

The Prayer of Jabez (Really) 1 Chronicles 4:9-10

The Prayer of Jabez: The Text Itself

- **1 Chronicles 4:9-10 (ESV)** ⁹Jabez was more honorable than his brothers; and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, “Because I bore him in pain.”
¹⁰Jabez called upon the God of Israel, saying, “Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from harm so that it might not bring me pain!” And God granted what he asked.
- The Prayer of Jabez: The Book, The Journal, , The Book for Kids, The Prayer Maze?, One of Many Posters, One of Many Plaques, An Attractive Glass Plate, A Key Chain, A Canvas Bag, A Coffee Mug, A Travel Mug, A Nice Button, A Cool Tattoo Design, A Nifty T-Shirt, Two Lousy T-Shirts

The Prayer of Jabez Introduction

- We may rightly question the motives of a whole industry built around a prayer.
- We may also question the prayer’s fad-like qualities.
- Nonetheless, our problem is more likely to be that we pray too little than that we pray too much.

How Not to Pray

- Jesus reminds us not to “heap up empty phrases” or use “vain repetitions” as is commonly done in other religions.
- Nonetheless, he tells his followers to “pray like this.”
- Conclusion: The prayers in the Bible are not magic words, nor mantras, but models which can guide us as we pray.

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The Prayer of Jabez: Background

- The Time of the Judges, when “everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”
- Jabez, on the other hand, “was more honorable than his brothers.”
- His name comes from a root meaning “sorrow, pain.”
- His mother bore him “in pain,” pointing to something more than the normal pain of childbirth.
- Perhaps there was something sorrowful about her circumstances.
- Perhaps his father died or abandoned her before the child was born.

- In any event, the poor kid's life starts off badly.
- Being honorable, he turns to God with a determination to overcome his bad start.
 - *Jabez's unpleasant name might have been seen as a curse. But his prayer changed his destiny.*
 - *Nupanga Weanzana, Faculté de Théologie Evangélique de Bangui, Central African Republic*

Three Steps to Applying This Prayer

1. Consider everything that has somehow held you back from a promising, fulfilling, rewarding or productive life.
2. Believe that God may have something better and more worthwhile in store for you – a truly good plan.
3. Determine to do whatever it takes to accomplish his will, knowing that you can only do so with his help.

Back to the Prayer

- The prayers in the Bible are not magic words, nor mantras, but models which can guide us as we pray.
- We'll look at the prayer in four separate parts.

The Prayer: Part One

Oh that you would bless me

- Numbers 6:24: "The Lord bless you and keep you ..."
- Psalm 29:11: "May the Lord bless his people with peace!"
- Psalm 67:1: "May God be gracious to us and bless us ..."
- It is biblical for us to ask for God's blessing.
- Chuck Smith recognized early in his ministry that most Christians prayed three times a day – at meals. So he asked his church to add a line to that prayer, saying, "*And please bless Calvary Chapel.*" And God blessed.

Part Two

and enlarge my border

- The times of the Judges were characterized by Israel failing to take possession of the land that God had promised them.
- Jabez wanted his share of the possession to increase.
- Jabez understood God's will for his people and was committed to praying for it and then carrying it out.
- While the nation was failing to take possession, Jabez was willing to take more than his share.
- Increase, within the boundaries of God's will – growth without greed – is a proper and a godly desire.

Part Three

and that your hand might be with me

- This reminds us that Jabez wanted to stay close to God.
- It is also a way of saying that he is praying for God's help.
- Psalm 109:27: "Let them know that this is your hand; you, O Lord, have done it."
- Psalm 119:173: "Let your hand be ready to help me."
- We need God's help if we hope to accomplish God's will.
 - *The Almighty Presence of our risen Lord is sufficient for any obedient service which we will dare to attempt in His strength and name.*
 - *A.B. Simpson, founder, Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA)*

Part Four

and that you would keep me from harm [or "evil"] so that it might not bring me pain!

- Harry Reeder explains:
 - *The Hebrew word translated "harm" can refer to sin itself, or to the consequences of sin. The word is often rendered "evil," so Jabez may be asking God for protection from the evil in himself or from the evil of others.*
- and that you would keep me from harm [or "evil"] so that it might not bring me pain!
- This is much like Jesus's "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."
- Jabez expected trouble in carrying out God's will.
- He also hoped to overcome the pain that his name implies.
- When doing God's will, we need to anticipate trouble and continually pray against it.

Application for the Church

- Neither the church as a whole, nor we as a small part of it, have yet obtained, or even understood, the full range of our inheritance.
- Consider what Paul tells the Colossians in Col. 1:9-14.
- We have not yet understood all the implications of Christ's death and resurrection.
- We have not yet grasped the full scope of God's promises.
- We have not yet achieved the entirety of holiness or faith.
- We have not yet experienced the full extent of God's power.
- We have not yet been completely transformed.
- We have not yet witnessed the full potential of our missionary efforts.
- Some things we can pray for:
 - Deep and lasting spiritual renewal in our lives
 - Revitalization within the church
 - Many people to be saved
 - The funds to improve our facility and expand our ministry
 - Leaders who will be a perfect fit for each area of effort

- Inroads into our local community
- Increase of our missionary endeavors

- *The whole land is before us; every avenue of influence at home, every missionary field abroad, is open for the Church's zeal and holy enterprise.*
 - *B. Simpson, founder, Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA)*

Application for Us Personally

- Consider everything that has somehow held you back from a promising, fulfilling, rewarding or productive life.
- Believe that God may have something better and more worthwhile in store for you – a truly good plan.
- Determine to do whatever it takes to accomplish his will, knowing that you can only do so with his help.
- Start a Prayer Journal – and pray regularly with others.

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