

follow Prayer: The Lord's Prayer

Introduction to the Lord's Prayer

In this session, we explore the most famous prayer in history: **The Lord's Prayer**, often called the "**Our Father**." While many of us have memorized these words, we often treat them as a rote recitation rather than a living conversation. Jesus didn't just give us a script to repeat; He gave us a **scaffold**—a structure to support and grow our own relational life with God.

The Disciples' Request

It is significant that the disciples did not ask Jesus, "Teach us how to preach," or "Teach us how to lead." After watching Jesus' life and ministry, they realized His power and peace flowed from His prayer life. Their request was simple: "**Lord, teach us to pray**" (Luke 11:1). Jesus responded by giving them this template.

- **Relational and Formational:** As we have discussed throughout this series, prayer is "simply talking to God about what we are doing together" (Dallas Willard). The Lord's Prayer is the ultimate guide for that collaborative relationship.
 - **Wiser Than We Are:** We often come to God with narrow, self-centered requests. This prayer provides a theology and a scope that is "wiser than we are," pulling us out of our own small worlds and into God's kingdom perspective.
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The "Our" in the Father

One of the most radical aspects of this prayer is the first word: "**Our**."

- **Communal Identity:** We do not say "My Father," but "Our Father." Even when we pray this alone in a closet, we are praying in solidarity with the global and historical Church.
 - **Relationship First:** Before we ask for bread or forgiveness, we establish our identity as children of a loving Father. This eliminates the anxiety of "performance" in prayer.
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"Wringing the Cloth"

We shouldn't just run through the prayer. Instead, we should treat it like a **soaked cloth** or a **wet sweater**.

- **Wringing it Out:** You take one phrase—for example, "*Give us this day our daily bread*"—and you "wring" it. You talk to God about your specific needs, your anxieties about provision, and your gratitude for what you already have.

- **Expansion:** You stay with a line until you've said everything you need to say to God about that specific topic, then move to the next "link" in the chain.
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The Structure of the Scaffold

1. **Our Father in Heaven, Hallowed be Your Name:** This is the "Look Up" phase. We focus on God's character, His holiness, and our relationship to Him.
 2. **Your Kingdom Come, Your Will be Done:** This is the "Alignment" phase. We surrender our agendas and ask for God's priorities to take root in our homes, workplaces, and cities.
 3. **Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread:** This is the "Dependency" phase. We acknowledge that everything we have comes from Him, focusing on *daily* needs rather than hoarding for the future.
 4. **Forgive Us Our Debts...:** This is the "Reconciliation" phase. We deal with the vertical (God) and horizontal (others) barriers to love.
 5. **Lead Us Not Into Temptation:** This is the "Protection" phase. We acknowledge our own weakness and ask for the Father's guidance through the trials of life.
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Final Thought: Staying in the Awe

Sometimes, you might get stuck on the very first line. You might say "Our Father," and be so overwhelmed by the reality of being a child of God that you can't move on. That is okay. As we learned in Centering Prayer, the goal is **presence**, not performance. If you stay in awe of Him for twenty minutes on the first sentence, that is "successful" prayer.