

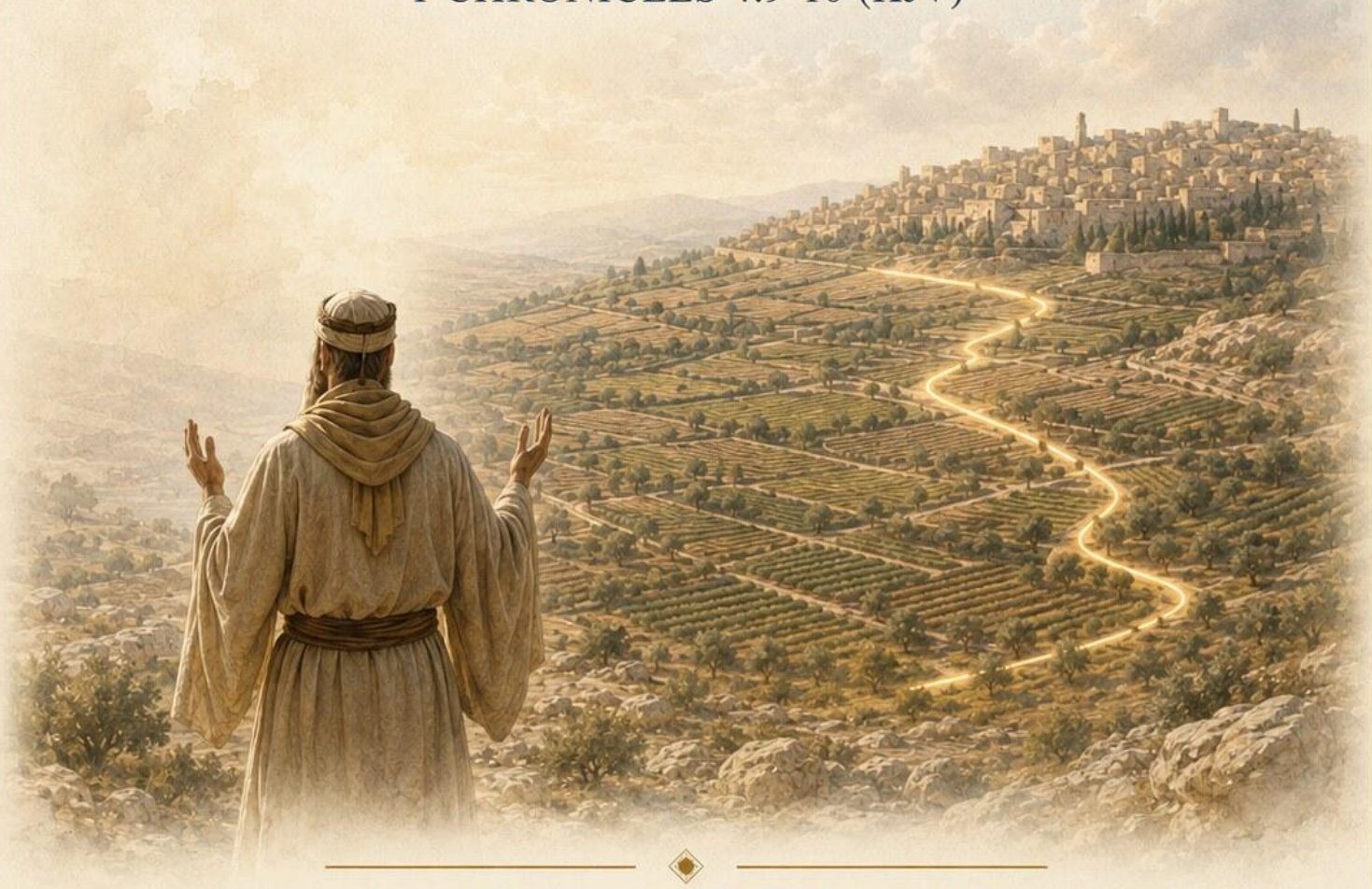
REASON TOGETHER CHURCH  
REASON TOGETHER STUDY

# THE PRAYER OF JABEZ

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*IS THERE A PRAYER  
GOD ALWAYS ANSWERS?*

1 CHRONICLES 4:9-10 (KJV)



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Aloha.

Welcome to Reason Together Church.

Whether this is your first time with us or you have been part of this family for a long time, we are grateful that God has brought you here today.

This is a place where sincere questions are welcome.

You do not have to pretend that you already understand everything.

You do not have to be afraid of asking a difficult question.

Our invitation is simple.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let us Reason Together the Word of God.

We also want to recognize any honored guests who may be with us today.

Thank you for sharing this time with our church family.

After the service, please join us in the Reason Together Cafe for a cup of coffee and conversation.

The coffee is free, and so are the refills on the conversation.

Our Keiki Kids Center is also available for families who need it.

If this is your first visit, we have a very simple guest card.

We ask only for your first name and an email address so we can thank you for coming and let you know what is happening here.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for gathering us around Your Word.

Teach us to pray with confidence without treating prayer like a formula.

Give us courage to ask, humility to submit and faith to trust Your answer.

Be especially near to those who have carried an unanswered prayer into this room.

Some have prayed for healing.

Some have prayed for restoration in a family.

Some have prayed for provision, direction or relief from a burden that has lasted much longer than they expected.

Guard them from believing that Your silence means Your absence or that a delayed answer means they have been forgotten.

Help us see Jabez honestly, without adding to what You revealed and without ignoring what You placed in the text.

Most of all, lead us through this prayer to Jesus Christ, in whom every true and lasting blessing is found.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

Before we open our primary passage, let me briefly mention giving.

If you are visiting with us, please understand that you are never expected to give.

If you are a member of another church, we encourage you to remain faithful in giving to your home church.

We do not pass a plate at Reason Together Church.

There is a giving box available for those who feel led to give, but giving is an act of worship, not an admission price and never a payment for the favor of God.

God loves a cheerful giver.

Now, we have just spoken about giving, but today's passage begins with a man asking God to give something to him.

That raises an interesting question.

Is it honorable to ask God for more, or does asking for more reveal a selfish heart?

The answer depends partly upon what we are asking for, why we want it and what place God has in the request.

Our primary text is First Chronicles chapter four, verses nine and ten.

Listen carefully to the words of the King James Bible.

"And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow.

And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested."

Here in Hawaii, the phrase "enlarge my coast" can create a very particular picture.

When we hear the word coast, we think about shoreline.

We think about where the land meets the ocean.

We might picture Waikiki Beach, the coast near Makapuu or the western shoreline of Oahu.

If someone in Hawaii asked God to enlarge his coast, it could sound as though he were asking for additional beachfront property.

That would certainly be a substantial prayer request.

But that is not what the word coast means in this passage.

In the older English of the King James Bible, coast could refer to a border, a boundary, a region or a territory.

Jabez was asking God to enlarge the boundaries of the territory entrusted to him.

That clarification answers one question, but it creates several more.

Why did Jabez ask for additional territory?

Was this a faithful request or a selfish request?

Why did he believe he could ask God for such a thing?

Why did God grant it?

Can you and I repeat these words and expect God to do the same thing for us?

Is there a prayer that God always answers?

Those questions became especially prominent after a small book titled The Prayer of Jabez was published in the year 2000.

The book became extraordinarily popular.

Millions of Christians who might otherwise have moved quickly through the genealogies of First Chronicles suddenly knew the name Jabez.

Many people were encouraged to pray his words every day.

