

BEGIN WITH PRAYER
“Strategy For Living”
Proverbs 15:29 & 20:7

“The Lord is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayers of the righteous.”
Proverbs 15:29 (NIV)

“The righteous man walks in his integrity; His children are blessed after him.”
Proverbs 20:7 (NKJV)

Life Principle: The effectiveness of my public life is determined by my private life.

Three questions:

1. When should I pray?
2. Why should I pray?
3. How should I pray?

I. WHEN SHOULD I PRAY? — FIRST

“... I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.” Nehemiah 1:4 (NIV)

Life Principle: The righteous make prayer their first priority; others make prayer a last resort.

II. WHY SHOULD I PRAY?

1. It shows I’m depending on God.

That’s the only way we bear righteous fruit.

“... apart from Me you can do nothing.” John 15:5 (NIV)

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”
Matthew 5:3 (NIV)

2. It lightens my load.

“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.” Isaiah 40:31 (KJV)

3. It releases God’s power.

“Call to me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you know not.” Jeremiah 33:3 (NKJV)

III. HOW SHOULD I PRAY? — LESSONS FROM NEHEMIAH

1. Base my request on God’s character

“... ‘O Lord, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant of love with those who love Him and obey His commands,”
Nehemiah 1:5 (NIV)

2. Confess my sins

“Let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father’s house, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.” Nehemiah 1:6-7 (NIV)

Life Principle: The righteous accept the blame, but others pass the buck.

3. Claim the promises of God

“Remember the instructions you gave to your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place that I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.’” Nehemiah 1:8-9 (NIV)

Life Principle: Prayer transforms God’s promises into performance.

4. Be specific in what I ask for

“... Please grant me success now as I go and ask the king for a great favor. Put it into his heart to be kind to me.” Nehemiah 1:11 (NLT)

Life Principle: If I can’t ask God to bless what I’m doing, then I’d better start doing something else.

“Expect great things from God; do great things for God.”—William Carey