FIREPIT
FELLOWSHIP

Forming men together,
fully alive, thoroughly equipped.

THE GETTING STARTED GUIDE

# Pull Up a Chair

## How to start a fire with your men, and your first six weeks around it

| | |
|---|---|
| PART 1 | The model, starting your fire, the covenant, and the gathering rhythm |
| PART 2 | Six launch nights: Manhood Today · Two Loves · Lord, Teach Us to Pray · Keep the Fire Going |
| PART 3 | Take-homes: the Fully Alive self-check and our fire covenant |

Free to copy for your group

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PART 1 · GETTING STARTED

# Welcome to the Fire

Why a firepit, and what you're starting

**Part 1 · Getting Started**

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## 1 Why a firepit

Most men are carrying life alone. They have plenty of acquaintances and very few brothers: men who know what's really going on in their marriage, with their kids, at work, in their doubts. The forming places are mostly gone, too: the elders, the fathers, the circles where men were shaped into men. What's left is a lot of pressure and very few people to share it with.

That isn't new. In the garden, before sin entered the story, God looked at the man and said, *"It is not good that the man should be alone"* (Genesis 2:18). We were made for each other. And for most of human history, men were formed around fires: telling stories, passing on wisdom, sitting with each other in the dark.

A Firepit is a recovered forming place. It's a small circle of men who gather most weeks around a fire to become real friends, grow deeper in faith, and learn to lead with courage at home, at work, and in the world.

> **God is the fire.** We don't light it, and we don't keep it burning by our own effort. We gather near the One who does (Hebrews 12:29). Your job as a leader isn't to make something happen. It's to pull up the chairs, open the Scriptures, and pay attention to what God is already doing in and through the men around you.

**Simple on purpose.** Many men who would never sign up for a church program or walk into a church building will say yes when a friend asks, "Want to sit by the fire Tuesday night?" A backyard, a few chairs, and honest conversation reach men where they are. Keep it that simple. This guide gives you what you need for the first six weeks; the fire and the friendships do a lot of the work.

## 2 The model on one page

**Our mission:** Forming men together, fully alive, thoroughly equipped. Gen 2:18 · Rom 6:11 · 2 Tim 3:17

### STRATEGY · HOW WE DO IT

**Weekly**

**FIRE**

A small circle around a fire: friendship, Scripture and great books, honesty, prayer.

**Seasonal**

**TRAIL**

Adventures and retreats: hard things done together, on purpose.

**Daily**

**FIELD**

Where men live, work, and play. Know your field, sow in it, and in time plant another man.

Out from the fire, onto the trail, into the field, and back to the fire with stories to tell.

### VALUES · THE LENS FOR EVERYTHING WE DO

**God is the Fire.** We gather near the One who lights it, and depend on his Spirit. Heb 12:29

**Walk in the Light.** We tell the truth about our lives. What's said at the fire stays at the fire. 1 John 1:7

**Doers, Not Just Hearers.** Every conversation lands on Tuesday: what will you do differently this week? James 1:22

**Forged in Hard Things.** We lean into hard conversations and hard trails, and stay with a brother when life gets heavy. Prov 27:17

## 3 The six Fully Alive marks

our measures

How do we know a man is being formed? Not by how many books we finish. We watch for six marks. Each part of being fully alive has an **Up** side (Godward) and an **Out** side (toward others). Every gathering, trip, and week in the field can grow all six.

| | UP · GODWARD | OUT · TOWARD OTHERS |
|---|---|---|
| **LIT** Identity · from Jesus | **Beloved.** Hears the Father's voice over him. Secure as a son, free from proving himself. Mark 1:9–11 · Rom 8:15 | **Called.** Lives from his God-given design and story, and sees God at work in his history. Ps 139 · Eph 2:10 |
| **LINKED** Intimacy · in Jesus | **Abiding.** Stays close to Jesus: Scripture, prayer, silence, dependence on the Spirit. John 15:4–5 · Ps 119:105 | **Known.** Lets his brothers fully know him. Honest, loyal, quick to confess and forgive. 1 John 1:7–9 · Eccl 4:9–12 |
| **LEADING** Influence · for Jesus | **Sent.** Commissioned by Jesus. Speaks his faith with courage, gentleness, and respect. Matt 28:16–20 · 1 Pet 3:15 | **Shepherding.** Leads his home, binds up the weak, serves his city, and forms the next man. Ezek 34:16 · 2 Tim 2:2 |

**How to use the marks:** They're for honest reflection, not grading. Every few months, have each man take the Fully Alive self-check (Part 3), which turns each mark into questions to ask yourself, and talk about it at the fire. Notice which marks your group feeds well and which it neglects. Most groups naturally grow Beloved, Abiding, and Known. Sent and Shepherding usually need deliberate attention.

# 4 Starting your fire

### WHO TO INVITE

- **4–10 men** (up to 12 can work). Fewer than four and a couple of absences stall it. Much past ten and the quiet men stop talking. When you outgrow it, that's a sign it's time to light a second fire.
- **A mix of ages and seasons.** Younger men need fathers in the faith; older men need sons to pour into (2 Timothy 2:2).
- **Men who want more than small talk.** Not the most spiritual men you know. The hungry ones.
- **Pray first.** Ask God for names before you ask men for a yes.

