we engage in ritual and language that both recognize God’s presence in that holy meal and ask God’s blessing on the meal. As families, we do the same. We invite God into our sacred times of eating, drinking, and conversation. Offering a creative, appropriate table prayer sets a tone for that time—whether it be pizza eaten in haste or several courses served over an evening of storytelling. At the family
table, we enter into a holy time with those who know us best and love us most—despite our foibles. In the eating of this food and in these faces, we see and reflect Christ—who offers himself for the sake of the world. We are nourished in body and soul to be people for justice, doing what we can so that all might be fed and know peace.

Mealtime is also the only time most families pray together. This book offers prayers for foods that make their way onto the menus of most children rather frequently. It also includes table prayers honoring special occasions at home and in the church year. Table talk questions follow each prayer, inviting everyone at the table (not just the kids) to answer a simple question. Questions reflect the food, the occasion, or the season for which that particular prayer was birthed.

Whatever the food, occasion, or season, let this book be your guide to wonderful family meals, whether eaten in the car, the backyard, or the dining room table. The important thing is that families come together to nourish their bodies and their relationships with one another. Why not begin that sacred time by remembering and thanking the One from whom all good gifts come?
This book was designed for families with young children, but in many ways it is for families of all configurations. Keep it handy and use it often, but remember to offer prayers of your own (my four-year-old offers delightful prayers with which no book could compete). *Peanut Butter and Jelly Prayers* may very well work its way into the fabric of your family’s life for years to come. I pray that it does.

—Julie B. Sevig
SECTION THREE

All through the Year
The rhythms of our lives beat to several drummers—the school year, the seasons, but also the church year. This section includes prayers for each season of the church year, and significant or festival days. They reflect the Sunday Scripture readings from the Revised Common Lectionary (when possible, all three cycles), and are intended for use throughout the week when a meal is shared. Images and words are simple enough to be read by older children or younger children who have learned to read.
Season of Advent

Week 1:

God of light, we thank you for this season of Advent—
this time of waiting and watching.
You are with us in our waking and in our sleeping.
Bless this food and bless these days as we prepare
for you.
Come Lord Jesus, come among us. Amen.

TABLE TALK: What’s something for which you’ve had to wait?
Week 2:

Thank you, God, for being with us in all our preparations.
Like John the Baptist, we also prepare the way of the Lord.
We pray that all would be filled with the food of this earth.
Come Lord Jesus, fill us with hope and joy.

TABLE TALK: As we prepare for Christmas, for what do you hope?
Week 3:

God of hope and healing, you bring good news to all people, chasing away sadness and giving comfort and peace. Come Lord Jesus, like streams in a desert. Bless this meal and make us mindful of your faithfulness.

TABLE TALK: Tell about a time when you were given good news.
Week 4:

God of Mary and Elizabeth,
you fill the hungry with good things and offer mercy
to the meek.
As we eat this food, remind us, too, that nothing is
impossible with God.
Come, O come, Immanuel, God with us.

TABLE TALK: Mary was told that her baby’s name would be
Jesus. What do you know about your name?
Christmas Eve

*Leader:* The Lord be with you.

*All:* And also with you.

On this dark and holy night, light breaks into our troubled world and anxious hearts.

Christ is born in Bethlehem. Christ lives among us as we eat this meal and celebrate his birth.

Help us remember, dear Jesus: this is why we gather and this is why we give and so graciously receive.

May your love for us be reflected in our conversation and our exchange of gifts, our traditions and our thanksgiving for the most precious gift of all: Immanuel, God with us. Amen.

**TABLE TALK:** What is your favorite Christmas tradition?
Christmas Day

With joy we celebrate the birth of your Son and our Savior, Jesus the Christ.
As Christ was made known to the shepherds in the field,
may he also be made known to us—in this meal and
in those joyfully gathered.
Joy to the world, joy to us this day. The Lord is come.
Amen.

TABLE TALK: The angels appeared to the shepherds with the good news of Christ’s birth. Who shares with you the good news of Jesus?
Christmas Song

Oh, thank you, Lord. Oh, thank you, Lord.
However can we thank you, Lord? (repeat)
For all the food we have today,
and all our blessings every day.
Oh, thank you, Lord. Oh, thank you, Lord.
However can we thank you, Lord? Amen.

(Sing to the tune of “O Christmas Tree.”)

By Benjamin Cox, nine, Madagascar

**TABLE TALK:** Can you think of a way to show God how thankful you are for all the blessings that you have this Christmas season?