

Living the Lord's Prayer

One Prayer. Five Steps. A Path for Walking with Jesus.

MARK SENTELL WITH THE ELDERS OF LIVING FAITH CHURCH



This book shouldn't take very long to read, but we know you're busy, so if you can only read two pages, these are them.

Most churches have a mission statement. We have a prayer. When Jesus' followers asked Him to teach them to pray, He gave them roughly sixty words: *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* It is "the most compact description ever given of a whole human life aimed in the right direction." We reorganized our church around it, as a constant prayer and a path to walk.

The path is a tree, not a staircase. The five petitions become five steps: Worship, Group, Serve, Covenant, Invest. But they are not a program. They are five contexts where people meet God. "We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed" (2 Corinthians 3:18). Transformation doesn't come from completing steps. It comes from beholding God. We are inviting you into rooms, not assigning you levels. You never graduate from worship. The tree fills out a bit at a time. It doesn't climb.

Worship: everything starts with "Our Father." Jesus says to call the Creator Father. God's law works like a garage diagnostic. It doesn't fix anything, but it tells the truth, and the fault codes print for every one of us. Then God took the bill on Himself. "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). We trust Him, and He adopts us. "Hallowed be your name" then means Treasuring God above everything. Everybody hallows something, and the substitutes wear off. And because there's no such thing as solo Christianity, we gather every week around the Word and the Table.

Group: rows can form an audience, but only circles form a family. "Your will be done" is "a resignation letter from the throne of your own life." Surrender isn't a solo act; it gets easier in company. Jesus never trained an isolated disciple, so most of our discipleship happens in small groups, where the people of Living Faith are cared for deeply by the people of Living Faith. And you're not mainly there to get: *it is more blessed to give than to receive.* Don't just join a group. Give yourself to one.

Serve: the prayer goes from the glory of God to groceries in a single breath. Nothing that concerns you is beneath Him. But the prayer says *us* and *our*. You cannot pray it honestly while being indifferent to whether your neighbor eats. God's normal plan is to provide bread for people through people. So volunteers fix neighbors' cars in the Garage next door, serving with people, not at them: one beggar showing another beggar where the bread is. "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Sunday singing is worship through our voices. This is worship with a wrench.

Covenant: forgiven people forgive. This is the only petition with a condition attached. Forgiving others isn't the price of God's forgiveness. It's the evidence that God's forgiveness actually got inside you. But relationships shallow enough to walk away from are too shallow to forgive in. So our members make promises out loud. Membership isn't privileges; it's partnership. A covenant closes the exits precisely so the relationship can bear weight. It is "the container that makes forgiveness possible."

Invest: the battle is inside, and maturity is a disciple making disciples. "Lead us not into temptation" is a prayer for weak people. The primary battle line runs through our own hearts: log first, always. "If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live" (Romans 8:13). Be killing sin, or it will be killing you. Answer sin's promise with a better one, and never fight alone. Then turn around and help the next person. The bar is intention, not size. Formal leadership waits for covenant; sharing your faith never waits for anything. The last leaf drops a seed.

Every part ends with the question we're famous for asking: So what? One concrete next step, never more than one:

1. **Worship:** talk to the Father in your own words, and worship with us weekly.
2. **Group:** find a small group to commit to weekly.
3. **Serve:** serve regularly with one of our Ministry Interest Groups.
4. **Covenant:** if you've trusted Jesus, become a covenant member. Stop attending and start belonging.
5. **Invest:** ask someone to invest in you, or pray about one name and invest in them.

Whatever the step is, take it this week, not someday. "Someday" is where next steps go to die.

That is the book. The rest of it shows what one prayer, walked, looks like in a small country church in Western Pennsylvania.

Free to share. Print it, copy it, hand it out, and use it in your church. Freely I have received; freely I give. "You received without paying; give without paying" (Matthew 10:8). If you'd like the whole book, it's at marksentell.com/books/living-the-lords-prayer, along with a free leader's guide.

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