

Once upon a time, a barber wrote a letter to his pastor, saying,

*Dear Dr. Luther,
What do I say when I pray?*

*Sincerely,
Peter, your barber*

Luther replied,

*Dear Peter,
I will tell you as best I can what I do personally when I pray. It is a simple way to pray.*

Luther went to describe how he prayed the Lord's Prayer. Rather than saying it rote, word for word as we usually do, Luther told his barber to let the prayer stir and guide his heart to new thoughts and feelings, maybe thanking God for oxygen after asking God to give us this day our daily bread. Sometimes one petition may leave you uninspired and you move onto the next. Other times you may get so lost in one that you don't even finish the Lord's Prayer. But never say it like a mindless autotron. Let Christ's prayer inspire your prayer.

For the prayers today we're going to pray in the manner Luther taught, slightly modified for a large group. To do so, I invite you to gather into groups of two or three with the people around you.

Let us pray...

Heavenly Father, we pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ together with all your saints and Christians on earth as he has taught us.

Join me in praying the beginning of the Lord's Prayer: **Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name...**

In your group, give thanks for the things that have recently made you cry out, "Praise be to God," be it as simple as a smile you received this morning, and prayer for those things in ourselves and the Church that have caused others to look upon God's name with disgust, anger, or plain disinterest.

[2 minutes for prayer]

We continue praying: **Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...**

In your group, thank God for anywhere God's kingdom is active in the world, such as in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania and

through Lutheran Disaster Relief in Nepal – and pray for anywhere heaven is not present on earth, such as in racism.

[2 minutes for prayer]

We continue praying: **Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us...**

In your group, praise God for the needs and wants that have been satisfied in our lives and in our neighbors lives today, for things like fresh air and laughter, and pray for the people and places who need daily bread, those in the hospital or the parched state of California or our children as they try to absorb all they're being taught right now.

[2 minutes for prayer]

We continue praying: **And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil...**

This part may be harder to pray in a group, and if you feel the need to pray on your own silently, I ask that you hold the hands of those in your group, or have a hand on each other's shoulders, or touch toes – somehow indicate to each other that we are not alone in prayer even if we don't feel

comfortable praying aloud – as we thank God for the ways we've been forgiven, ask for God's help to remove Sin from our lives and for the strength to forgive the those who have hurt us or are making us angry, and name those things that tempt us, begging God to remove Evil from our lives and the world.

[2 minutes for prayer]

Waiting to say that final little word for just a moment, we continue praying: **For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever.**

Lord, we give thanks for all who have entered your kingdom and now bask in your glory. As they are now alive in your kingdom, living in awe of your power and glory, may we be blessed to see and share your love and mercy as you fulfill all that we have prayed in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

And all God's people say: **Amen.**