

GRACE AND MEALTIME ROUTINES

GOAL: *How to use grace and other mealtime routines as simple ways to build faith into the early routines of life.*

Preparation and Resources:

- Faith 5 prayer bookmarks and infographic (see *Extra Resources* on website).
- Examples of the resources from the *Inspire them* section below.
- See *Take it home* section at the end for resources to send home with the parents.

Morning tea: (10 min)

Start with morning tea to allow parents to spend time connecting with each other. Introduce any new parents. Alternatively you could allow some time for this at the end of your session.

Explain it: Why do we run these sessions for parents?

Take a few minutes to reinforce to your parents the importance of their role in passing on faith to their children. Sell the vision by saying something like, “You are the biggest influence in your children’s lives and the church wants to partner with you to help make the most of these early, foundational years.”

Share some facts about the importance of the preschool years. You could show an infographic from the Orange ‘its just a phase’ material:

“Preschool children have superpowers—at this age they are learning so much! This is such an important time for laying down faith foundations by doing a few simple things as part of your daily routine which become habits in our families. One example is saying Grace with our children.”

Explain it: Why are mealtimes important?

Meal times are a perfect time to gather together as a family. They therefore provide an opportunity to incorporate prayer and faith conversations, even with preschoolers. In our busy lives it is good to establish the habit of eating together and having routines, like saying Grace.

Inspire them: How can we add faith elements to mealtime?

Have an opportunity for families to share ideas and resources they use at home. Think about how to display the ideas, e.g. on a whiteboard or with post-its. Send a follow-up email or newsletter so everyone can share their good ideas.

Show them some resources which they can use at home and have copies for them to take away.

For example:

- **A prayer/grace cube** (which parents could make up during the session).
childrensministry.org.au/2011/03/grace-cube-lent-resources.

- **A prayer place mat** (this is available for download in the *Extra Resources* on website).
- **A handout** of different graces (see the examples below).
- **A booklet** of graces—www.suburbanshalom.com/a-big-book-of-blessings.
- **Faith 5** prayer bookmarks or other simple conversation starters (see *Extra Resources* on website).

There are lots of ideas on Pinterest.

Practice it: Praying for our food

Allow a short time for families to actually pray Grace, using some of resources you have shown above. This could be done in family groups or all together as a large group. Maybe they could use the prayer cube, sing a grace or do a grace with actions.

From your hand comes every good,
We thank you for our daily food.
And with it Lord, your blessing give,
And to your glory may we live.
Amen.

Thank you, God, for loving me.
Thank you for my family.
Help me learn more each day
To be kind at work and play.
Amen.

Thank you for the friends we meet- such fun!
Thank you for the food we eat – yum yum!
Thank you for the birds that sing-a-ling-a-ling,
Thank you God for everything
Amen.

Thank you Lord for giving us food,
Thank you Lord for giving us food,
Thank you Lord for giving us food,
Right where we are,
Amen.

Ki taku whanau
Me nga hoa
Me te Kai
Kia Ora.

Our family,
Our friends and food,
We say thank you.

Take it home:

It is important to send parents home with resources. I suggest something for them to read and a resource they can use with their children.

For example:

- the prayer and grace examples from above
- A wooden grace cube—available from Christian bookshops
- An article on the importance of mealtimes. Check out these examples:
 - sacraparental.com/2017/07/29/eight-ways-to-give-thanks-at-mealtimes
 - growingfaith.com.au/parenting/drawing-closer-together-as-a-family-at-mealtimes