

# Improving Your Prayer Life

Improving Our Influence, part 2

Pastor Dave Nichols, Grace Point Church, January 20, 2019

## When Should I pray?

### - Before I...

(Nehemiah 1:3-4)

## Why Should I pray?

### - Prayer shows I...

(Proverbs 21:1, Matthew 5:3)

### - Prayer...

(1 Peter 5:7, Isaiah 40:31)

### - Prayer releases...

(Jeremiah 33:3)

## How Should I pray?

### 1. Base my request \_\_\_\_\_

(Nehemiah 1:5-6a)

### 2. Confess the sin \_\_\_\_\_

(Nehemiah 1:6b-7)

### 3. Claim the \_\_\_\_\_

(Nehemiah 1:8-9)

### 4. Be specific \_\_\_\_\_

(Nehemiah 1:11)

## This weeks discussion guide:

### Welcome to “Week2” of our small group session!

We are glad that you have taken this journey with us digging into God’s Word with others. We pray this is a time of growth, encouragement, and fun as you deepen friendships and make new friends along the way! This session of small groups will wrap up the week of March 24th.

### Background:

During this time, the king of Persia was Artaxerxes, who reigned from 464 to 424 B.C. in Susa. He was the son of Xerxes who took Esther to be his queen (Esther 2:17). Artaxerxes received a letter from Rehum and Shimshai telling him that the Jews were rebuilding that rebellious and wicked city of Jerusalem (Ezra 4:8, 4:12). They were reportedly restoring the walls and repairing the foundations. Rehum and Shimshai warned Artaxerxes that he would no longer receive his tribute from Jerusalem if it were rebuilt and suggested that a search be made for a decree from his predecessors regarding the city (4:13-15). They succeeded in having the work stopped by the king’s order until a search could be made for a decree.

Nehemiah was in the palace serving the king as his cupbearer when the news of the stoppage came. Nehemiah’s kinsman Hanani came to report that upon receiving the king’s letter, Rehum and Shimshai and associates went immediately to the Jews in Jerusalem and compelled them by force to stop (Ezra 4:23). What Hanani told at court was that these men had torn down the wall and the foundation that were being rebuilt and burned the gates to the city. They had totally ruined the work that had so faithfully and carefully been done. This news broke Nehemiah’s heart. He felt their discouragement and disappointment. That day Nehemiah’s heart took on the burden of rebuilding Jerusalem. He believed the burden was a call from the Lord to take leadership in the completion of the work. (Taken from *Wisdom of the Word*.)

## I. When Should I Pray?

Read **Nehemiah 1:1-4**

- What did Nehemiah do when he heard the news of Jerusalem's ruins?

From Nehemiah's example, we learn that after experiencing initial grief and concern, God challenges us to pray "before we do anything else."

- When bad news is presented, what are some typical responses that often come before prayer?
- Think about a time you personally heard some bad news. What was the situation and how did you respond?
- What can help us stop and pray more often when a concern or crisis occurs in our lives or in the lives of those we care about?

Read the following verses about grief and loss: **1 Samuel 1:9-11, 30:3-8, John 11:17, 33-34.**

- How did these people deal with their loss and what can we learn from them?

## II. Why Should I Pray?

Along with showing my dependence on God (Matthew 5:3), and lightening my load (1 Peter 5:7), prayer releases God's power in my life!

- How have you seen God's power at work as a result of specific prayer?

One way God works is in people's hearts. "*The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.*" *Proverbs 21:1 (NIV)*

- When have you seen God changing someone's heart as a result of specific prayer?

## III. How Should I Pray?

1. Base my requests on God's character.

**Group Challenge:** Can we think of at least 10 character qualities of God?

- What character qualities of God have meant a lot to you in the past/present?

Read **Nehemiah 1:5-11** and **Daniel 9:1-19**

- Which character qualities of God are listed in these two passages?
- What is the purpose of including descriptions of God's character in our prayers?
- How does including descriptions of God's character improve your prayer life?

2. Confess the sin in my heart.

- From the previous two passages, for whom is confession made?
- Why should we confess to sin that God is already aware of? Read **Psalms 32:1-5** for insight.
- How can we not fall into condemnation as we admit to the sin in our lives? (**1 John 1:9**)

3. Claim the promises of God.

- What did Nehemiah and Daniel ask for in these prayers, and who was going to benefit when God answered those prayers?
- What example does this set for us in our prayer lives? See **Colossians 3:1-4** and **1 Timothy 2:1-2** for insight.

4. Be specific in my requests.

- What does Nehemiah ask for in Nehemiah 1:11? Why is this appropriate to ask God for?
- What is one thing you will begin doing differently in your prayer life as a result of studying Nehemiah 1?