

The Value of Prayer  
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1 Chronicles 4:9-10

Opening Illustration: The other day both of our grandsons were at our house. When I came into their room to see them little Tyson was standing in his crib holding to the rail and excitedly watching his big brother Knox playing. As Susan approached Tyson I was struck by his response. It was something we've all seen hundreds of times. When she approached those little arms instinctively reached up for his grandmother to lift him UP. In his nine months on this earth Tyson has learned that reaching up is how he gets to go higher, farther, and faster. Reaching up allows his needs to be met (in this case dry pants!) Reaching up allows him to learn new things. Reaching up results in hugs and kisses. No one has to say, "Okay, Tyson lift up those arms!" He KNOWS about REACHING UP.

How do we reach UP to our Heavenly Father? His arms are always open we just need to reach up in prayer. Tonight our church is observing a Solemn Assembly and our leaders have asked every group to focus this week on the value of prayer in the life of our congregation and in the life of each Christ-follower.

As we look at a couple of short but familiar verses, here is where I want us to focus regarding the VALUE of prayer:

PRAY MORE (*"I didn't pack for a guilt trip!"* This is not just about frequency.)  
to RECEIVE MORE (Has Allen gone all "prosperity gospel"? Nope!)  
of WHAT HE WANTS US TO HAVE (Praying His BEST in His WILL for us!)

- Before we look at our text, let's think about our prayer life.
- **What are some ways we could improve the quality of our prayer life?**
- **What are some NON-MATERIAL things you would like to receive from God through your prayer life? "Lord, please give me more \_\_\_\_\_."**

**1 Chronicles 4:9-10 (ESV) — 9** Jabez was more honorable than his brothers; and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bore him in pain." **10** Jabez 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.

- That's all we really know about Jabez from scripture.
- Before Bruce Wilkinson wrote the book "The Prayer of Jabez" in 2000, these verses were pretty obscure for most of us. Let's examine the text.
- Jabez was more honorable. What does that tell us about his intentions?

- Jabez had a strange name. If your parents named you “painful delivery” how might that “color” how you live your life? He had “baggage”.
- Bruce Wilkinson: Search your Bible and this is all we know about Jabez:
  - *Things started badly for a person no one had ever heard of*
  - *He prayed an unusual, on-sentence prayer*
  - *Things ended extraordinarily well.*

Wilkinson continues, “Clearly, the outcome can be traced to his prayer. Something about Jabez’s simple, direct request to God changed his life and left a permanent mark on the history books of Israel.”<sup>i</sup>

- Let’s unpack this simple prayer in verse ten.
- Jabez prayed to “the God of Israel.” He was clear about his SOURCE.
- The Life Application Study Bible: “*Jabez acknowledged God as the true center of his life. When we pray for God’s blessing, we should also pray that he will take his rightful position as Lord over our work, our family time, and our recreation. Obeying him in daily responsibilities is heroic living.*”<sup>ii</sup>
- Tyson knows he HAS no alternative than to REACH UP.
- Question: Do we pray like God is our only source of power and blessing?
- Jabez boldly requested: “Bless me!” Does that sound a little selfish? Perhaps we’ve been taught it’s more respectable to pray for others more than ourselves. Clearly, Jabez wasn’t afraid to pray for God to bless HIM.
- Wilkinson: “*God really does have unclaimed blessings waiting for you...*”<sup>iii</sup>
- His next sentence proves this isn’t greediness; it’s NEEDINESS!
- Wilkinson: “*To bless in the biblical sense means to ask for or to impart supernatural favor.*”<sup>iv</sup>
- Next Jabez prayed, “*expand my territory.*” Put all that together: “*...bless me...indeed...so I can do MORE for YOU!*” He wasn’t asking for prosperity, he was praying for FAVOR in order to DO MORE for God.
- Wilkinson: “*Notice a radical aspect of Jabez’s request for blessing: He left it entirely up to God to decide what the blessings would be and where, when, and how Jabez would receive them.*”<sup>v</sup>
- Question: Are we willing to boldly ask God for more opportunity to have more impact and leave the specifics entirely up to Him?
- Next Jabez prayed to God, “*that your hand might be with me.*”
- **Zechariah 4:6 (ESV) — 6** Then he said to me, “This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.
- Jabez was asking for God’s POWER so he could DO MORE for God.
- He not only asked for POWER, Jabez asked for PROTECTION: “*...keep me from harm so that it might not bring me pain!*”
- Some translations (NKJV, CSB) render it: “*...keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!*”<sup>vi</sup> That means PROTECTION from temptation to sin.
- Both ideas make sense. “*Lord, please keep me from both harm and evil.*”
- How do we know God approved of this simple prayer? “*God granted what he asked.*” Five words as simple as the prayer itself! God said YES!
- I think Jabez’s prayer lines up with what we said at the beginning:

