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The

PRAYER

of

JABEZ



Breaking Through to the Blessed Life

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MULTNOMAH
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*To all who—like those Christians in the
book of Acts—look at who they are now and who
they’ll never be, and what they can do now
and what they’ll never be able to do. . .
and still ask God for the world.*



*Without the friendship, commitment and
skill of my writing partner and editor David Kopp,
the early help of my previous editor Larry Libby,
and the encouragement of my publishing friend
John Van Diest, the message of this book would not
have found its way to paper. I am so thankful
that the Lord brought us together.*

PREFACE

Dear Reader,

I want to teach you how to pray a daring prayer that God always answers. It is brief—only one sentence with four parts—and tucked away in the Bible, but I believe it contains the key to a life of extraordinary favor with God.

This petition has radically changed what I expect from God and what I experience every day by His power. In fact, thousands of believers who are applying its truths are seeing miracles happen on a regular basis.

Will you join me for a personal exploration of Jabez?

I hope you will!

Bruce H. Wilkinson

LITTLE PRAYER, GIANT PRIZE

Jabez called on the God of Israel.

The little book you're holding is about what happens when ordinary Christians decide to reach for an extraordinary life—which, as it turns out, is exactly the kind God promises.

My own story starts in a kitchen with yellow counters and Texas-sized raindrops pelting the window. It was my senior year of seminary in Dallas. Darlene, my wife, and I were finding ourselves spending more and more time thinking and praying about what would come next. Where should I throw my energy, passion, and training? What did God want for us as a couple? I stood in our kitchen thinking again about a challenge I'd heard from the seminary chaplain, Dr. Richard Seume. "Want a bigger vision for your life?" he had asked earlier that week. "Sign up to be a gimper for God."

A gimper, as Seume explained it, was someone who always does a little more than what's required or

expected. In the furniture business, for example, gimping is putting the finishing touches on the upholstery, patiently applying the ornamental extras that are a mark of quality and value.

Dr. Seume took as his text the briefest of Bible biographies: “Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers” (1 Chronicles 4:9). Jabez wanted to be more and do more for God, and—as we discover by the end of verse 10—God granted him his request.



*What sentence
has
revolutionized
my life the
most?
The cry of a
gimper named
Jabez.*

End of verse. End of Bible story.
*Lord, I think I want to be a gimper for
You, I prayed as I looked out the win-
dow at the blustery spring rain. But I
was puzzled. What exactly did Jabez do
to rise above the rest? Why did God
answer his prayer?* I wondered. For that
matter, why did God even include

Jabez’s miniprofile in the Bible?

Maybe it was the raindrops running down the windowpanes. Suddenly my thoughts ran past verse 9.

I picked up my Bible and read verse 10—the prayer of Jabez. Something in his prayer would explain

the mystery. It had to. Pulling a chair up to the yellow counter, I bent over my Bible, and reading the prayer over and over, I searched with all my heart for the future God had for someone as ordinary as I.

The next morning, I prayed Jabez's prayer word for word.

And the next.

And the next.

Thirty years later, I haven't stopped.

If you were to ask me what sentence—other than my prayer for salvation—has revolutionized my life and ministry the most, I would tell you that it was the cry of a gimper named Jabez, who is still remembered not for what he did, but for what he prayed—and for what happened next.

In the pages of this little book, I want to introduce you to the amazing truths in Jabez's prayer for blessing and prepare you to expect God's astounding answers to it *as a regular part of your life experience*.

How do I know that it will significantly impact you? Because of my experience and the testimony of hundreds of others around the world with whom I've shared these principles. Because, even more importantly, the

Jabez prayer distills God's powerful will for your future. Finally, because it reveals that your Father longs to give you so much more than you may have ever thought to ask for.

Just ask the man who had no future.

THE PRODIGY OF THE GENEALOGY

Someone once said there is really very little difference between people—but that little difference makes a great



*Something
about this man
caused
the historian
to pause, clear
his throat, and
switch tactics.*

deal of difference. Jabez doesn't stand astride the Old Testament like a Moses or a David or light up the book of Acts like those early Christians who turned the world upside down. But one thing is sure: The little difference in his life made all the difference.