### WHEN AND WHERE

- **Weekly**, about 40 weeks a year, 90–120 minutes. Same night, same time. Rhythm builds trust.
- **Around a real fire** when you can: a backyard, a fire table on a patio. In bad weather, a garage or living room works; light a candle and keep the spirit of it.
- **Food and drinks help.** Something simple. Men talk better with something in their hands. Decide together whether your fire is BYOB: a craft beer, a good bottle of wine, or a fine whiskey shared responsibly can be part of a good night. Talk it through as a group, and be sensitive to any man who may feel left out or who is working on sobriety. Good coffee and cold soda are always on hand.

### LEAD TOGETHER

No one man carries the fire. Start with one leader, but share the work early so others grow as leaders.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Host** | Fire, chairs, food. Welcomes men as they arrive. |
| **Discussion leader** | Prepares the text and questions. Keeps time. Can rotate by series. |
| **Care lead** | Tracks prayer requests. Checks on the man who's gone quiet or missed two weeks. |
| **Trail planner** | Plans one or two outings a year. |

### WHAT TO TELL MEN WHEN YOU INVITE THEM

> *"A few of us are going to meet around my firepit on Tuesday nights. We'll catch up, read some Scripture and a few good books, and pray for each other. No performance and no pressure. I'd love for you to try it for six weeks."*

Six weeks is an easy yes. Week 6 is built for men to decide together whether to keep going.

# 5 Our fire covenant

A covenant names what we're promising each other. Introduce it on Week 1, give the men a week to think about it, and sign it together on Week 2. Revisit it every year. The signing copy is in Part 3.

| Our value | Our commitment |
|---|---|
| **God is the Fire** | We come to meet God, not just each other, and to listen for what he is doing in and through each other. |
| **Walk in the Light** | We tell the truth about our lives. What's said at the fire stays at the fire. |
| **Doers, Not Just Hearers** | We show up, come prepared, and practice what we talk about in our homes, work, and neighborhoods. |
| **Forged in Hard Things** | We stay with each other when life gets heavy, and we don't walk away when the conversation gets hard. |
| **Between fires** | We pray for one another during the week, and reach out when a brother is missing. |

## 6 The gathering rhythm

90–120 minutes

Every Firepit night follows the same six movements. The rhythm frees you from planning from scratch every week, and lets men know what to expect.

| Movement | Time | What happens |
|---|---|---|
| **Connect** | **20–30 min** | Food, the fire, catching up as men arrive. Casually check in: How was your week? How's your family? |
| **Celebrate** | **5–10 min** | One opening question. Where did you see God at work this week? What did you try from last week? |
| **Text** | **10–20 min** | Read the Bible together, out loud. Notice what it says before deciding what it means. |
| **Content & application** | **30–45 min** | Discuss the passage and tonight's reading. Land it on Tuesday: What will you do differently? |
| **Care** | **10–15 min** | Share needs. Pray for each other by name. |
| **Communicate** | **2–5 min** | What's next: next week's reading, upcoming trips, who's hosting. |

### LEADING A GOOD DISCUSSION: THE SHORT VERSION

**Before you gather.** Read the passage and the reading twice. Pray for each man by name. Pick three or four questions, not twelve.

**Read the Bible together.** Ask: What do you notice? What does this show us about God? About Jesus? About us? Let the text speak before anyone explains it.

**Connect it to life.** Scripture teaches, corrects, and trains us (2 Timothy 3:16–17). Ask what this passage is teaching us, where it corrects us, and how it trains us to live.

**Ask, then wait.** Silence is not failure. Count to ten before you rescue a question.

**Go first, and go honest.** Men will match the depth of the first answer they hear.

**Draw out the quiet.** "Dave, what are you thinking?" Rein in the talkative: "Let's hear from a couple of others."

**Don't fix.** When a man shares something hard, thank him. Listen. Pray. Advice can wait.

The full leader tool, *Leading a Great Bible Discussion*, is included in the Firepit Year 1 plan.

## 7 Your first six weeks

| Week | Night | Focus | Marks |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Gather Round: Manhood Today** | What were we taught a man is? What's hard right now? Introduce the covenant. | Beloved · Known |
| 2 | **Two Loves I: Two Cities** | Augustine and Matthew 6. Love of self or love of God: which city are we building? Sign the covenant. | Beloved · Known |
| 3 | **Two Loves II: Nature and Grace** | Thomas à Kempis and Galatians 5. How the two loves show up in a day. One moment from each man's story. | Beloved · Known |
| 4 | **Lord, Teach Us to Pray I** | What is prayer? "Our Father" and the first three petitions. | Abiding · Beloved |
| 5 | **Lord, Teach Us to Pray II** | Praying it as a way of life. Praying it together. | Abiding · Sent |
| 6 | **Keep the Fire Going** | Look back, take the self-check, choose what's next, plan a Trail outing. | All six |

## 8 Your first Trail

Something happens when men do hard things together that doesn't happen in a living room. Plan your first outing during the first few months, even a simple one. Shared effort builds trust faster than a dozen conversations.

| Easy start | What it looks like |
|---|---|
| **Day hike** | A three-to-five-hour hike within an hour of home. Stop at a viewpoint, read a psalm, and ask one question. |
| **Service day** | Serve side by side: a home repair for a widow, a neighborhood cleanup, a ministry partner's project. Debrief over lunch. |
| **Fire overnight** | Camp one night at a state park. Cook together, sit late by the fire, and share one more story each. |
| **Quiet morning** | Two or three hours of guided silence and Scripture at a retreat center or park. Gather at the end to share what you heard. |

**Ready for more?** Firepit **Trail Guides** are pocket-size booklets for two-to-four-day adventures and retreats, each with a leader kit: Mountaintops with Jesus (backpacking), Into the Wilderness (with Henri Nouwen), Fearfully & Wonderfully Made (Psalm 139, a trail edition and a silent-retreat edition), and Live Your Baptism (kayaking, fishing, or a water sport).

