Session Four: Teach Me to Pray

Opening Discussion

1. Through this series, we've explored Old Testament prayers of the people of God and we've looked at Jesus' own prayers and His practice of prayer. To get our conversation going this morning, let's take a few minutes to remember some of the examples that have influenced us personally.

   - Name and describe someone you've known who practiced prayer well?
   - How did their prayers influence you? What did you learn?

Digging Deeper

2. Today we are going to look at something Jesus taught the disciples that not only impacted how they prayed, but even how we pray today. The prayer we call the Lord's Prayer arises out of real-life situations involving Jesus and His disciples. When we examine the contexts in which we find the Lord's Prayer in the Gospels, we discover some interesting things. Read Luke 11:1-13

   - What is Jesus' doing when His disciples approach Him? (See verse 1.)
   - What sounds similar and what sounds different when you compare what Jesus says in Luke to what we pray when we say the Lord's Prayer?
   - What part of the Lord's Prayer stands out most to you? Why?
   - What is the point Jesus makes in the paragraphs He speaks following the Lord's Prayer?

3. The third commandment commands that we honor the sabbath day by keeping it holy. Many argue that they don't have to go to church to do that. They might argue that they can talk to God on the boat while fishing, or they talk to God while on the commute to work every day. They fail to understand that true worship is about God talking to us (the Means of Grace). And notice how when it comes to the most personal and intimate aspect of our relationship with God—prayer—Jesus begins this *prayer of all prayers* with the pronoun "our." What might this suggest?

❹ Read Matthew 6:1-18. The Lord's Prayer in the Gospel according to Matthew is situated within Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount." At play in this passage is a contrast between the disciples of Jesus who pray to be in relationship with God and the hypocrites who pray to be noticed by others. Also, you will see how forgiveness is highlighted at the end of the passage.

- What does Jesus discuss prior to giving the Lord's Prayer? (See verses 5-8.)
- How do you think we should apply Jesus' encouragements to pray in secret and to pray without heaping up empty words?
- How does it feel to know that God know what you need before you ask Him? Why should we pray if He already knows what we need?
- What sounds similar and what sounds different when you compare what Jesus says Matthew to what we pray when we say the Lord's Prayer? Similarly, how does this compare to what you find in Luke 11:2-4?

❺ In Matthew 5:14-15, Jesus highlights the importance of forgiveness, even after teaching the disciples to pray the 5th petition of the Lord's Prayer—"forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors." In fact, notice how Mathew's version even explicitly states that we ***have already*** forgiven not that we "might" or "should" forgive. Notice also how both Matthew's and Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer use financial words to describe the sins of others that we are to forgive. What might that imply?