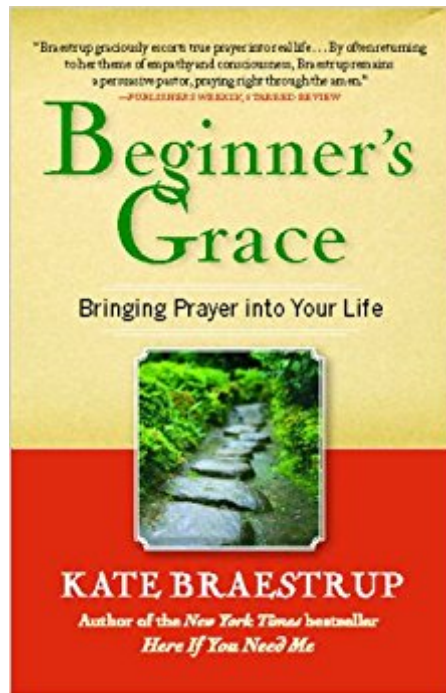




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Beginner's Grace: Bringing Prayer To Life



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.Â 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

Starred Review. Braestrup (*Here If You Need Me*), a Unitarian Universalist minister who serves as chaplain to the Maine Warden Service, graciously escorts true prayer into real life. In her fourth book, Braestrup approaches prayer from 24 angles, including from the threshold, in mixed company, for enemies, before service, and with laughter. She presents prayers in lyrics or without words. She understands that prayers can be posture and presence but never formulaic: "They need not be factual, but they must be true." Braestrup's voice registers in a wide range--from scholarly to deliciously earthy (she declares God a "noodge") to motherly--as she plaits a story strand about herself with a good hank of biblical exegesis, then finishes with personal ribbons, drawing material from her family (familiar from her memoir) and her friends in ministry and law enforcement. Some disquisitions, like the one on sleep, dull when compared to richer, exemplary narratives, such as her teasing chapter on hypocrisy. By often returning to her theme of empathy and consciousness, Braestrup remains a persuasive pastor, praying right through the amen. (Nov.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Braestrup's book is appropriately named, particularly the subtitle. But with the author's tendency to ask provoking, often humorous questions, one must ask, does she mean bringing prayer to life as in giving it power or bringing prayer into people's daily lives, even the embarrassing parts? The answer is both. A Unitarian Universalist minister, Braestrup is astute, entertaining, and scholarly in suggesting prayers from myriad faiths that have served countless generations, including this one. There are prayers for almost every occasion and circumstance: shared meals, birth, death and grief, old age, bedtime for anxious children, safety for those facing daily occupational hazards, even romantic intentions. She invites people to make up their own prayers as she includes tales of frayed nerves, abiding love, and opting for generosity in settings as mundane as the Shop 'N Save. This confirms the comfort and grace afforded by prayer and its power to reveal the beauty of life, warts and all. Amen. --Susan DeGrane --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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.

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. "

It's hard to describe Rev. Kate Braestrup's writing style. It's full of self-reflective, playful humor. Here she shares with us the role prayer can play in our lives even if we don't fit neatly into anyone else's idea of a religion.

I am a big fan of her previous 2 memoir books ('Here if You Need Me', and 'Marriage and Other Acts of Charity'). All 3 are written with good humor. Although a lot of this is instructional, I very much enjoyed hearing about her continuing adventures with her job, the Maine wardens, her family, and friends. I also decided to go ahead and buy the hardback version of the book in order to more easily reference the prayers and graces it contained. Especially important to me are the prayers that are said when groups of people of multiple faiths are present.

I not only appreciated the subject of prayer, but enjoyed the author's use linguistic skills in sharing her heart.

Beginner's Grace: Bringing Prayer to Life was another fascinating, informative and inspiring journey guided by the pen of Maine's Kate Braestrup. It's candor and humility and refreshing readability made it hard to put down. Whether you're already a believer in the power of prayer or something of a skeptic, Kate's many examples and approaches...both scholastic and personal...made this the kind of book that has lasting impact. Plenty of food for thought and for the soul to digest, it's well worth owning and then sharing!

Beginner's Grace: Bringing Prayer to Life

I lead a prayer group at the assisted living facility where I live, and the stories and sample prayers have greatly encouraged me in that endeavor. I like all the family stories and Rev Brastrups individual style of writing.

Beginner's Grace is the best book on prayer I've read. It's a subject I'm interested in, and I'm always on the lookout for a good book of prayers. This book is so engaging and so reader friendly that I couldn't put it down. The prayers she includes are invaluable and I've used many of them. After reading this book, I feel like Kate Baestrup is my friend, and now that I see her featured in several publications, it seems I'm not the only one who feels that way. No matter where you are on your faith journey, this book is a treasure.

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