## 9 Where to go next

After six weeks your men will know whether they want to keep going. If they do, here's what's available:

| Resource | What's inside |
|---|---|
| **Firepit Year 1 Plan** | A full first year (about 40 weeks): the order, the books and articles, leader discussion guides for each, the Storyboard Nights for telling your stories, and the full Leading a Great Bible Discussion tool. |
| **Trail Guides & Leader Kits** | Five adventure and retreat guides, print-ready as saddle-stitch booklets, each with a leader kit for planning, safety, and debrief. |
| **Years 2–3 Resource Library** | A curated, rated list of books and studies mapped to the six Fully Alive marks, with discussion guides. |
| **Church license** | For churches launching several fires: everything above, licensed for your congregation, plus a launch conversation. |

**Let's talk about your fire.** Starting a group, or leading men's ministry at your church? Reach out at **firepitfellowship.com**. We'd love to hear what God is doing around your fire.

PART 2 · LAUNCH NIGHTS · WEEK 1

# Gather Round: Manhood Today

A first night around the fire · Leader guide

**Objective:** Every man meets the others, names honestly what he was taught a man is and what's hard right now, and hears God's first word about men: we weren't made to do this alone.

BELOVED KNOWN

**Leader note: the first night sets the depth.** Keep it warm and unhurried. Your goal isn't a great discussion; it's that every man leaves thinking, "I could be honest here." Go first on every question, briefly and truthfully. Don't push anyone. If a man passes, thank him and move on.

## Agenda

90–120 min

| | |
|---|---|
| 20–30 min | **Connect.** Food and the fire. Introductions: your name, your people (family, friends), your work, and one thing you love doing outside. |
| 10 min | **Celebrate.** Opening question: *"What's the best fire you've ever sat around? Who was there?"* |
| 10–15 min | **Text.** Read Genesis 2:15–18 aloud (below). |
| 30–40 min | **Content & application.** Manhood then and now (questions below). |
| 10–15 min | **Care.** Introduce the covenant. Pray for each other. |
| 5 min | **Communicate.** Next week: read Augustine's "two loves" (in this guide, Week 2) and Matthew 6:19–24. Bring the covenant back ready to sign. |

GENESIS 2:15–18 (ESV)

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

### NOTICE

- Before anything goes wrong, God gives the man work to do: to work and keep, to cultivate and protect.
- God gives him a word to live by, and a boundary.
- And God names the one thing in creation that is "not good": the man alone.

### ASK

- What strikes you about the first things God gives the man?
- Why do you think "alone" is the first thing God calls not good?
- Where do you feel most alone as a man right now?

## Manhood then and now

### ROUND 1 · WHAT WERE YOU TAUGHT?

1. When you were a boy, what did you think a man was supposed to be? Who taught you that, by words or by example?
2. Who's a man you've admired? What made him worth following?
3. What did you learn about manhood that you've had to unlearn?

### ROUND 2 · WHAT'S HARD RIGHT NOW?

4. What messages about being a man do you hear today: at work, online, in the culture, even in church? Which ones are true? Which ones aren't?
5. Where is it hardest to be a man right now: as a husband, a father, a son, a worker, a friend?
6. What do you wish you had: more time, a friend who'd tell you the truth, a clearer sense of what God wants from you?

### ROUND 3 · WHY WE'RE HERE

7. What would make this group worth showing up for every week?
8. What would make it hard for you to be honest here? What would help?

Write down what the men say on question 7. You'll come back to it on Week 6.

## INTRODUCING THE COVENANT

Read the covenant together (Part 3). Say something like: *"This is what we'd be promising each other. Take it home. Next week, if you're in, we'll sign it together."* Emphasize the first line: we come to meet God, not just each other, and to listen for what he's doing in and through each other.

**This week:** Read Augustine's "two loves" and Matthew 6:19–24. Notice one moment this week when you felt the need to prove yourself. Don't fix it. Just notice it.

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PART 2 · LAUNCH NIGHTS · WEEKS 2–3

# Two Loves

Two nights with Augustine and Thomas à Kempis on the battle inside every man · Leader guide

**Objective:** Every man names the two loves pulling at his heart, love of self and love of God, sees how they show up in ordinary life, and hears the good news that God gives a better love than the one we keep falling back on.

BELOVED · ABIDING · KNOWN · FORGED IN HARD THINGS

**Why these voices:** Every man is fighting a quiet war: for a place in the world, for respect, for control, and underneath all of it, for his own soul. Two of the church's great teachers named that war plainly. **Augustine** (354–430), a brilliant, restless young man who came to faith in his thirties, said all of human history is shaped by two loves. **Thomas à Kempis** (c. 1380–1471), a monk whose *Imitation of Christ* is one of the most-read books in Christian history, showed how those two loves play out in a single day.

**Why it launches a group:** These readings give men honest language for their own lives without asking anyone to perform. They are short, old, and free, and they still read our hearts.

| Week | Focus |
|---|---|
| Week 2 | **Two loves.** Augustine's two cities, and which one we're building. Sign the covenant. |
| Week 3 | **Nature and grace.** à Kempis on how the two loves show up in a day, and one moment from each man's story. |

**Before you gather:** Read both readings in this guide (about ten minutes total). Read Matthew 6:19–24 and Galatians 5:16–25. Ask God to show you which love is driving you this week.