You could think of him as the Prodigy of the Genealogy, or maybe the Bible's Little Big Man. You'll find him hiding in the least-read section of one of the least-read books of the Bible.

The first nine chapters of 1 Chronicles are taken up with the official family tree of the Hebrew tribes, beginning with Adam and proceeding through thou-

sands of years to Israel's return from captivity. Talk about boring! The long lists of unfamiliar and difficult names—more than five hundred of them—are likely to make even the bravest Bible student turn back.

Take chapter 4. *The descendants of Judah: Perez, Hezron, and Carmi, and Hur, and Shobal...* And that's just the beginning.

Ahumai

Ishma

Idbash

Hazelelponi

Anub...

I'd forgive you if you suddenly considered putting this little book aside and reaching for your TV remote. But stay with me. Because forty-four names into the chapter, a story suddenly breaks through:

Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bore him in pain." And 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)

In the next verse, the roll call for the tribe of Judah picks up as if nothing has happened—*Chelub, Shuah, Mehir...*

Something about this man Jabez had caused the his-



*Just under
the surface of
each request
lies a giant
paradigm
breaker.*

torian to pause in mid-drone, clear his throat, and switch tactics. “Ah, wait a minute!” he seems to interject. “You just gotta know something about this guy named Jabez. He stands head and shoulders above the rest!”

What was the secret to the enduring reputation of Jabez? You can search from front to back in your Bible, as I have, and you won’t find any more information than we have in these two brief verses:

- Things started badly for a person no one had ever heard of.
- He prayed an unusual, one-sentence prayer.

- Things ended extraordinarily well.

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:

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.

At first glance, the four requests may strike you as sincere, sensible, even noble, but not terribly remarkable. Yet just under the surface of each lies a giant paradigm breaker that runs exactly opposite to the way you and I usually think. In the pages to come, I want to show you just how dramatically each of Jabez's requests can release something miraculous in your life.

LIVING BEYOND THE LIMITS

When was the last time God worked through you in such a way that you knew beyond doubt that God had

done it? In fact, when was the last time you saw miracles happen on a regular basis in *your* life? If you're like most believers I've met, you wouldn't know how to ask for that kind of experience, or even if you should.

What I have to share with you has been opening up lives to God's mighty working for many years. Recently, I was in Dallas to teach on the Jabez blessing to an audi-



When was the last time God worked through you in such a way that you knew beyond doubt God had done it?

ence of 9,000. Later over lunch, a man said to me, "Bruce, I heard you preach the message of Jabez fifteen years ago, and I haven't stopped praying it. The change has been so overwhelming I have just never stopped."

Across the table, another friend agreed. He said he'd been praying Jabez's little prayer for ten years with similar results. The man next to him, a heart surgeon from Indianapolis, said he had been praying it for five.

I told them, "Friends, I've been praying Jabez for more than *half my life!*"

Because you're reading this book, I believe you share my desire to reach for a life that will be "more hon-

orable” for God. Not that you wish others to reach for less, but for you, nothing but God’s fullest blessing will do. When you stand before Him to give your accounting, your deepest longing is to hear, “Well done!”

God really does have unclaimed blessings waiting for you, my friend. I know it sounds impossible—even embarrassingly suspicious in our self-serving day. Yet that very exchange—your want for God’s plenty—has been His loving will for your life from eternity past. And with a handful of core commitments on your part, you can proceed from this day forward with the confidence and expectation that your heavenly Father will bring it to pass for you.

Think of it this way: Instead of standing near the river’s edge, asking for a cup of water to get you through each day, you’ll do something unthinkable—you will take the little prayer with the giant prize and *jump into the river!* At that moment, you will begin to let the loving currents of God’s grace and power carry you along. God’s great plan for you will surround you and sweep you forward into the profoundly important and satisfying life He has waiting.

If that is what you want, keep reading.