- PRAY MORE (More simply, specifically, and “selfishly” than most)
- to RECEIVE MORE (Favor, power, and protection to DO MORE for God)
- of WHAT HE WANTS US TO HAVE (More dependence and more impact)
- How can we pray MORE? Here are some ideas:
  - Pray more habitually – Illustration: My idea for an phone app
  - Pray more intentionally – Not haphazard or spotty but a PRIORITY!
  - Pray more simply – Jabez’s prayer was simple not complicated.
  - Pray more biblically – Praying scripture keeps requests in His will.
  - Pray more fervently – “forceful, passionate, heartfelt”<sup>vii</sup>
- To receive MORE – What do we need to receive from God?
  - More “territory” i.e. more opportunities for IMPACT for HIM
  - More supernatural FAVOR to maximize those opportunities
  - More POWER because we have none on our own
  - More PROTECTION from harm as we carry out His will
  - More PROTECTION from evil and the temptation to sin
  - More KNOWLEDGE of Christ so I can be more like Him (Phil.3:10)
- Pray MORE to receive MORE of what God wants us to have – According to God’s word, all those things appear to be what God wants us to have.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- From today’s lesson: *“In this text, Jabez wanted to be and do more for God, and according to v.10, God granted him his request. Corporately, as followers of Jesus Christ, we should desire to “make a difference.” Individually, we should desire to be missed when this life is over. We should desire to help the body of Christ realize it is not over-challenged but under-challenged. Our attitude should not be a desire to “just get by.” The Prayer of Jabez...reveals the desire of our Heavenly Father to give us much more than we may have ever thought or desired to ask for.”<sup>viii</sup>*
- Remember little Tyson instinctively lifting his little arms to BE lifted UP?
- He knows being lifted up means favor and provision he needs, power he doesn’t have, protection from harm, not to mention HUGS and KISSES!
- Little Tyson’s uplifted arms made me think of the words of that old hymn:
 

*I’m pressing on the upward way  
New heights I’m gaining every day  
Still praying as I onward bound  
“Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.”*

*Lord, lift me up and let me stand  
By faith on heaven’s table land  
A higher plane than I have found  
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.<sup>ix</sup>*
- God’s arms are always open to receive our prayers so He can bless us.
- This week let’s pray simply, boldly, and intentionally like Jabez.
- Let’s pray for expanded opportunity to have impact for God and His favor, power, and protection as we do His will!

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- <sup>i</sup> The Prayer of Jabez by Bruce Wilkinson, 2000 – Multnomah Publishers
- <sup>ii</sup> Tyndale. Life Application Study Bible NKJV (LASB: Full Size) (Kindle Locations 142899-142900). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.
- <sup>iii</sup> The Prayer of Jabez by Bruce Wilkinson, 2000 – Multnomah Publishers
- <sup>iv</sup> ibid
- <sup>v</sup> ibid
- <sup>vi</sup> [\*The New King James Version\*](#). (1982). (1 Ch 4:10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.
- <sup>vii</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/fervent-prayer.html>
- <sup>viii</sup> The Value of Prayer – Lesson Plan from FBCW 2022
- <sup>ix</sup> Songwriters: Johnson Oatman Jr / Johnson Oatman Jr. / Charles H. Gabriel Sr. Higher Ground lyrics © Integrity's Hosanna! Music, Word Music, Llc, Exhibition Music Inc.