**Agenda:** each night follows the Firepit gathering rhythm (Connect · Celebrate · Text · Content & Application · Care · Communicate), about 90–120 minutes. Both readings are public-domain translations, lightly modernized and printed in full or in part here, so every man can read them.

**Leader note: go first, and go honest.** These readings land close to home. Men will match the depth of the first answer they hear. If you answer "Which love drives you?" with a safe generality, everyone else will too. Name one real place where love of self is winning in your life right now. Keep it short so there's room for others, and let silence sit before you rescue it.

## Week 2 · Two Loves

Augustine · 90–120 min

| | |
|---|---|
| 20–30 min | **Connect.** Food, the fire, catch up. Last week's question: what were you taught a man is? |
| 5–10 min | **Celebrate.** Opening question: *"What's something you've wanted badly, and what did it cost to get it?"* |
| 10–15 min | **Text.** Read Matthew 6:19–24 aloud (below). Ask: What do treasure and masters have to do with the heart? |
| 35–45 min | **Content & application.** Read Augustine aloud, slowly, twice. Then the questions. |
| 10–15 min | **Care.** Sign the covenant together (Part 3). Pray for one another. |

MATTHEW 6:19–21, 24 (ESV)

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. … No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

### AUGUSTINE · THE CITY OF GOD, BOOK 14, CHAPTER 28

Two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly city by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly city by the love of God, even to the contempt of self.

The one glories in itself; the other glories in the Lord. The one seeks glory from people; for the other, the greatest glory is God, the witness of the conscience. The one lifts up its head in its own glory; the other says to its God, "You are my glory, and the lifter of my head."

In the one, the love of ruling rules its princes and the nations it conquers; in the other, leaders and followers serve one another in love, the followers by obeying, the leaders by caring for all. The one delights in its own strength, displayed in its powerful men; the other says to its God, "I love you, O Lord, my strength."

Public domain. Adapted and lightly modernized from the Marcus Dods translation (1871).

### WHAT AUGUSTINE IS SAYING

Augustine isn't describing two countries. He's describing two directions a heart can face. Every person, every family, every company, every nation is being built by one love or the other: love of self that pushes God to the edge, or love of God that puts self in its proper place. Both cities are under construction in every man. Earlier in life, Augustine wrote the line he's best known for: *"You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you"* (*Confessions* 1.1). The love of self never delivers the rest it promises.

## AT THE FIRE

1. Augustine says the earthly city "seeks glory from people." Where do you look for that kind of glory: respect at work, approval at home, being seen as capable? **BELOVED**
2. What did you learn growing up about what makes a man worth something? Who taught you that? **KNOWN**
3. Jesus says, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." If someone looked at your calendar and your bank statement, which love would they say you serve?
4. Augustine describes leaders in the heavenly city as "caring for all." What would change if you led your home or your work that way? **SHEPHERDING**
5. Where do you feel the restlessness Augustine talks about? **ABIDING**

**This week:** Notice your loves. Once a day, stop and ask: *"Right now, which city am I building?"* Don't fix anything yet. Just notice, and bring one example next week.

## Week 3 · Nature and Grace

Thomas à Kempis · 90–120 min

| | |
|---|---|
| **20–30 min** | **Connect.** Food, the fire, catch up. |
| **5–10 min** | **Celebrate.** What did you notice about your loves this week? |
| **10–15 min** | **Text.** Read Galatians 5:16–17, 22–25 aloud (below). Ask: Where do you feel that tug-of-war? |
| **25–35 min** | **Content & application.** Read the nature-and-grace pairs aloud, one man per line. Then the questions. |
| **25–30 min** | **One moment.** Each man shares one moment from his story (below). |
| **10 min** | **Care & communicate.** Pray for the man on your right. What's next: Lord, Teach Us to Pray. |

### GALATIANS 5:16–17, 22–25 (ESV)

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. … But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

### THOMAS À KEMPIS · THE IMITATION OF CHRIST, BOOK 3, CHAPTER 54: "OF THE DIVERSE MOTIONS OF NATURE AND OF GRACE"

Pay close attention to the movements of nature and of grace. They move in very opposite ways, yet so subtly that only a man who is spiritually awake can tell them apart. Everyone seeks what is good and claims good intentions in what he says and does, and so many are fooled by what only looks good.

| Nature… | Grace… |
|---|---|
| is crafty, draws others in, and always has itself as its goal. | walks simply, avoids every appearance of evil, and does everything purely for God. |
| hates to die to itself, to be held down, overcome, or placed under anyone. | practices self-denial, accepts being under authority, and doesn't insist on its own way. |
| works for its own advantage and asks what it can gain from others. | asks not what is useful to itself, but what will benefit many. |
| gladly receives honor and respect. | faithfully gives all honor and glory to God. |
| fears shame and being looked down on. | is glad to bear shame for the name of Jesus. |
| loves ease and comfort. | can't stay idle, and gladly takes on work. |
| wants things that are fine and impressive. | is content with simple, humble things. |
| rejoices in gain, is upset by loss, and bristles at a slight word. | looks to what lasts; isn't shaken by loss or stung by hard words, because its treasure is in heaven. |
| would rather take than give, and keeps a firm grip on what's its own. | is generous and open-handed: it is more blessed to give than to receive. |
| wants to hear the latest news, to be seen, and to be noticed. | doesn't chase what's new or showy, and keeps clear of vanity and display. |
| complains quickly about need and trouble. | bears hardship patiently. |
| turns everything back to itself, and fights and argues for itself. | brings everything back to God, the source of every good thing. |

Grace is a light from above and a special gift of God. The more nature is held down and overcome, the more grace is poured in, and day by day the inner man is made new in the image of God.