They were taught to think about enlarged territory as greater opportunity, increased influence, more ministry and a larger impact for God.

There are useful truths in that approach.

It is not wrong to ask God for blessing.

It is not wrong to ask Him for an opportunity to help more people.

It is not wrong to ask for His power and protection.

But a useful application is not necessarily the same thing as the original meaning.

And a prayer God answered once is not automatically a promise that He must answer every person in exactly the same way.

The popularity of an interpretation does not necessarily make it wrong.

But popularity also does not relieve us of the responsibility to open the Bible and examine the passage for ourselves.

Before we decide what this prayer means for us, we need to understand what it meant when Jabez prayed it.

First Chronicles begins with genealogies.

It begins with Adam and traces families, generations and tribes through the history of God's people.

Many readers reach those pages and wonder how quickly they can get through them.

Name follows name.

Father follows son.

Family follows family.

But those genealogies are not meaningless filler placed between the interesting parts of the Bible.

They preserved identity.

They established family and tribal connections.

They mattered in questions of inheritance.

They showed a people returning from exile that they still belonged within the history and promises of God.

They also carried the story forward toward the family through whom the Messiah would come.

First Chronicles chapter four traces descendants associated with Judah.

Then, in the middle of name after name, the text unexpectedly pauses.

It does not merely tell us that Jabez lived.

It tells us what kind of man he was, something about the sorrow surrounding his birth, what he prayed and what God did.

In a chapter filled with names, Scripture pauses for a prayer.

Jabez is not remembered here because the Bible records a throne he occupied.

He is not remembered because of a battle he won.

He is not remembered because of a monument he constructed.

He is remembered as a man who called upon God.

That is worth considering by itself.

If Scripture summarized your life or mine in two verses, what would be remembered?

Would the defining feature be something we accumulated, something we accomplished or the One upon whom we depended?

There is another lesson in how little the passage tells us.

The Bible tells us that Jabez had brethren.

It tells us he was more honorable than they were.

It tells us his mother associated his name with sorrow.

It tells us he called upon the God of Israel, made several requests and received an answer.

But the Bible does not tell us the identity of his father.

It does not tell us why his father is not mentioned.

It does not tell us that his father abandoned the family.

It does not tell us that Jabez was unwanted.

It does not tell us that his mother resented him.

It does not tell us that he was poor, disabled, rejected or mocked by other children.

It does not tell us the precise reason his mother experienced sorrow.

Many sermons create an entire childhood for Jabez because the imagined details make an emotional story.

Some of those things might have happened.

But might have happened is not the same as the Bible says.

We should never make the Bible more interesting by pretending that our imagination is part of the text.

There is enough in the two verses God gave us.

We do not need to improve upon His revelation.

What we can say is that the name Jabez participates in Hebrew wordplay involving sorrow, pain or difficult labor.

His mother said, "Because I bare him with sorrow."

His name preserved the memory of sorrow surrounding his birth.

But we should not turn the name into a magical curse.

The passage does not teach that his mother released a supernatural force over his future by choosing that name.

The name remembered what she had experienced.

It did not possess sovereignty over what he would become.

His name remembered sorrow, but his God determined his future.

That does not mean every painful circumstance disappears when someone prays.

It does mean a painful beginning does not place anyone beyond the grace, presence or purpose of God.

Some people have carried names that were never written on a birth certificate.

Someone called them a failure.

Someone treated them as unwanted.

A past addiction became the label by which others remembered them.

A divorce, an illness, a financial collapse or a terrible decision became the first thing people associated with their life.

Sometimes the label came from another person.

Sometimes it came from the voice within.

The past may explain part of your journey, but it does not possess divine authority over your destination.

God may change the circumstance.

He may change you within the circumstance.

He may provide grace sufficient to endure what He does not remove.

But sorrow does not place you beyond His reach.

Jabez's beginning was associated with sorrow, but Scripture does not introduce him as a victim.

It introduces him as honorable.

Verse nine says, "And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren."

The Bible does not give us a complete explanation of that statement.

The placement of his prayer certainly associates his honor with his dependence upon God.

But we should be careful not to claim that Scripture said more than it did.

It does not say he became honorable because he repeated this prayer.

It does not list a series of accomplishments that earned the description.

It simply tells us he was more honorable than his brethren and then allows us to hear him call upon God.

There is something important in the order.

The text calls him honorable before it tells us that his territory was enlarged.

His possessions did not create his honor.

His success was not the measurement of his character.

The size of his territory was not the proof of his faithfulness.

Scripture mentions the size of his character before it mentions the size of his territory.

Our world often reverses that order.

We see a larger business and assume the owner must be wise.

We see a larger audience and assume the speaker must be right.

We see a larger church and assume every method must carry God's approval.

We see wealth and use the word blessed as though the two words were interchangeable.

But enlargement is not the same thing as honor.

A small ministry may be deeply faithful.

A large ministry may be deeply compromised.

A person with very little may walk closely with God.

A person with very much may live far from Him.

Visible success does not automatically prove divine approval.

Jabez's honor did not rest in the dimensions of his property.

It appeared in what he did with his desire for more.

He brought that desire to God.

Verse ten says, "And Jabez called on the God of Israel."

That description is not unnecessary.

Jabez did not call upon an undefined higher power.

He did not speak his preferred future into existence.

He did not ask the universe to rearrange itself around his ambition.

He called upon the God of Israel.

This was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

This was the God who had revealed His character, kept His covenant, delivered His people and assigned their inheritance.

This was the God who possessed authority over every boundary Jabez wanted enlarged.

The most important words in the Prayer of Jabez may not be what Jabez requested.

They may be the identity of the God to whom he prayed.

The Prayer of Jabez is not powerful because Jabez arranged the right words.

It is powerful because Jabez called upon the right God.

Prayer is not a technique for persuading a reluctant deity.

Prayer is not a code that unlocks a machine.

Prayer is not a spiritual purchase in which enough repetition obligates God to deliver the requested result.

Prayer is a dependent approach to the God whose wisdom is perfect, whose authority is complete and whose goodness never needs to be improved.

Jabez then made four requests.

The first was, "Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed."

Some Christians feel uncomfortable praying those words.

They are willing to ask God to bless someone else, but asking God to bless me sounds selfish.

Yet Scripture repeatedly teaches us to bring personal needs to God.

Solomon asked for wisdom.

David asked for mercy and protection.

The disciples asked Jesus to increase their faith.

Jesus taught us to ask for daily bread.

It is not inherently selfish to ask God for wisdom, provision, strength, healing, opportunity or help.

The moral question is not merely whether we ask for blessing.

The question is what we mean by blessing, why we want it and whether we desire the gift more than the Giver.

The Hebrew wording behind "bless me indeed" strongly emphasizes the request.

Jabez was not offering a timid or casual suggestion.

He desired God's blessing and asked boldly.

But notice that he did not attempt to become the final authority on what a true blessing must be.

Charles Spurgeon made a valuable distinction when he preached from this phrase in 1871.

Some things are blessings only in appearance.

They satisfy a desire for a moment but eventually produce grief.

Money can look like an unquestionable blessing until it feeds greed, destroys contentment or divides a family.

Recognition can look like a blessing until it weakens humility and makes applause feel necessary.

An opportunity can look like a blessing until it consumes every hour and leaves no room for God or family.

Freedom can look like a blessing until it becomes an opportunity for temptation.

Even success in ministry can look like a blessing while quietly teaching a pastor to rely upon ability, reputation or numbers instead of God.

