

Why We Need to Revisit the Prayer of Jabez

Do you remember hearing about the prayer of Jabez?

When Bruce Wilkinson's book, *The Prayer of Jabez*, was published almost 20 years ago, it took the Christian community by storm. Quickly propelled to the best-seller lists, it encouraged Christians to daily pray the prayer of an obscure man found in 1 Chronicles 4:9-10. In fact, that's the only place in the Bible where this man—or his prayer—is mentioned:

“Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, “Because I bore *him* in hardship.” Then Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, “Oh, that You would indeed bless me and enlarge my territory, that Your hand might be with me, and that You would keep *me* from evil, that *it* may not bring me hardship!” So God granted what he asked.”

I had been praying my personalized version of this prayer daily since I first learned of it. But I've recently revised the way I pray this for two reasons:

- I realized I was asking for things God was already doing
- I was ignoring the importance of my own obedience for each request

So these days my prayer is revised to reflect those two concerns. Here's the original post with the updates in *italics*.

Heavenly Father, I ask for today:

Your Blessing as You Define It

Some Christians today limit focus their definition of blessing on material provisions.

Of course, God is not against wealth. But nowhere in the Bible is material wealth His priority for His children. If anything, material comforts often get in the way of His process to conform us to the image of Christ. God is more concerned with wealth that will last for eternity. Spiritual growth. The fruit of the Spirit. And of course, the most valuable provision He has already given me is the gift of salvation—a restored relationship with Him.

So when it comes to asking for blessing, I'd rather leave the definition to Him.

Now I'm asking for the ability to recognize those blessings as God defines them. To take the blinders off and to stop being influenced by what I want rather than what I need. And to call them blessings even if they don't initially appear that way.

Your Use as You Decide It

Jabez prayed for victory to expand his territory. I don't know what territory God has for me. Is it to be a greater influence in my family, church or social circles? Is it to teach His Word? To publish books?

While I have hopes and dreams regarding how God might use me in the future, I never want those desires to prevent me from recognizing how God wants to use me today. Whatever He decides is fine by me!

Now I'm specifically asking for a spirit of contentment with what God has decided. To be content if God doesn't use me in accordance with my own agenda. For contentment if He has chosen a new direction for me.

Your Leading as You Provide It

Over the years, I've watched many Christian leaders shipwreck themselves on the rocks of their own grand plans for larger ministries and media empires. God's plan for them might have been to toil in obscurity, but that wasn't their plan for

themselves.

I can strategize and I can plan. But without the Lord's leading, my ideas may not be His plans for me. I need to trust Him to direct me onto a straight path (Prov. 3:6). The Bible often speaks of our "walk" with God. Walking with someone requires that we move in the same direction and at the same pace. I don't ever want to run ahead of God or lag behind Him!

Now I'm specifically praying for immediate obedience to His leading. Because I know delayed obedience is ultimately disobedience!

And That You Would Keep Me From Both Giving and Receiving Pain

Jabez prayed for protection from harm and pain. Some scholars believe that verse can also be translated to mean that he was asking to be kept from giving pain to others.

I know from experience the pain caused by other people. Betrayal. Insensitivity. Negligence. Temptation. But I also know I've caused pain, too. How can I pray for protection from pain if I'm not willing to pray that God would keep me from causing it?

Now I'm asking for increased sensitivity to how I might be causing pain for others. It's a cop-out for me to excuse my behavior as "this is who I am." I need to ask the Holy Spirit to take who I am and make me more like Christ. But for that to happen, I need to surrender to the Holy Spirit, not just day by day, but minute by minute!

So, my personalized prayer of Jabez is:

Heavenly Father, I ask for today:

- *To recognize Your blessing as You define it,*
- *To be content with Your use as You decide it,*
- *To obey Your leading as You provide it,*

- *And to be sensitive to how I might be giving pain, harm and temptation to others even as I ask for God's protection from those things for myself.*

The change in the way I pray has had a significant impact on the way I approach the events of each day.

How about you? What are your thoughts about the prayer of Jabez? {eoa}

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This article originally appeared at .

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