

# Devotion: The Prayer of Jabez

I often struggle when someone asks me to pray about something and then says, “Just pray about it and let me know your thoughts.” It’s not so much me remembering to pray about the request, but it’s *waiting* on God for the answer that is my challenge. So was the case when Tina asked me to do this devotional. I immediately said sure and then quickly decided without praying that I would do the devotion on the book, “The Prayer of Jabez.”

While getting ready for work one morning, I clearly heard God say that rather than focusing on the book, I should consider a devotional on fear. The next morning, God spoke again and said that he wanted me to consider a devotional on trusting our whole life in Jesus. Great, now I was really confused! Even as I considered these two other topics, my mind kept coming back to The Prayer of Jabez and what it has meant to me the past ten years. I think my initial confusion really was God’s way of forcing me to WAIT and REFLECT on what this prayer has meant to me. It has changed my life like you wouldn’t believe. So here it goes:

The book focuses on a prophet named Jabez who is a great example of how God uses people who don’t seem that important to accomplish extraordinary things. Did you know that the story of Jabez is hidden in one of the least-read books of the Bible, 1 Chronicles. Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother called him Jabez, which means, “Because I bore him in pain.” Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, “**Oh, that you would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that your hand would be with me, and that you would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!**” So God granted him what he requested. (1 Chronicles 4:9-10).

The book focuses on the prayer’s four key elements:

The first part of the prayer is asking **God to bless you with many blessings**. This can seem selfish at first, especially in the self-centered world that we live in, but it really isn’t. Just like our kids ask us for something, as God’s children he wants us to ask him for blessings. “We’re not asking for more of what we could get for ourselves, we’re crying out for the wonderful, unlimited goodness that only God has the power to know or give to us.” “Jabez left it totally up to God to decide what the blessings would be and where, when, and how Jabez would receive them.” We are not talking about asking God for a new Cadillac here. Instead, it’s more of a radical trust in our father and his good intentions for our lives. The catch is that we have to actually ask God for HIS blessings. “Ask,” promised Jesus, “and it will be given to you” (Mathew 7:7). “You do not have because you do not ask,” (James 4:2). Ever since I started praying this, God has blessed me with so much!

The next part of the prayer is asking **God to enlarge your territory**. This means to ask God to “enlarge your life so you can make a greater impact for him.” Jabez wasn’t asking for more real estate, but instead, “He wanted more influence, more responsibility, and more opportunity to make a mark for God of Israel.” Your territory might be your business or your home. What great places these are where we

can touch more lives. This part of the prayer has been so huge for me. My job requires me to be in multiple Lowe's and Home Depot stores each day. Since I started praying this prayer, God has brought random store customers to me almost on a daily basis. I can almost sense when a customer is headed my way. I can spot them coming, and it has become a joke between my wife and me for years. Earlier this week, I was working early in a store. It was still dark, the lighting in Home Depot stores is controlled by the home office and it hadn't been turned on yet, a female customer walked up to me and started telling me about her husband who is dying from cancer. [What's amazing is that in The prayer of Jabez, it talks about a lady named Darlene who prayed this prayer. One day, she got a knock on her door from an old lady who said through tears, "My husband is dying, and I have nobody to talk to. Can you help me?"] This led me into a longer conversation with the customer about what is currently happening with the Coronavirus. I don't have enough time to tell you everything that we talked about, but it was a good conversation, and I hope that it made her feel better in the midst of her husband's cancer battle. I had another experience at a Lowe's store (God doesn't just favor Home Depot) in Stockbridge a couple of years ago. Again, I could sense that this random lady was about to start talking to me. I was amazed about how fast two hours went by while we discussed God and the future of our country. I wish I could remember all of these "encounters" with strangers that I have had since I started praying this prayer. I remember having another conversation about God with a total stranger in a Lowe's store in Florida. I want to challenge you next time you're around a lot of people (no, not during social distancing) to ask God to enlarge your borders and to send somebody who needs you. Don't be surprised when this actually happens and God brings opportunities and people into your path. It is such an amazing feeling! God is looking for more people who want to use their gifts to enlarge their territory.

The third part of the prayer is, **"Oh that your hand would be with me."** I believe this is asking God to be with us because we can't do anything on our own without God beside us. "Father please do this in me because I can't do it alone! It's too big for me! And so you step out in faith to do and say things that could only come from his hand. Afterwards, your spirit is shouting, God did that, nobody else! God carried me, gave me the words, gave me the power-and its wonderful!" "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves," wrote Paul, "to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant" (2 Corinthians 3:5-6)

The last part of the prayer is, **"Oh, that you keep me from evil, that I may cause no pain."** Man, do I need this part of the prayer! "Somehow we don't think to ask God simply to keep us away from temptation and keep the devil at bay in our lives." "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." (Matthew 6:13). When was the last time you asked God to keep you away from temptation? In the same way that God wants us to ask for more blessing, and more territory, and more power, he longs to hear us plead for safekeeping from evil.

My prayer is that you will start incorporating this in your daily prayers and watch how God blesses you! Just as the book outlines, "Our father longs to give you so much more than you may have ever thought to ask for." As I've illustrated, it really is life changing! You can get the book, *The Prayer of Jabez (Breaking through to the blessed life)* by Bruce Wilkinson, on Amazon. Maybe this time of social distancing is a great time to take a look at this quick read.

Thank you guys!