A blessing indeed is not simply what I strongly desire.

It is what God knows will truly be good.

There is a significant difference between asking God to bless us and asking Him to approve what we have already decided must be a blessing.

Sometimes we present God with a completed plan, a fixed outcome and a preferred timetable.

Then we use the word prayer for our request that He sign the bottom.

Jabez was bold, but he was still asking.

He recognized that the blessing had to come from God.

His second request identified the particular blessing he desired.

"And enlarge my coast."

As we have seen, the original request concerned an actual border or territory.

Land had special meaning within Israel.

It was connected with God's promises to Abraham, tribal inheritance, family provision and the future of coming generations.

We should not erase that meaning and replace it immediately with ministry, business or personal influence.

When people say enlarged territory means more ministry, they are offering a possible Christian application.

They are not translating the Hebrew word.

That distinction matters because Christians have not been promised an Israelite land inheritance in return for repeating Jabez's words.

God may enlarge someone's business.

He may provide a larger home.

He may expand a ministry or increase someone's public influence.

But First Chronicles 4:10 does not guarantee any of those outcomes to every believer.

There is, however, a beautiful lesson in how Jabez pursued what he desired.

The surrounding chapters contain other accounts involving land and territory.

Groups move, fight and acquire land.

Jabez desired enlargement, but this passage records no scheme, no manipulation and no victim.

He asked God.

He did not confuse desire with entitlement.

He did not assume that wanting something gave him the right to take it by any means available.

Faith does not merely ask whether something is desirable.

Faith asks whether God is willing to give it and then refuses to obtain it dishonorably.

It is possible to desire a promotion without undermining a coworker.

It is possible to desire church growth without manipulating people.

It is possible to desire a larger ministry without compromising the message.

It is possible to desire financial provision without abandoning integrity.

It is possible to ask boldly while waiting honorably.

If something must be gained through deception, cruelty, compromise or disobedience, we should not place God's name upon the acquisition and call it a blessing.

Jabez asked rather than took.

That is part of what makes his prayer honorable.

Can a Christian ask God for enlarged usefulness today?

Certainly.

We can ask for more opportunities to serve.

We can ask for a greater capacity to give.

We can ask for a deeper understanding of Scripture.

We can ask for greater influence for the gospel.

We can ask God to enlarge our compassion, patience and ability to carry another person's burden.

The most important enlargement may occur within us rather than around us.

But even those requests must remain in God's hands.

We should never ask God to enlarge what we are unwilling to surrender to Him.

Jabez's third request shows that he did not want enlargement alone.

He prayed, "And that thine hand might be with me."

The hand of God in Scripture can represent His presence, power, guidance, providential favor, correction and protection.

This language becomes especially prominent in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Ezra chapter seven says the king granted Ezra's request "according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him."

Nehemiah chapter two says the king granted Nehemiah's requests "according to the good hand of my God upon me."

The hand of God was not an impersonal force.

It described the active presence and providence of God within the responsibilities He had given them.

Jabez did not merely ask for a larger territory.

He asked God to accompany him into it.

Never ask God for something larger without also asking for a greater dependence upon Him.

Greater responsibility requires greater wisdom.

Greater visibility requires greater humility.

Greater resources require greater stewardship.

Greater ministry requires greater reliance upon God.

Greater influence creates greater consequences when someone falls.

An enlarged opportunity without God's hand can become an enlarged disaster.

Sometimes we want God to open the door, but we do not think about how much we will need Him after we walk through it.

We pray for the new position but not for the wisdom to carry its responsibilities.

We pray for increased income but not for protection from greed.

We pray for a larger audience but not for humility when people begin to listen.

We pray for a growing ministry but not for the strength to care for the additional people God may send.

Jabez did not ask merely for what might be found in God's hand.

He asked that God's hand remain with him.

That leads directly to the fourth request.

"And that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me."

The Hebrew word can involve evil, harm, trouble or calamity.

The final phrase most naturally asks that evil not bring Jabez additional sorrow.

Some translations convey the possible sense that he did not want to cause pain.

The Hebrew construction contains a genuine difficulty, so we should not pretend there is no question.

But both thoughts produce a fitting pastoral prayer when carefully distinguished from the translation itself.

Lord, protect me from the evil that would bring sorrow into my life.

And do not allow my enlargement to make me a source of sorrow to others.

This fourth request may function as a safeguard around the previous three.

Bless me, but keep blessing from becoming an idol.

Enlarge me, but keep enlargement from producing pride.

Place Your hand upon me, but keep me from presumption.

Give me more, but do not allow more to carry me away from You.

Jabez did not merely ask God to give him more.

He asked God to keep more from destroying him.

That concern agrees directly with the prayer Jesus taught His disciples.

Matthew chapter six, verse thirteen says, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

There is nothing selfish about recognizing our vulnerability and asking God for protection.  
 The person who receives greater opportunity without recognizing greater temptation is already in danger.  
 The person who thinks success has placed him beyond failure is closer to failure than he realizes.  
 The person who asks for God's hand understands that human strength is not enough.  
 Then the passage ends with the statement that has produced both hope and confusion.  
 "And God granted him that which he requested."  
 That sentence is wonderful.  
 Jabez prayed.  
 God heard.  
 God chose to act.  
 The requested blessing was granted.  
 We should not become so concerned about prosperity teaching that we become afraid to celebrate answered prayer.  
 God really does hear His people.  
 God really does intervene.  
 God really can change circumstances, open doors, provide resources and enlarge opportunities.  
 We are not protecting Biblical theology if we reduce prayer to a therapeutic exercise that changes only the person praying.  
 The God of Israel acts.  
 The final sentence makes that unmistakable.  
 At the same time, the verse reports what God did for Jabez.  
 It does not say that everyone who repeats the words will receive the same result.  
 It does not promise that every Christian's property, business, ministry or influence will expand.  
 It does not promise measurable changes after thirty days of repetition.  
 It does not say the prayer cannot fail to produce the desired outcome.  
 A historical answer to prayer reveals that God hears and answers.  
 It does not transform the words of that prayer into an incantation.  
 An answered prayer can reveal God's character without becoming a blank check bearing God's signature.  
 The grammatical and theological subject of the final statement is God.  
 Jabez asked, but God granted.  
 The answer came from God's freedom, wisdom, goodness and authority.  
 It did not come from a verbal technique.  
 Bold prayer is Biblical.  
 Formula prayer is not.  
 Jesus warned in Matthew chapter six against vain repetitions.  
 He was not condemning repeated prayer itself.  
 Jesus prayed more than once concerning the same cup in Gethsemane.  
 Paul prayed three times concerning his thorn.  
 Persistent prayer can be an expression of faith.  
 Vain repetition treats the words as though saying them enough times creates power or earns an answer.  
 We may pray the words of Jabez.  
 We may pray the Psalms.  
 We may pray the words Jesus taught.  
 But the power is never in syllables separated from faith, truth and submission to God.  
 That leads to a difficult pastoral question.  
 If God granted Jabez what he requested, why has He not granted what I requested?  
 Some people hear a sermon about answered prayer and feel encouraged.