Public domain. Selected, adapted, and lightly modernized from the William Benham translation (1874). The full chapter is longer and well worth reading.

## AT THE FIRE

1. Read down the "Nature" column. Which line describes you best this week? Be specific. **KNOWN**
2. Which line of "Grace" do you most want to grow into? **ABIDING**
3. à Kempis says the two "move so subtly" that we're easily fooled by "what only looks good." Where has self-interest dressed up as something good in your life: at work, at church, at home?
4. Paul calls the good side "fruit." Fruit grows; it isn't manufactured. What does that tell you about how a man actually changes? **BELOVED**
5. When your nature wins, what does it look like, and how do you handle it? **FORGED**
6. No man fights this alone. What would it look like for this group to help each other "keep in step with the Spirit"?

### ONE MOMENT (25–30 MINUTES)

Each man takes about three minutes to share **one moment** from his life: a time when love of self ran the show and cost him something, or a time when grace met him in the middle of it. Not a whole life story. One scene: where you were, what happened, what it did to you.

After each man shares, the group responds with one sentence each, either *"What I heard was..."* or *"Thank you for..."* No fixing, no advice. The leader goes first.

This is a short version of the story nights later in the Firepit Year 1 plan. Keep time gently so every man gets his turn.

**Where this leads:** In the Firepit Year 1 plan, men go further into this battle with Frederick Buechner's sermon "The Two Battles," tell their stories in full on the Storyboard Nights, and read *The Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis's look at the war for a man's soul from the enemy's side. *firepitfellowship.com*

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FIREPIT FELLOWSHIP · GETTING STARTED · LAUNCH NIGHTS

# Lord, Teach Us to Pray

Two nights on the Lord's Prayer with the catechisms of the church · Leader guide

**Objective:** Every man can learn to pray the way Jesus taught, by understanding each line of the Lord's Prayer as the church has prayed it for centuries, and by practicing it as his own daily conversation with the Father.

ABIDING · BELOVED · KNOWN · SENT

**Why the Lord's Prayer:** The disciples watched Jesus pray, and then asked, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). He didn't hand them a technique. He gave them a prayer. Tertullian, in the early 200s, called it a summary of the whole gospel. For most of church history, new believers learned it by heart alongside the Creed and the Ten Commandments, the building blocks of a life of faith.

**Why the catechisms:** A catechism is a teaching tool: simple questions and answers that pass the faith from one generation to the next. Martin Luther wrote his *Small Catechism* (1529) for fathers to teach in their homes, and his *Large Catechism* for pastors and teachers. The Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* (1662) includes a catechism that has shaped prayer for centuries. We'll let these voices teach us, then bring each line home to the life we actually live.

| Night | Focus |
|---|---|
| Night 1 | **What is prayer?** "Our Father" and the first three petitions: God's name, God's kingdom, God's will. |
| Night 2 | **Praying it as a way of life.** The last four petitions: bread, forgiveness, temptation, deliverance; the closing praise; and praying it together. |

**Before you gather:** Read Matthew 6:5–15 and Luke 11:1–13 during the week. Pray the Lord's Prayer once a day, slowly. Notice which line catches in your throat.

**Agenda:** each night follows the Firepit gathering rhythm (Connect · Celebrate · Text · Content & Application · Care · Communicate), about 90–120 minutes. Catechism quotations are from Luther's *Small Catechism* (1921 public-domain translation, lightly modernized) and the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*.

**Leader note: "Our Father" isn't easy for every man.** For some men, "father" means absence, anger, or abuse. Name that gently on Night 1. Jesus is not asking us to picture our earthly fathers; he is inviting us to know the Father he knows, the one every good father faintly resembles. Let men be honest about the struggle. Don't rush past it, and follow up one-on-one if a man goes quiet.

## Night 1 · What Is Prayer?

"Our Father" + petitions 1–3 · 90–120 min

| | |
|---|---|
| 20–30 min | **Connect.** Food, the fire, catch up as men arrive. Brief prayer. |
| 10–15 min | **Celebrate.** Anything still stirring from the Two Loves nights? Then the opening question: *Who taught you to pray? What did prayer look like in your home growing up?* |
| 20–25 min | **Text.** Read Matthew 6:5–13 aloud. Use the four lenses (teaching, reproof, correction, training) lightly. |
| 30–35 min | **Content & application.** Walk through the address and the first three petitions (below). |
| 10–15 min | **Care & communicate.** Pray the Lord's Prayer together, slowly. Share needs. Next week. |

MATTHEW 6:5–8

"And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."

**NOTICE**

- Prayer isn't a performance for an audience, even a religious one.
- It isn't about many words or the right words.
- It's a son talking with a Father who already knows what he needs.

**ASK**

- Where have you prayed "to be seen," even just to impress yourself?
- If your Father already knows what you need, why pray at all?
- What makes prayer hard for you: time, doubt, distraction, not knowing what to say?

