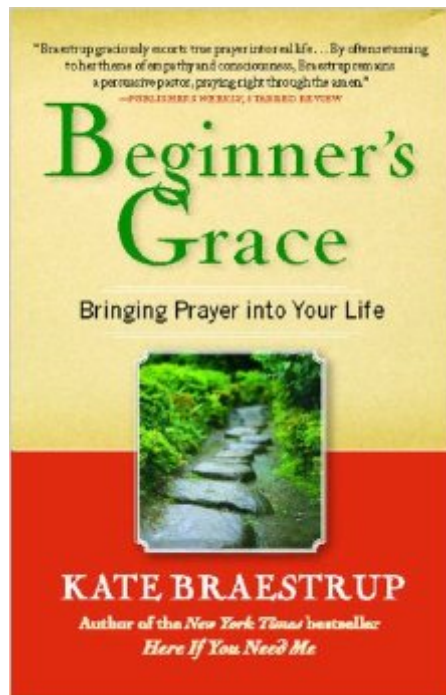


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# Beginner's Grace: Bringing Prayer To Life



## Synopsis

Prayer is an ancient and simple way to prepare yourself for grace, or love, and to learn to recognize it when it comes. Even the briefest "grace" spoken before dinner offers its time-honored wisdom. Yet in spite of hundreds of traditions and teachings and books about prayer, millions of Americans have become ambivalent about it. They are unsure how, when, where, and even why they might pray, afraid theyâ™ll do it wrong, or worried that they wonâ™t be heard. Writing in the beautiful, funny, honest narrative style that moved and inspired readers of her first book, *Here If You Need Me*, Kate Braestrup explains what prayer is and the many ways we can pray. With an approach that is both personal and inclusive, *Beginnerâ™s Grace* is a new kind of prayer book. Even if you donâ™t pray and donâ™t consider yourself religious, thereâ™s room in this book for you. In these pages, Braestrup explains how and why the practice of prayer can open a space in our busy lives for mindfulness, gratitude, contentment, and a wider compassion toward others. Inspired by her work as a chaplain, Braestrup includes many examples of prayers to draw fromâ™ beginning with grace, a brief prayer of thanks. She provides clear models and practical suggestions for making your own and your familyâ™s prayers meaningful and satisfying, and offers prayers for situations in which words might fail: times of anxiety, helplessness, or grief. And she invites you to explore forms of prayer that extend into the wider community, including prayer with and for people we donâ™t like or with whom we disagree. A welcoming modern guide to the simplest, most effective way to satisfy a universal spiritual hunger, *Beginnerâ™s Grace* is for the religious and nonreligious and even irreligious in its generous, good-humored approach to spirituality. With its insight and warmth, *Beginnerâ™s Grace* is sure to become a spiritual touchstone for people of all faiths

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## Customer Reviews

This book is not just for beginners, but for all of us. I have read many books about prayer that seem to claim that if we pray as the author suggests, God will listen to our prayers and we will get our desired response. This book is not one of them: Thanks be to God. Instead we can join with Ms Braestrup in our belief and doubts, our joys and sorrow, our certainty and confusion as we seek to become all that God has made us to be."There is the grand, beautiful, unconditional, limitless love we want to give to one another, the love that bears all things, endures all things, believeth all things, the love that sees. And then there is the stingy, shabby, nearsighted human love we find ourselves giving. The aching, immeasurable distance between one and the other can be filled only by grace. "

The story in the first few pages about a mother in the hospital told to pray for her baby with no idea how to pray captured my attention and prompted me to buy this book. I was struck by Kate's story of immediately going to the hospital to provide comfort and join in prayer. I also had hope that this book would find a middle ground in offering prayers without the mystical assumption that if you did it "right" you could cure your own cancer, etc.I was hoping for a book which: 1) provided new (nondenominational) prayers and 2) gave some inspired ideas about how to develop one's own in a powerful and connected way. I think I had envisioned a more modern Marianne Williams' *Illuminata*, filled with prayers but perhaps with inclusive language.Unfortunately, the hospital story was the only part of the book that really spoke to me, and in the end, I was disappointed. I found relatively few new prayers in the book, many of which were repetitions of Bible verses. If my prayer needs were satisfied with Psalm 23 and "Now I lay me down to sleep", I wouldn't need this book. There were many more references to Biblical prayers than I'd hoped for from a Unitarian Minister, and the flow was uneven...as if there were a series of blogs thrown together. Knowing what I know now, I would not purchase this book.

I enjoy this author very much (Here If You Need Me and columns in womens magazines)and found this little book to be helpful in guiding my prayer life. She includes anecdotes and is not "preachy" at all. It is enjoyable reading and I will buy another copy to pass on to a friend.

In reading this book about ways to think about how to pray, how to give thanks, and how to engage

a group in common purpose, one can find their own way to understanding how prayer can be helpful, prayer practice can be improved, and how prayer can help others.

Maine Warden Service Chaplain Kate Braestrup didn't learn how to pray until she had reached adulthood. Like many people raised by parents (and grandparents) of faith, I find that difficult to imagine; but I know it's a common experience, and reading her account of her own journey toward God helped me better understand how that might feel. Her prayers - this book is filled with them - I can pray with conviction! Some are quoted from traditional sources, and many are her own creations. What particularly interested me was Braestrup's sensitivity to the spiritual needs of people who have difficulty with organized religion, especially those against whom faith has been used as a weapon. Instead of explaining why such people "ought not to feel that way," the author meets them where they are. That's her job as a chaplain for a public agency, yes; but it's also a rare and (to me, at least) wonderful thing. The book reads easily, is well organized, and does not pull punches in dealing with difficult issues. It's one I am going to keep, not pass on to a used book venue after reading once.--Reviewed by Nina M. Osier, author of 2005 science fiction EPPIE winner "Regs"

I read Kate Braestrup's first book, 'Here if you Need Me' and recommend it to friends and family all the time. This new book has so many hidden treasures, for anyone remotely interested in the nature of prayer. It gives nearly every type of person a route into a more meditative or just thoughtful lifestyle, no matter what walk of life. I love her down to earth way of sharing her own life's journey. The salt of the earth people that she has worked with in her professional life have given her this unique gift.

This is an excellent introduction to prayer, and it is obviously written by one who is familiar with prayer. In the interests of full disclosure, the author was a student of mine years ago. I appreciate both her writing style and her openness about her struggles and successes. This is well worth the time to read.

I LOVED this book. I feel as though I know the author quite well after reading it. I will re-read it many times as within these pages are tools for changing lives, for gaining peace, for true worship. While dealing with the very deepest subjects, Kate Braestrup is laugh-out-loud funny! It just doesn't GET any better!! I have also read Braestrup's "Marriage and Other Acts of Charity." I just ordered "Here If You Need Me." My adult children will be getting these books for Christmas this year!

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