Others hear the same sermon and quietly remember the prayer that still appears unanswered.  
 They asked for healing, but the disease remained.  
 They asked for a marriage to be restored, but the other person would not return.  
 They asked for a child, employment, deliverance or relief from grief.  
 They asked sincerely.  
 They asked repeatedly.  
 They asked in the name of Jesus.  
 The answer they desired did not come.  
 The Prayer of Jabez must never be used to blame those people.  
 An ungranted request does not automatically mean someone lacked faith.  
 It does not mean the prayer was worded incorrectly.  
 It does not mean God abandoned the person.  
 It does not mean another Christian discovered a secret the suffering believer missed.  
 Scripture gives us more than the story of Jabez.  
 Moses asked God to allow him to enter the Promised Land.  
 God did not grant that request.  
 Moses remained a servant of God.  
 Paul asked three times for the thorn in his flesh to depart.  
 God did not remove it.  
 Instead, Christ answered, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."  
 The thorn remained, but grace met Paul within it.  
 Jesus prayed in Gethsemane that, if possible, the cup might pass from Him.  
 Then He prayed, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."  
 No prayer was ever offered with greater purity, faith or obedience.  
 The cup did not pass.  
 Through the cross, God accomplished our salvation.  
 Sometimes God grants what we request.  
 Sometimes He grants something better than we requested.  
 Sometimes His blessing is the grace to endure what He does not remove.  
 Faith is not confidence that God must accept our preferred answer.  
 Faith is confidence that God remains good, wise and present even when His answer differs from our request.  
 First John chapter five, verse fourteen gives the proper confidence.  
 "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us."  
 Confidence and submission are not opposites.  
 We may ask boldly because He is our Father.  
 We may submit humbly because He is God.  
 Scripture also gives us an interesting balance to Jabez in Proverbs chapter thirty.  
 Jabez prayed, "Enlarge my coast."  
 Agur prayed, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me."  
 Jabez asked for more.  
 Agur asked for enough.  
 God preserved both prayers in Scripture.  
 Jabez teaches us that it is not wrong to ask God for more.  
 Agur teaches us that more is not always God's best answer.  
 Agur understood the danger on both sides.  
 In poverty, he feared he might steal and take the name of God in vain.  
 In riches, he feared he might become full and say, "Who is the LORD?"

He was not afraid of provision.  
 He was afraid of anything that would draw his heart away from God.  
 Sometimes the faithful prayer is, "Lord, enlarge this."  
 Sometimes the faithful prayer is, "Lord, this is enough."  
 Sometimes it is, "Do not give me what I cannot safely carry."  
 Sometimes it is, "Teach me to be content within the boundary You have assigned."  
 The issue is not whether the territory becomes larger.  
 The issue is whether our trust remains centered upon God.  
 Jabez teaches boldness.  
 Agur teaches contentment.  
 Jesus gives Christians the controlling pattern for both.  
 Consider the relationship between Jabez's requests and the Lord's Prayer.  
 Jabez called upon the God of Israel.  
 Jesus taught us to begin, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."  
 Jabez asked for blessing.  
 Jesus taught, "Give us this day our daily bread."  
 Jabez asked that God's hand be with him.  
 Jesus taught, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."  
 Jabez asked to be kept from evil.  
 Jesus taught, "Deliver us from evil."  
 The Prayer of Jabez can inform Christian prayer, but it should never displace the prayer Jesus explicitly taught.  
 The Lord's Prayer gives necessary order to our desires.  
 God's name comes before our needs.  
 God's kingdom comes before our enlargement.  
 God's will comes before our preferred outcome.  
 We ask for daily bread rather than demand guaranteed abundance.  
 We seek forgiveness as well as provision.  
 We ask for deliverance from evil because every earthly gift exists in a world affected by sin.  
 Jabez teaches us to ask boldly.  
 Jesus teaches us how every bold request must remain centered upon the Father's name, kingdom and will.  
 Now return once more to the setting of Jabez.  
 He appears within the genealogy associated with Judah.  
 The line of Judah continues beyond Jabez.  
 It continues through kings, generations, exile and return.  
 Ultimately, the line leads to Jesus Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah.  
 We should not force every word of Jabez's prayer into an artificial prediction of Jesus.  
 But we should not stop in Judah's genealogy without recognizing where the Biblical story leads.  
 Jabez asked for an enlarged earthly inheritance.  
 Through Christ, believers receive an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and reserved in heaven.  
 Jabez asked that God's hand be with him.  
 Through Christ, believers receive the indwelling Holy Spirit and the promise that He will never leave nor forsake His people.  
 Jabez asked to be kept from evil.  
 Jesus died for our sins, rose from the dead and delivers all who trust Him from the penalty and dominion of sin.  
 Ephesians chapter one, verse three says God "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."  
 The greatest blessing is not a larger piece of earth.

It is reconciliation with the God who made heaven and earth.  
The greatest territory is not a boundary marked on a survey.  
It is citizenship in a kingdom that can never be shaken.  
The greatest protection is not a life in which nothing painful happens.  
It is eternal security in the Savior who conquered death.  
This brings us back to our governing question.  
Is the Prayer of Jabez a promise, a pattern or simply one man's answered prayer?  
It is first the inspired record of one man's answered prayer.  
It is not a universal promise of material enlargement.  
It does contain Biblical principles that can shape the prayers of Christians.  
Ask boldly.  
Let God define the blessing.  
Seek enlargement honorably.  
Desire God's hand more than His gifts.  
Ask for protection from evil.  
Submit every request to God's will.  
Trust Him when the answer differs from the request.  
Jabez did not discover a prayer that placed God under obligation.  
He discovered that his sorrow, his future, his boundaries and his safety could all be placed in the hands of God.  
Before we pray, I want to ask you four personal questions.  
What blessing are you asking God to give?  
Why do you want it?  
Have you asked for God's hand to remain upon you if He grants it?  
Will you continue trusting Him if His answer is no, not yet or something different?  
Perhaps your request has been small because fear has kept you from asking.  
Jabez reminds you that God is not intimidated by a large request.  
Ask Him.  
Perhaps your request has become a demand.  
Jesus reminds you to pray, "Thy will be done."  
Submit it.  
Perhaps you have asked for more without considering the dangers that more could bring.  
Ask God for His hand and His protection.  
Perhaps you have stopped praying because the answer has not come.  
Do not mistake waiting for abandonment.  
Continue speaking honestly with your Father.  
Perhaps God has already given enough, but comparison has made enough look small.  
Ask Him to restore contentment.  
We do not pray as customers placing an order.  
We pray as children speaking to a Father who knows whether enlargement, limitation, abundance, suffering or waiting will become the blessing indeed.  
There is one prayer God will always receive from a sincere heart.  
It is the prayer of a sinner who comes to Him through Jesus Christ for salvation.  
The greatest problem in our lives is not limited territory.  
It is separation from God because of sin.  
Material blessing cannot forgive sin.  
Religious repetition cannot save a soul.  
Good intentions cannot erase guilt.  
Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into this world, lived without sin and willingly died upon the cross for our sins.

