

# Studying a Prayer

## by Ben Fryer

I sit down alone at a booth in my university cafeteria. My mind is moving everywhere, as it often does, and all the thoughts I have reflect on heavy things.

Life. People. Religion. Spirituality.

I sit here, chewing my salad methodically. My mind tumbles. I look up and my eyes focus on a young girl sitting down at a table some fifteen feet away. I don't take much notice of her, I've never seen her before, but then she does something that catches my attention.

She bows her head.

She is praying. She is blessing her food before she eats.

I watch, entranced.

Of course, this is not a rare thing to see people practice, especially on a private Baptist campus, but for whatever reason I am drawn in. I study her.

I begin to wonder. I ask questions:

"What is she specifically saying?"

"I don't really pray over food. Do I pray enough?"

"How does she voice her prayers; does she just wish for things or does she ask for guidance? How do I, for that matter?"

"Does she feel she really communicates with God? Do I ever feel that I do?"

"What's her reason, I mean, does she believe?"

And on and on I wonder. I watch her with such focus I can feel my eyes start to strain. My vision blurs, and I have to blink. My left eyelid starts to tick. It does that when I think too hard.

I'm not sure why I am caught up in all this.

Maybe it's...

Maybe it's because I see the simple beauty in it all. Maybe I feel I am witnessing this deeply profound moment between a human being, God, and the universe we all seem to float in, and if I turn away, I will miss a chance to learn something.

Some divine secret.

I'd like to learn a divine secret.

Whatever it is, I am intent on watching this event until it is finished completely. I will watch this prayer, this prayer of this girl who only sits some fifteen feet away from me.

Oh, but wait.

From this distance it is a little hard to tell if her eyes are closed. I was sure they were a moment ago.

Oh, hell.

In an instant, perceptions can change.

I now see the object on the table I didn't see before.

With a single swift motion, the girl moves her hand from her lap and gently taps the touch screen of her iPhone. She has finished or lost focus on whatever she was viewing. Then she picks up her fork and begins to eat.

I sit some fifteen feet away. I am disappointed.