**LUTHER, LARGE CATECHISM**

### Why pray at all? Four reasons

1. **God commands it.** Prayer isn't extra credit for the especially spiritual. "Prayer is therefore as strictly and earnestly commanded as all other commandments." To pray is "to call upon God in every need. This He requires of us, and has not left it to our choice."
2. **God promises to hear.** We don't pray on our own worthiness but on his word: "Here I come, dear Father, and pray, not of my own purpose nor upon my own worthiness, but at Thy commandment and promise, which cannot fail or deceive me." And because the same command and promise belong to every believer, Luther tells the ordinary man to say, "My prayer is as precious, holy, and pleasing to God as that of St. Paul."
3. **God gives us the words.** He "arranges the words and form of prayer for us, and places them upon our lips." So "there is no nobler prayer to be found upon earth than the Lord's Prayer."
4. **Our need drives us.** "We all have enough that we lack, but the great want is that we do not feel nor see it." Name your needs plainly to God, not because he doesn't know them, but so you "make wide and open your cloak to receive much."

- **At the fire:** Which of these four reasons do you most need to hear right now? Why?

## Address "Our Father in heaven"

**LUTHER, SMALL CATECHISM · WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?**

With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that he is our true Father and that we are his true children, so that we may ask him boldly and with complete confidence, just as dear children ask their dear father.

**TODAY**

We start with relationship, not requests. "Our," not "my": no man prays alone; he prays with the whole family of God. "In heaven": this Father is near and also far above, able to do what we can't.

**AT THE FIRE**

- What would change if you really believed God wants you to come to him "as dear children ask their dear father"?
- What makes "Father" hard, or good, for you?

## 1 "Hallowed be your name"

**LUTHER, SMALL CATECHISM**

God's name is certainly holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may become holy among us also. *How does this happen?* When the Word of God is taught truly and purely, and we, as God's children, also live holy lives according to it.

**TODAY**

A man carries his family name into every room he walks into. So do we, as sons of God. Our words, our work, and the way we treat people either honor his name or drag it through the mud.

**AT THE FIRE**

- Where does God's name get honored, or dishonored, through your life: at work, at home, online?
- What would "hallowing his name" look like tomorrow?

## 2 "Your kingdom come"

**LUTHER, SMALL CATECHISM**

The kingdom of God certainly comes by itself, without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also. *How does this happen?* When our heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe his holy Word and live godly lives, here in time and there in eternity.

**TODAY**

Every man is building some kingdom: a career, a reputation, a comfortable life. This petition asks God to bring his reign into our hearts first, then into our homes, workplaces, and neighborhoods, the Field where we live, work, and play. It's the good news Jesus announced (Mark 1:15).

**AT THE FIRE**

- What little kingdom are you tempted to build instead?
- Where in your Field do you most long to see God's kingdom come?

## 3 "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"

**LUTHER, SMALL CATECHISM**

The good and gracious will of God is certainly done without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also. *How does this happen?* When God breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our own flesh, which would keep us from hallowing his name and from letting his kingdom come; and when he strengthens us and keeps us firm in his Word and in faith until we die. This is his good and gracious will.

**TODAY**

Jesus prayed this himself in Gethsemane: "Not my will, but yours" (Luke 22:42). It's the hardest line for a man who likes to be in control. But it's also a relief: we're not the ones holding the world together.

**AT THE FIRE**

- Where are you wrestling with God's will right now?
- What would it cost you to pray "your will be done" over that situation, and mean it?

**This week:** Pray the Lord's Prayer every morning. Stop on the first three petitions and put your own life into each one: *"Hallowed be your name… at work today. Your kingdom come… in my marriage. Your will be done… in the decision I'm facing."*

## Night 2 · Praying It as a Way of Life

petitions 4–7 + the conclusion · 90–120 min

| | |
|---|---|
| **20–30 min** | **Connect.** Food, the fire, catch up. |
| **10–15 min** | **Celebrate.** How did praying the first three petitions go this week? Which line stuck with you? |
| **15–20 min** | **Text.** Read Luke 11:1–13 aloud, the asking, seeking, knocking, and the Father who gives good gifts. |
| **35–45 min** | **Content & application.** The last four petitions and the conclusion (below), then the Anglican catechism's summary. |
| **15 min** | **Care: praying it together.** The practice at the end of this guide. |
| **2–5 min** | **Communicate.** What's next for the group (see the Getting Started guide). |

The first three petitions turn our eyes to God: his name, his kingdom, his will. The last four turn to our needs: for the body, for the past, for the future, and for the fight. Notice the order. Jesus teaches us to want God first, and then to ask boldly for everything else.

### 4 "Give us this day our daily bread"

**LUTHER, SMALL CATECHISM**

God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayer, even to the wicked, but we pray in this petition that he would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving. *What is meant by daily bread?* Everything that belongs to the support and needs of the body: food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, work, money, possessions, a godly spouse, godly children, faithful co-workers, good and faithful government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, a good name, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

**LARGE CATECHISM**

Luther says this short petition has "a very wide scope": "open wide and extend your thoughts not only to the oven or the flour-bin but to the distant field and the entire land." It includes peace at home and good government too. He even suggests every prince put "a loaf of bread instead of a lion" on his coat of arms.

**TODAY**

Luther's list is earthy and wide: your job, your marriage, your health, your neighbors, even good government. Nothing in a man's ordinary life is too small to pray about. "Daily" means one day at a time, like manna in the wilderness: trust, not hoarding.