He was buried and rose again on the third day.  
 Salvation is not earned by enlarging your life.  
 It is received by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.  
 Romans chapter ten, verse thirteen says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."  
 Jabez called upon the God of Israel concerning his territory.  
 Today, you can call upon Jesus Christ concerning your eternity.  
 If you have never trusted Him, I invite you to do that now.  
 The words of a prayer do not save you.  
 Jesus saves.  
 But prayer can express the faith of a heart turning toward Him.  
 You may pray with me.  
 Heavenly Father,  
 I know that I am a sinner.  
 I cannot save myself.  
 I believe Jesus Christ died for my sins and rose again.  
 I turn from my sin and place my trust in Him.  
 Forgive me.  
 Save me.  
 Make me the person You created me to be.  
 I receive Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.  
 In Jesus' name.  
 Amen.  
 Let us continue in prayer.  
 Father, teach us to ask boldly without becoming demanding.  
 Teach us to receive gratefully without becoming proud.  
 Bless us according to Your wisdom.  
 Enlarge whatever part of our lives You desire to use.  
 Place Your good hand upon every responsibility You give.  
 Protect us from evil, pride and anything that would make us a source of sorrow to others.  
 For those who are waiting for an answer, provide sustaining grace.  
 For those who receive enlargement, provide deeper humility.  
 For those whose boundaries remain unchanged, provide contentment and faithfulness.  
 Give us what will glorify You and withhold whatever would draw us away from You.  
 May Your name be honored, Your kingdom come and Your will be done.  
 In the name of Jesus Christ we pray.  
 Amen.  
 Before we say goodbye, I want to encourage you to carry this conversation into the coming week.  
 Read First Chronicles chapters four and five so you can see Jabez within the larger setting.  
 Then read Proverbs chapter thirty and Matthew chapter six.  
 Place Jabez's request for more beside Agur's request for enough and Jesus' instruction to seek the Father's will.  
 Identify one blessing you have been asking God to provide.  
 Ask yourself why you want it and what responsibility would accompany it.  
 Before asking for enlargement, ask for God's hand.  
 Before celebrating more, ask for protection from the dangers of more.  
 And if you are carrying an unanswered prayer, please do not carry it alone.  
 I am available after the service and throughout the week if you need prayer, counsel or simply someone willing to listen.  
 Join us in the Reason Together Cafe for coffee and conversation.

There are free refills on both.

May God give us the courage to ask boldly, the humility to receive wisely and the faith to trust Him completely.

The greatest answer is not always a larger territory.

The greatest answer is the presence of God within whatever territory He gives us.

Thank you for being with us today.

Aloha Nui Loa.

## COMMENTARY ORIENTATION

First Chronicles 4:9-10 contains one of the shortest recorded prayers in Scripture and one of the most commercially familiar. Jabez appears without an identified father, speaks four closely connected requests and then disappears from the narrative. The Chronicler gives the reader only two verses, yet those verses have generated sermons, devotionals, daily prayer campaigns and a modern publishing movement.

Familiarity has not always produced careful reading. Some treatments turn the prayer into a dependable method for increasing property, ministry or influence. Others react so strongly against that use that they avoid the passage or treat every request for personal blessing as spiritually suspect. Neither response allows the inspired text to speak in its own setting and proportions.

The passage records an honorable man asking the God of Israel for blessing, enlarged territory, continuing divine presence and protection from evil. God granted what he requested. Every part of that sentence matters. The answer is real and should be celebrated. The covenant setting is also real and should not be transferred carelessly. The narrative describes what God did for Jabez, but it does not state that repeating his words obligates God to reproduce his result.

**CENTRAL COMMENTARY CLAIM | Jabez did not discover a prayer formula. He demonstrated honorable dependence by entrusting blessing, territory, divine presence and protection to the God of Israel. Christians may imitate the dependence without claiming the result as a guarantee.**

This Commentary therefore moves slowly through the wording, the genealogy, the land setting and the major interpretive proposals. It distinguishes what the text states from what may be responsibly inferred and from what remains unknown. It also asks how the prayer should be received by believers whose sincere requests have not been granted in the form they desired.

The governing public question is, Is there a prayer God always answers? The immediate passage says that God granted Jabez's request. The wider Bible shows faithful servants receiving other answers. The final answer must therefore travel beyond a slogan to the Lord's Prayer, the Father's will and the unconditional promise of salvation to those who truly call upon Jesus Christ.

## THE TWO-VERSE INTERRUPTION

### Genealogies preserve more than names

First Chronicles begins with nine chapters of genealogies. Modern readers often hurry through them because the names appear distant from the story. For the post-exilic community, however, these records preserved identity, inheritance, tribal continuity, worship responsibilities and the remembered faithfulness of God through generations of upheaval.

A genealogy does not function like a modern biography. It may compress generations, arrange names according to purpose and pause for a place, occupation, prayer or event that serves the Chronicler's larger concern. The reader should not assume that every unexplained relationship is missing by accident or that every unusual name hides a secret code.

Jabez appears in material associated with Judah, the royal tribe through which David and ultimately the Messiah came. The text does not clearly attach him to a named father in the surrounding list. That silence limits reconstruction, but it does not make him unimportant. The Chronicler deliberately interrupts the names to preserve his character, prayer and answer.

### Why the pause deserves attention

In a chapter filled with names, Scripture pauses for a prayer. The interruption signals that the reader should listen, but it does not authorize the reader to invent a full life story. The inspired emphasis falls upon honor, remembered sorrow, calling upon God and the grant that followed.

Nearby chapters also contain territorial concerns. Simeonite groups sought pasture and acquired land. Reubenites, Gadites and Manassites expanded territory through battle and called upon God. These narratives make literal land a natural subject in Chronicles, although the text never explicitly says that Jabez is being contrasted with each nearby event.

R. Christopher Heard has proposed that the surrounding territorial material forms an intentional literary frame for Jabez. That proposal is illuminating because it restores land and community to the discussion. It remains an inference about composition rather than an explicit explanation supplied by the Chronicler.

## WHAT SCRIPTURE ACTUALLY TELLS US

### The inspired biography is very short

The text tells us that Jabez was more honourable than his brethren, that his mother connected his name with sorrow, that he called upon the God of Israel, that he made a four-part request and that God granted it. Those facts are sufficient for the theological purpose of the passage.

Scripture does not say that his father died, abandoned the family or rejected him. It does not say that Jabez was disabled, bullied, poor, homeless or treated as an unwanted child. It does not describe his mother's emotional posture toward him beyond the naming explanation. Popular sermons sometimes supply those details because they make a dramatic testimony, but dramatic usefulness does not turn imagination into history.

The absence of a named father in this part of the genealogy cannot prove fatherlessness. Genealogies omit and rearrange relationships for many reasons. Silence may create a question, but it cannot carry the weight of an answer the text does not give.

### Honor comes before enlargement

Jabez is introduced as more honourable before the reader hears that his territory was enlarged. This order matters. Scripture does not infer honorable character from visible expansion. The moral description precedes the reported blessing.

The Hebrew form may be understood as honorable, honored, weighty or distinguished. English translations divide over whether the term emphasizes his character or the honor accorded to him. The exact reason for his distinction and the identity of those recognizing it are not stated.

What can be said safely is that the Chronicler presents Jabez favorably. His prayer is not the cry of a manipulator demanding entitlement. It belongs to a man whose distinction is already part of the inspired record.

## JABEZ, SORROW AND THE DANGER OF INVENTED DESTINY

### The name and its wordplay

His mother called his name Jabez, saying, 'Because I bare him with sorrow.' The Hebrew name and the word for sorrow are connected through sound and narrative wordplay. The relation is meaningful without requiring the name to be a simple dictionary equation with the English word pain.

The noun associated with sorrow can describe pain, toil, difficult labor or grief. Childbirth is an obvious possibility because the mother says she bore him with sorrow, but the verse does not diagnose a medical complication or describe the family's later treatment of the child.

Biblical narratives often explain names through sound association or thematic meaning. Such explanations help the reader remember a story. They do not teach that syllables release spiritual forces or that a spoken label possesses sovereignty over a person's future.

