

## *An Exercise To Discern Both Good and Evil (Hebrews 5:14)*

### **I Have Never Seen Them Pray**

#### **Scenario:**

You are having a teenager over to your house for dinner. This teenager's parents are members of the congregation. The reason you are having dinner with this teenager is that the parents needed somewhere for their child to be for an evening. This teenager has not obeyed the Gospel. Whether or not this teenager is interested in the Gospel is not very clear to you. Since you will have some time with this teenager, you are hoping to use your influence on this young person and engage in spiritual discussions if possible. You sit down to eat. You lead a prayer for the meal. After the prayer, you are just discussing general things. That is when you are asked a question.

#### **Statement That Arises From Our Scenario:**

The teenager asks you why you had them wait to start eating for a prayer. You then explain that you wanted to express thanksgiving for your food to God. You open your Bible and read I Thessalonians 5:18 to this young person.

#### **A Later Statement Is Made:**

After reading I Thessalonians 5:18, there is a period of silence. You then ask this teenager about what you just read to them. The teenager responds: "My parents never pray. I have never seen them pray. When we eat they just dig in. So, I didn't even know we should pray before eating. I am just confused now."

#### **For Discussion:** What do you see in those statements?

- Before I begin talking about the scenario, let's be reminded that God expected His saints of old and now to be a people of prayer (**I Thessalonians 5:17**). We now that prayer has changed as the miraculous age has concluded (**I Corinthians 13:8-13**). For example, praying over the sick as mentioned in **James 5:14** was clearly miraculous (**Mark 6:13** and **Mark 16:17-20**). We know that they had spiritual gifts, such as wisdom (**I Corinthians 12:3-11**) that they could pray for (**James 1:5**). We know spiritual gifts have ceased. So, while we will not be asking for things as we see saints of old did, we do need to come before our Father in prayer (**Colossians 4:2**).
- Opening our homes to others is certainly a good work (**Acts 2:46, Acts 16:13-15, Romans 12:13, Hebrews 13:2, and I Peter 4:8-9**).
- Being in service to help brethren is good (**Mark 10:35-45** and **Galatians 5:13**).
- If/when a person obeys the the will of God is that person's choice (**Luke 13:34, Acts 2:36-41, Acts 13:44-46, Romans 10:1-3, Colossians 1:23, Hebrews 12:25, James 1:21-25, etc.**).
- Desiring to use one's influence, by way of being a good example, is right in line with the will of God (**Matthew 5:14-16, Philipians 2:14-16, I Timothy 4:12, Titus 2:1-8, and I Peter 3:1-4**).

## *An Exercise To Discern Both Good and Evil (Hebrews 5:14)*

- Whether or not someone is interested in the Gospel doesn't matter when it comes down to how we conduct ourselves. Regardless, we need to live above reproach even in the company of those opposed to Christ (**I Peter 2:5-4:19**).
- Remember how many bad influences exist in this world and the power those bad influences have (**I John 5:19**; cf. **I Corinthians 15:33**). The power of the bad example outweighs the good (**Ecclesiastes 9:18** and **Galatians 5:7-9**).
- Opportunities to have a true spiritual discussion requires not only our willingness, but someone has to be ready and seeking as well (**II Chronicles 12:13-14**, **Ezra 7:10**, **Jeremiah 29:13** and **Luke 8:4-13**).
- A Christian ought to offer thanks to God before eating a meal even with other people (ex. **Matthew 14:19-20**). We are going to examine this further as we continue in looking at this scenario.

### Regarding the Statement That Arises From Our Scenario:

- Why does a Christian pray before eating? We pray before eating because God tells us to pray before eating (**Romans 14:6** and **I Timothy 4:1-5**). We pray before eating because Jesus did (**Matthew 15:36**). We pray before eating because, even under duress, Paul did so (**Acts 27:35**). We are supposed to follow the examples we can follow that were set forth by Jesus (**I Peter 2:21** and **I John 2:3-6**) and the approved examples set forth by the Apostles (**I Corinthians 4:16** and **I Corinthians 11:1**).
- Without God's work today in providing us with rain and fruitful seasons (**Acts 14:17**) we would have nothing to eat.
- Reading **I Thessalonians 5:18** is a good starting point. In general, a Christian needs to be a thankful person (**Ephesians 5:20**, **Colossians 3:15-17**, and **Hebrews 13:15**).
- Think about what this person taught by opening his or her Bible to answer a question (**Matthew 4:4; 4:7; 4:10**, **Acts 20:32**, **Romans 1:16-17**, **Colossians 4:5-6**, **II Timothy 3:15-17**, and **I Peter 4:11**).

### Regarding the Later Statement That Is Made From Our Scenario:

- This scenario gets very "tricky" (so to speak) here. For one, as often is the case, you cannot take a one-sided story and run with it (**Proverbs 18:13**; cf. **John 7:51**). There are many unknowns in this scenario as is often the case with any situation we face.
- Secondly, when the teenager says he or she never has seen them pray, you could say that such might be for a reason (i.e. **Matthew 6:5-8**). Why is it that people often jump to the worst conclusion? Our brethren ought to have the benefit of the doubt. We are supposed to love one another (**John 13:34-35** and **Romans 12:10**). In a context concerning the cessation of spiritual gifts and the continuance of faith, hope, and love; we learn that charity [love] "believeth all things" (**I Corinthians 13:4-7**). Part of the definition of the Greek word "πιστεύω" is "to entrust (especially one's spiritual well-being to Christ" (Strong's # 4100).

## *An Exercise To Discern Both Good and Evil (Hebrews 5:14)*

- Thirdly, how Christians choose to raise their children is their responsibility (**Deuteronomy 11:19-20, Psalms 78:1-4, Ephesians 6:4, and II Timothy 1:5**).
- Fourthly, this account may not even be true (**Psalms 35:11**). Consider, if this teenager has ever been to services of the local church he or she has seen her parents in prayer. Even at the very least during the Lord's Supper (**I Corinthians 11:23-26**). This would be a good point to raise to this teenager.
- So, take a deep breath in situations such as these and think (**Proverbs 15:28**). You could tell this teenager to talk to his or her parents about what he or she saw at this meal concerning prayer and the discussion.
- Outside of that, before jumping to any conclusions, you could/should talk to the parents of this teenager and tell them that there is confusion (**Ephesians 4:25**). You may find out something you didn't know. One thing is for sure, you doing the will of God is not what has caused confusion IF such as occurred (**I Corinthians 14:33**).