**AT THE FIRE**

- What "daily bread" have you been taking for granted?
- Where are you anxious about provision right now? What would it look like to ask for just today's?

### 5 "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors"

**LUTHER, SMALL CATECHISM**

We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look at our sins or deny our prayers because of them. We are not worthy of anything we ask for, and we have not deserved it; but we ask that he would give us everything by grace, for we sin every day and deserve nothing but punishment. So we too will sincerely forgive, and gladly do good to, those who sin against us.

**LARGE CATECHISM**

This prayer humbles every man: before God, "all must lower their plumes, and be glad that they can attain forgiveness."

**TODAY**

This is the only petition Jesus comments on right away (Matthew 6:14–15). Forgiveness received and forgiveness given are tied together. A man who won't forgive is carrying a pack full of rocks up the mountain. Walking in the light (1 John 1:7) means owning our sins, and letting go of others'.

**AT THE FIRE**

- What makes it hard to believe you're forgiven?
- Is there someone you need to forgive, or ask forgiveness from? (No need to name him.)

## 6 "And lead us not into temptation"

**LUTHER, SMALL CATECHISM**

God tempts no one. We pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our own flesh may not deceive us or lead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice. And although we are attacked by these things, we pray that we may finally overcome them and win the victory.

**LARGE CATECHISM**

We can't pray temptation away; we pray not to be overcome by it. "To feel temptation is therefore a far different thing from consenting or yielding to it."

**TODAY**

Every man has a trailhead to trouble: a screen, a bottle, a grudge, the need to win. This petition is honest that we're in a fight, and humble enough to ask for help before the battle, not just after it.

**AT THE FIRE**

- Where are you most vulnerable to temptation right now? What time of day? What setting?
- Who knows about it? Who could pray this petition for you by name?

## 7 "But deliver us from evil"

**LUTHER, SMALL CATECHISM**

We pray in this petition, as a summary of everything, that our Father in heaven would rescue us from every kind of evil, of body and soul, property and reputation; and finally, when our last hour comes, give us a blessed end and graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to himself in heaven.

**TODAY**

Evil is real: in the world, in systems, in spiritual darkness, and in our own hearts. This petition asks the Father to rescue us all the way home. It makes the prayer brave: men who pray it can face hard things without fear having the last word.

**AT THE FIRE**

- Where do you need rescue right now, for yourself or someone you love?
- How does knowing the end of the story ("a blessed end") change how you face today?

## Conclusion "For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

**LUTHER, SMALL CATECHISM · WHAT DOES "AMEN" MEAN?**

That I can be certain these petitions are pleasing to our Father in heaven and are heard by him; for he himself has commanded us to pray this way and has promised to hear us. Amen, amen: yes, yes, it shall be so.

The prayer ends where it began: with God. The kingdom, the power, and the glory are his, not ours, and that's good news. "Amen" isn't a sign-off. It's a man planting his feet: *yes, it shall be so.*

## A SECOND VOICE: THE ANGLICAN CATECHISM (1662)

**QUESTION: WHAT DO YOU DESIRE OF GOD IN THIS PRAYER?**

*Answer*: I desire my Lord God our heavenly Father, who is the giver of all goodness, to send his grace unto me, and to all people; that we may worship him, serve him, and obey him, as we ought to do. And I pray unto God, that he will send us all things that be needful both for our souls and bodies; and that he will be merciful unto us, and forgive us our sins; and that it will please him to save and defend us in all dangers ghostly and bodily; and that he will keep us from all sin and wickedness, and from our ghostly enemy, and from everlasting death. And this I trust he will do of his mercy and goodness, through our Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore I say, Amen, So be it.

- Put the whole prayer in your own words in one sentence. What do you desire of God?
- Luther and the Book of Common Prayer both end with "Amen, so be it." Where do you need that kind of confidence?

## PRACTICE AT THE FIRE: PRAYING IT TOGETHER (15 MINUTES)

1. The leader prays one phrase aloud, slowly: *"Our Father in heaven..."*
2. Pause. Any man may add a short sentence of his own: thanks, a confession, a request, a name.
3. When the silence settles, the leader moves to the next phrase. Continue through "Amen."
4. Close by praying the whole prayer together, at normal speed, as one voice.

Don't force anyone to pray aloud. Silence is prayer too. The leader should go first, honestly, to set the tone.

**This week, and beyond:** Pray the Lord's Prayer three times a day (morning, midday, evening), as the earliest Christians did (Didache 8). Use one line each time as a door into your own words. Carry the card below in your wallet, your Bible, or your truck.

**TAKE-HOME · CUT OUT AND KEEP**

## Praying the Lord's Prayer

| | |
|---|---|
| **Our Father in heaven** | I come as a dearly loved son. |
| **Hallowed be your name** | May my words and life honor you today. |
| **Your kingdom come** | Reign in my heart, my home, my work, my street. |
| **Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven** | Not my will, but yours, especially in... |
| **Give us this day our daily bread** | I trust you for today's needs... |
| **And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors** | Forgive me for... I release... |
| **And lead us not into temptation** | Guard me today from... |
| **But deliver us from evil** | Rescue me, and those I love, from... |
| **For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.** | Yes, yes, it shall be so. |

Pray it morning, midday, and evening. Slow down on one line each time and add your own words.