### His name remembered sorrow, but sorrow did not rule him

The prayer's final clause returns to the language of grief. The narrative therefore begins and ends with remembered sorrow, but the center is occupied by the God of Israel. The movement is not from a

magical curse to a magical counter-formula. It is from a painful human memory to dependent prayer and divine action.

This creates a responsible pastoral application. Painful beginnings, family labels and remembered wounds can affect a person deeply, but they do not possess divine authority. A believer need not deny what hurt in order to refuse the claim that hurt must determine the future.

The application must remain honest. Jabez's story cannot be recruited as proof that every painful history will be followed by visible prosperity. It shows that remembered sorrow is not sovereign. God is.

## HE CALLED ON THE GOD OF ISRAEL

### The identity of God controls the prayer

The Prayer of Jabez is powerful because Jabez called upon the right God, not because he arranged the right words. The phrase 'the God of Israel' locates the prayer within covenant revelation. Jabez did not appeal to an impersonal principle of expansion or to spiritual energy available through correct speech. Israel's God had revealed His name, promises, holiness and covenant purposes. Blessing and land were already major parts of Israel's history. Jabez's request belongs within that story rather than within a modern technique for personal achievement.

This distinction protects prayer from superstition. Biblical prayer is personal address to the living God. Words matter because truth matters and because love speaks carefully, but the power belongs to the One who hears rather than to the sound pattern used by the petitioner.

### Calling upon God is an act of dependence

Jabez asks. He does not seize. The territorial narratives surrounding Chronicles include conflict, acquisition and human action. Jabez's remembered moment is prayer. His desire is brought beneath divine permission.

Asking for something does not make the request selfish. James warns about asking to consume upon lusts, but Jesus also teaches His disciples to ask the Father for daily bread and other good gifts.

Motive, object and submission determine whether boldness becomes entitlement.

The honorable feature of the request is not that Jabez wanted nothing. It is that he refused to treat desire as a command God must obey. He called upon God and left the grant with God.

## OH THAT THOU Wouldest BLESS ME INDEED

### The emphatic request

The Hebrew construction places an infinitive absolute beside the finite verb and intensifies the request. The King James expression 'bless me indeed' communicates the emphasis well. Jabez is not offering a timid hint. He genuinely wants God to bless him.

The construction does not contain a secret number of exclamation points. Claims that Hebrew punctuation proves a particular emotional performance confuse later writing conventions with grammar. The emphasis is real without theatrical exaggeration.

Bold personal prayer is Biblical. Formula prayer is not. Jabez does not apologize for bringing his own need before God, yet the request remains undefined enough for God to be the giver and judge of what blessing should mean.

### God must define what is good

A blessing indeed is not simply what I strongly desire. It is what God knows will truly be good. Wealth can become a snare. Influence can enlarge temptation. Relief can arrive before character is ready to steward freedom. Scripture never reduces blessing to the possession of more.

Within the Old Testament, blessing may include land, fruitfulness, security, descendants and covenant well-being. Within the New Testament, the believer's controlling blessings are centered in Christ, the Spirit, adoption, forgiveness, holiness, resurrection and eternal inheritance. Christians may ask for provision, opportunity and usefulness. They should also permit the Father to refuse what would injure them, redirect what would distract them and redefine success according to His kingdom.

## AND ENLARGE MY COAST

### Coast in older English

For readers in Hawaii, coast normally means shoreline. That meaning can produce an accidental picture of beachfront expansion. The King James word here reflects an older English sense of border, boundary, district or region. Jabez is asking for the enlargement of territory.

The underlying Hebrew noun, *gebul*, regularly refers to a border or the territory defined by it. It does not lexically mean ministry, business, audience, influence or platform. Those may become applications only after the actual request has been understood.

This clarification is not a minor word-study correction. It returns the prayer to Israel's land setting. Jabez's coast involved real geography, inheritance, livelihood, responsibility and exposure to neighboring danger.

### Land within Israel's covenant

The land was not a generic symbol of personal ambition. It belonged to God's covenant dealings with Israel. Tribal allotment, family inheritance, fruitful cultivation and secure dwelling carried theological meaning that cannot be transferred directly into a guarantee of Christian property.

Territorial enlargement could be a genuine blessing, but it also brought responsibility. More land required cultivation, defense, justice, stewardship and dependence upon favorable conditions no human owner could control.

The narrative does not explain the mechanism by which Jabez's boundary increased. It does not describe purchase, inheritance, peaceful opportunity or conflict. That silence prevents the Commentary from supplying a heroic acquisition story.

### Responsible modern application

The wider Bible permits believers to pray for enlarged usefulness, ministry opportunity, generosity and influence. Those requests may reflect the principle of increased responsibility, but they are applications of the passage rather than translations of the word coast.

A responsible application preserves the order. First determine what Jabez asked in Israel's world. Then identify enduring principles: dependence, stewardship, divine presence and protection. Only then ask how those principles may shape Christian work, family, service or ministry.

Territory cannot be made synonymous with platform size. A larger audience is not automatic evidence of greater honor, and a small field of service is not proof of divine disfavor. Faithfulness remains the Christian measure.

## AND THAT THINE HAND MIGHT BE WITH ME

### The hand of God

Biblical hand imagery communicates effective presence, power, providence, guidance and protection. In Ezra and Nehemiah, the good hand of God explains safe arrival, royal permission, courage and the strengthening of God's servants for difficult work.

Jabez does not merely ask for more. He asks that God's hand accompany the more. Enlargement without divine presence would leave him with increased exposure and insufficient wisdom.

The phrase should not be reduced to impersonal energy or baptized self-confidence. God's hand is God's active involvement. The petitioner remains dependent after the grant, not merely until the opportunity opens.

### **Greater territory, greater responsibility**

An enlarged opportunity without God's hand can become an enlarged disaster. More responsibility creates more decisions, more temptation, more possible harm and more people affected by the petitioner's character.

This petition corrects prosperity readings from inside the prayer itself. Jabez does not ask for possession detached from presence. The request for enlargement is surrounded by the request for God's hand and protection.

Christian prayer for expansion should therefore include wisdom, humility, accountability and stewardship. The question is not only whether God will open a door. It is whether the believer will remain beneath God's hand after walking through it.

## **AND THAT THOU Wouldest KEEP ME FROM EVIL**

### **Protection surrounds the blessing**

The Hebrew wording can refer to evil, harm or calamity. Major English translations preserve the sense of protection from what could injure, corrupt or grieve. The petition resembles the Lord's Prayer request for deliverance from evil without being verbally identical to it.

Protection is not an unrelated fourth wish. It guards the earlier requests. Blessing can awaken pride, territory can invite conflict and responsibility can multiply consequences. Jabez asks God to keep the gift from becoming the setting of his destruction.

He did not merely ask God to give him more. He asked God to keep more from destroying him. This is one of the prayer's strongest correctives to shallow success teaching.

### **The difficult final clause**

The King James Bible reads, 'that it may not grieve me.' The wording returns naturally to the sorrow associated with the name Jabez. Other translations, including the New King James, allow the sense 'that I may not cause pain.' The grammar has produced continuing discussion.

The traditional reading understands Jabez as the recipient of pain. The alternative understands him as its possible source. Both yield pastorally valuable concerns, but the grammar does not permit the interpreter to speak as though the dispute were imaginary.

The approved preaching text retains the KJV direction. The concern not to cause pain may be mentioned as a secondary application, particularly because enlarged responsibility can injure others when character fails. It should not silently replace the translation being preached.

### **The Septuagint and the pastureland proposal**

The ancient Greek rendering of the final portion differs substantially from the familiar Hebrew-based translations and speaks in a way that may suggest freedom from humiliation. This divergence witnesses to the difficulty or to an alternative underlying text, but it does not provide a simple solution.

A modern scholarly proposal repoints the Hebrew consonants traditionally rendered evil or harm so that the prayer may refer to pastureland. The reading creates poetic correspondence with enlarged territory and nearby grazing narratives. It is ingenious and contextually interesting.

The proposal remains a minority reconstruction. The Masoretic vocalization, major translations and traditional reception support the familiar reading. Pastureland belongs in the research record, not in the controlling sermon conclusion.

## AND GOD GRANTED HIM THAT WHICH HE REQUESTED

### The answer must be celebrated

The final sentence is direct. God granted Jabez what he requested. A responsible response should not become so anxious about prosperity teaching that it explains away the joy of answered prayer.

The decisive actor is God. Jabez prayed, but God granted. The narrative does not credit a technique, emotional intensity or verbal arrangement. Divine freedom remains visible in the very sentence that reports the answer.

Answered prayer reveals God's character and invites gratitude. It does not become a blank check bearing God's signature for every later reader who repeats the wording.

### Narrative report is not universal promise

A narrative may present an event worth imitating without making every detail a promise. Elijah prayed and fire fell. Hannah prayed and received Samuel. Hezekiah prayed and received additional years. The reality of those answers does not make each result universally reproducible.

First Chronicles does not command daily repetition of Jabez's words, attach a timetable or promise predictable expansion. The passage gives no ritual instructions and no warning that altered wording will cancel the result.

Christians can pray the categories because they are consistent with wider Scripture. They must not convert the recorded grant into a mechanism that places God under obligation.

## WHEN GOD DOES NOT GRANT THE REQUESTED FORM

### Moses, Paul and Jesus

The Bible contains faithful prayers whose requested form was denied. Moses asked to enter the land and was refused. Paul asked three times for the thorn to depart and received sufficient grace rather than removal. Jesus prayed concerning the cup and submitted perfectly to the Father's will.

These examples forbid the accusation that every continuing hardship proves defective faith. Moses knew God, Paul trusted Christ and Jesus possessed perfect faith. A different answer cannot automatically be translated into spiritual failure.

The contrast does not weaken Jabez. It places his answered prayer within the whole counsel of Scripture. God truly granted him territory, presence and protection. The same sovereign God sometimes gives, sometimes withholds and sometimes answers through sustaining grace.

### Pastoral care for the unanswered prayer

The words 'God granted him' can hurt a believer who has asked faithfully for healing, reconciliation, a child, employment or deliverance and has not received the desired result. The church must not use Jabez to increase that pain through blame.

Faith continues to ask while refusing dishonest means of obtaining the answer. It also listens for the Father's wisdom, accepts help, seeks appropriate care and remains open to a provision different from the first request.

The promise is not that every circumstance will conform to the petitioner's plan. The promise is that the Father remains good, Christ remains sufficient and nothing can separate the believer from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

## JABEZ, AGUR AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

### A prayer for more and a prayer for enough

Proverbs 30 preserves Agur's request for neither poverty nor riches. He asks to be fed with food convenient for him so that abundance will not lead him to deny God and poverty will not tempt him to steal. This is as Biblical as Jabez's request for enlargement.

Jabez teaches that it is not wrong to ask for more. Agur teaches that more is not always God's best answer. Together they prevent Christian prayer from being governed by either embarrassed smallness or unquestioned expansion.

Solomon's request for wisdom provides another balance. God granted the request and added gifts Solomon had not made central. Biblical blessing is ordered around God's purpose rather than around the maximization of possessions.

### **The Lord's Prayer governs Christian application**

Jesus teaches His disciples to begin with the Father's name, kingdom and will. Daily bread, forgiveness and deliverance are requested inside that order. The Lord's Prayer does not suppress personal need. It places need within worship and submission.

Every Christian use of Jabez should therefore be prayed beneath, 'Thy will be done.' Bless me indeed must serve the Father's holy name. Enlarge my usefulness must serve His kingdom. Keep me from evil must be joined to forgiveness, obedience and dependence.

This canonical order prevents Jabez from becoming the controlling template for all prayer. His request contributes to Christian prayer, but Jesus provides its governing pattern.

## **THE MODERN PRAYER OF JABEZ MOVEMENT**

### **Why the popular treatment resonated**

Bruce Wilkinson's 2000 book brought the neglected passage into wide Christian conversation. Its memorable fourfold structure encouraged believers to pray boldly, expect usefulness, seek God's hand and recognize the need for protection. Many readers were moved from passivity into serious prayer. The book's accessibility explains part of its influence. Two obscure verses became a daily framework that could be remembered easily. Testimonies of changed opportunity gave readers a sense that Biblical prayer belonged in ordinary decisions.

A fair Commentary should acknowledge these strengths. Popularity alone does not make an interpretation false, and criticism should not erase genuine encouragement believers received to call upon God.

### **Where the movement requires correction**

The danger appears when actual territory is converted too quickly into ministry, influence or personal opportunity and when testimony creates an expectation of predictable visible results. A devotional application can begin to function like a promise the text never states.

Daily repetition may become a faithful habit, but repetition itself has no mechanical power. Jesus condemns vain repetition, not all repeated prayer. The dividing line is whether the petitioner trusts the Father or trusts the performance of the words.

The responsible evangelical response is neither uncritical adoption nor cynical dismissal. It recovers the Israelite setting, retains bold dependence, rejects guaranteed prosperity and carries the prayer through the Lord's Prayer to Christ.

### **Other expository voices**

Charles Spurgeon emphasized the difference between true blessing and apparent prosperity. More recent expositors such as David Mathis, Derek Thomas, Paul Carter and David Schrock have variously stressed Biblical prayer, the legitimacy of asking, the need for pastoral balance and the danger of a soft prosperity Gospel.

These treatments do not agree on every biographical implication or on the extent of modern application. Their shared caution is valuable: the text should not be made to promise more than it says, and Christ must remain the destination of Christian blessing.

Responsible preaching receives insight from earlier sermons without treating any preacher as an authority equal to Scripture. Claims are tested by the passage, its literary setting, language and canonical context.

## LATER IDENTIFICATIONS AND HISTORICAL PROPOSALS

### Was Jabez also Othniel?

Babylonian Talmud Temurah 16a identifies Jabez with Othniel and develops the prayer through additional wordplay. In that tradition, the petitions become requests for learning, disciples, preservation of knowledge and protection from forgetting. The association demonstrates the enduring Jewish interest created by these two verses.

The identification is not stated in Chronicles or Judges. Othniel is named, connected to Caleb's family and described through military and judicial events. Jabez is presented without those links. Later interpretive tradition may preserve imaginative theological reflection without preserving independent historical information.

The tradition belongs in Commentary because it helps explain reception history. It must not be preached as biography. Calling Jabez Othniel would replace an unresolved question with a certainty the Biblical text does not supply.

### The place called Jabez

First Chronicles 2:55 names families of scribes who dwelt at Jabez. The shared name raises a reasonable possibility that a settlement remembered the man or that the man was associated with the settlement. A scribal community would be particularly interesting in a book deeply concerned with records and restored identity.

The text does not explain the relation. The place may predate the person, may have been named later or may share a name without a recoverable historical connection. Archaeological certainty cannot be created from literary proximity alone.

The observation remains valuable because it keeps Jabez attached to actual land and community. It is another reason not to dissolve coast immediately into an invisible idea of influence.