**Where this leads:** In the Firepit Year 1 plan, men go deeper with Martin Luther's *A Simple Way to Pray*, written for his barber, which teaches how to pray through the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Creed. *Learn more at firepitfellowship.com.*

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PART 2 · LAUNCH NIGHTS · WEEK 6

# Keep the Fire Going

Look back, look ahead, and choose the next stretch of trail together · Leader guide

**Objective:** Every man names what God has done in and through this group over six weeks, takes an honest look at where he's growing, and the group decides together whether and how to keep the fire going.

ALL SIX MARKS

**Leader note: let the men decide.** Tonight isn't a sales pitch for another year. Some men will be all in; one or two may step out, and that's okay. Thank them and leave the door open. The men who choose to stay will own it more than if you decided for them.

## Agenda

90–120 min

| | |
|---|---|
| 20–30 min | **Connect.** Food and the fire. Maybe something a little special tonight. |
| 10–15 min | **Celebrate.** Look back over six weeks (Round 1 below). |
| 10 min | **Text.** Read Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 aloud (below). |
| 30–40 min | **Content & application.** The Fully Alive self-check (Part 3), then look ahead together. |
| 15 min | **Care.** Pray over each man, one at a time. |
| 5–10 min | **Communicate.** Decide the next study, the next date, and a first Trail outing. |

### ECCLESIASTES 4:9–12 (ESV)

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

### NOTICE

- Friendship pays off in work, in falling, in the cold, and in a fight.
- "Keep warm": the writer reaches for the image of a fire.
- The third strand: many have heard Christ in it, the one who binds brothers together.

### ASK

- When has another man lifted you up when you fell?
- Where has this group already "kept you warm"?
- Where do you need a brother to stand with you right now?

### ROUND 1 · LOOK BACK

1. What's one moment from these six weeks you'll remember?
2. Where did you hear God speaking, in the reading, in prayer, or through another man here?
3. On Week 1 we said what would make this group worth showing up for *(leader: read what the men said)*. How are we doing?

### ROUND 2 · TAKE THE SELF-CHECK

Give each man ten quiet minutes with the Fully Alive self-check in Part 3. Then go around:

4. Which mark feels strongest in your life right now? Which feels weakest?
5. Which one mark would you most like to grow in this next year?
6. As a group, which marks do we feed well? Which do we neglect?

### ROUND 3 · LOOK AHEAD

7. Do we want to keep going? What rhythm works: weekly, what night, what time, where?
8. What do we want to read or study next? *(Leader: come with two or three options that feed the marks the group named in question 6.)*
9. When and where is our first Trail outing?
10. Is there a man we should invite to pull up a chair?

### CLOSE: PRAY OVER EACH MAN

One at a time, a man sits while the others stand and lay a hand on his shoulder. Two or three men pray briefly for him, including the mark he wants to grow in. Keep it short so every man is prayed for.

**Take it home:** Keep your self-check somewhere you'll see it. Pray for the man on your right by name every day this week.

**Where this leads:** The **Firepit Year 1 plan** picks up right where these six weeks leave off, with a full year of books, discussion guides, and story nights mapped to the six Fully Alive marks. *firepitfellowship.com*

PART 3 · TAKE-HOME

# The Fully Alive Self-Check

## An honest look at where God is forming you

This isn't a test, and there are no right scores. Read each line and circle how true it is of you right now: **1** = rarely true, **5** = consistently true. Then answer the questions at the bottom and bring them to the fire.

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **LIT · Identity · from Jesus** | | | | | | |
| **Beloved** | I hear the Father's voice over me. I'm secure as a son and don't need to prove myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | When I fail, I run toward God, not away from him. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **Called** | I know how God has designed me, and I'm living from that design. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | I can see God at work in my story, even in the hard chapters. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **LINKED · Intimacy · in Jesus** | | | | | | |
| **Abiding** | I spend regular time with God in Scripture, prayer, and quiet. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | I depend on the Spirit, not just my own strength, for the day ahead. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **Known** | At least one brother knows what's really going on in my life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | I'm quick to confess when I'm wrong, and to forgive when I've been wronged. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **LEADING · Influence · for Jesus** | | | | | | |
| **Sent** | I know who in my field doesn't yet know Jesus, and I pray for them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | I speak about my faith with courage, gentleness, and respect. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **Shepherding** | I'm leading my home with love, and serving where I live and work. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| | I'm investing in at least one man who is coming up behind me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

### MY STRONGEST MARK RIGHT NOW

### THE MARK I MOST WANT TO GROW IN

### ONE STEP I'LL TAKE IN THE NEXT MONTH

### A BROTHER WHO'LL ASK ME ABOUT IT

Take it again every few months. Growth is slow, and it's easier to see looking back.

PART 3 · TAKE-HOME

# Our Fire Covenant

What we promise each other around this fire

### GOD IS THE FIRE

We come to meet God, not just each other, and to listen for what he is doing in and through each other.

### WALK IN THE LIGHT

We tell the truth about our lives. What's said at the fire stays at the fire.

### DOERS, NOT JUST HEARERS

We show up, come prepared, and practice what we talk about in our homes, work, and neighborhoods.

### FORGED IN HARD THINGS

We stay with each other when life gets heavy, and we don't walk away when the conversation gets hard.

### BETWEEN FIRES

We pray for one another during the week, and reach out when a brother is missing.

"A threefold cord is not quickly broken." Ecclesiastes 4:12

| | |
|---|---|
| Name _____ | Name _____ |
| Name _____ | Name _____ |
| Name _____ | Name _____ |
| Name _____ | Name _____ |
| Name _____ | Name _____ |

Signed around the fire on _____ · Renewed each year

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