### The post-exilic audience

Chronicles addressed a community living after national upheaval, exile and return. Questions of ancestry, land, worship and continuity were not academic. They concerned whether the restored people still stood within the purposes and promises of God.

A brief account of a Judahite who sought God concerning territory could encourage readers living with fragile boundaries and diminished political strength. The answer would witness that divine providence remained active even when the community's circumstances looked smaller than its remembered past.

This setting is a strong historical frame rather than a direct statement of motive. The Chronicler does not append an explanation saying that Jabez was included for returned exiles. Responsible interpretation distinguishes a likely audience resonance from an inspired explanation that is not present.

## THEOLOGICAL CONCLUSIONS

### God's freedom is essential to prayer

Prayer is meaningful because God hears and acts. It is also prayer because the petitioner addresses a sovereign Person rather than operating a spiritual law. If correct wording forced the outcome, dependence would be replaced by technique.

The grant to Jabez is an expression of freedom, not evidence that freedom has been surrendered. God knew the man, the need, the territory and the consequences. The answer came from wisdom unavailable to later readers who possess only two verses.

This makes boldness and submission companions. The Christian may ask specifically and confidently while leaving the definition, timing and form of blessing with the Father.

### **Old covenant land and New Testament inheritance**

Israel's territorial promises cannot be transferred directly into Christian property claims. The church does not inherit the tribal allotments, and believers are not promised a larger house, business or audience as evidence of covenant favor.

The New Testament locates controlling blessing in union with Christ. Believers receive the Spirit, adoption, forgiveness, sanctification, resurrection and an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and reserved in heaven.

Earthly provision remains a legitimate subject of prayer, but it is provisional and governed by the kingdom. The Christian's greatest coast is not a wider earthly boundary. It is the eternal inheritance secured by Jesus Christ.

### **Character, stewardship and protection**

The sequence of the passage places honor before enlargement, divine presence within enlargement and protection around enlargement. That movement provides a theology of stewardship more substantial than a slogan about getting more.

A gift can expose what character has not surrendered. Increased resources expand both opportunity and consequence. Prayer for enlargement should therefore be joined to prayer for holiness, wisdom and protection from the evil that could corrupt its use.

God's hand does not merely help the believer acquire. It enables the believer to carry, serve, protect and remain faithful inside what has been entrusted.

## **PASTORAL COMMENTARY**

### **For the believer afraid to ask**

Some Christians hesitate to ask God for personal blessing because they fear appearing selfish. Jabez shows that a personal request can be honorable when it is directed to God and surrounded by dependence and protection.

The remedy for selfish prayer is not prayerlessness. It is surrendered prayer. Ask the Father to bless, define the blessing, search the motive and refuse anything that would draw the heart away from Christ.

### **For the believer longing for greater usefulness**

It is legitimate to ask for a larger field of service, more people to help, greater generosity or a wider opportunity to communicate truth. Such requests should be accompanied by willingness to accept hidden service and small assignments if that is where God places faithfulness.

Do not measure the answer only by numbers. An enlarged coast may sometimes appear as deeper responsibility within the same visible boundary. Influence should never become a substitute for obedience.

### **For the believer carrying a painful label**

Jabez's name remembered sorrow, but the narrative does not end with the name. A family history, diagnosis, failure or cruel description may remain part of a person's memory without possessing the right to define his or her relationship with God.

Christian hope does not require pretending the label was harmless. It requires placing the label beneath the truth of belonging to Christ. The believer's final name is not supplied by pain but by the Savior who calls His people His own.

**For the believer whose prayer remains unanswered**

The grant to Jabez should invite hope, not condemnation. God can answer specifically and visibly. The wider Bible also assures the sufferer that a different answer does not prove abandonment. Continue to ask, seek wise help and remain open to sustaining grace. The church should stand beside the person rather than explaining the delay through accusation. Faithfulness is not measured only by whether the desired circumstance changes.

**INTERPRETIVE CAUTIONS****Do not invent a childhood**

A moving story about abandonment, disability, mockery or rejection may hold attention, but none of those details appears in 1 Chronicles 4. The Bible does not need invented suffering to become relevant.

Pastoral application may address people who have endured those experiences as long as the preacher does not claim that Jabez shared them. A modern parallel should be labeled as application, not biography.

**Do not turn a name into a curse**

The wordplay with sorrow is real. The claim that every use of the name released a supernatural curse is not. Scripture never says Jabez needed to break a spoken spell. Magical-causation language shifts attention from the God of Israel to the supposed power of syllables. The passage teaches providence and prayer, not verbal enchantment.

**Do not promise prosperity**

God granted territorial enlargement to Jabez. The New Testament does not promise that every Christian who repeats the prayer will receive wealth, property, health, business growth or public influence.

Testimony may encourage, but it cannot create doctrine. The church must not select visible success stories while ignoring faithful believers whose prayers received another answer.

**Do not shame unanswered prayer**

Paul's repeated request, Moses' denied request and Jesus' submitted request prevent the church from equating an unchanged circumstance with insufficient faith.

Prayer ministries should make room for lament, waiting, treatment, counsel and practical help. Bold asking and compassionate patience belong together.

**Do not replace coast with ministry**

The Hebrew word means border or territory. Ministry and influence may be responsible applications, but they should never be presented as the lexical meaning.

Preserving the original sense strengthens rather than weakens application. It teaches the church to move from history to principle to contemporary obedience instead of skipping the world of the text.

**Do not make repetition a mechanism**

Repeated Scripture prayer can shape attention and desire. Jesus Himself repeated a request in Gethsemane. The danger is not recurrence but trust in recurrence as the cause of the answer.

No timetable, ritual or guaranteed result is attached to Jabez's wording. Christians pray through Christ, under the Father's will and in dependence upon the Spirit.

## COMMENTARY SUMMARY

First Chronicles 4:9-10 interrupts Judah's genealogy to preserve an honorable man, a name associated with sorrow, a fourfold prayer and a divine grant. The brevity of the account creates limits. Jabez's father, childhood, social condition and later life are not revealed.

The word coast means border or territory in its Israelite setting. Jabez asked for actual enlargement rather than directly asking for ministry or influence. Modern applications may include greater usefulness and responsibility, but they must not replace the historical meaning.

The four petitions belong together. Blessing is defined by God. Enlargement is accompanied by God's hand. Protection guards the petitioner from evil, harm and grief. The difficult final clause permits careful acknowledgment of an alternative concern about causing pain without displacing the KJV reading.

God granted the request, and the church should celebrate the answer. The narrative does not establish a repeatable formula or a universal guarantee. Moses, Paul and Jesus demonstrate that faithful prayer may receive denial, sustaining grace or a submitted path through suffering.

Agur's prayer for enough balances Jabez's prayer for more. The Lord's Prayer governs Christian application by placing every request beneath the Father's name, kingdom and will. Modern devotional use is strongest when it recovers this Biblical balance.

**FINAL MINISTRY CONCLUSION | The wonder of Jabez is not that he found the right combination of words. The wonder is that a man whose story began in remembered sorrow knew where to bring his future. He called upon the God of Israel, asked boldly, depended completely and received according to God's freedom.**

The Gospel remains the destination. Jesus is the greater Son of Judah. In Him believers receive every spiritual blessing, the presence of the Spirit, deliverance from the dominion of evil and an eternal inheritance that cannot be enlarged because it cannot be exhausted.

## A FINAL WORD

The Prayer of Jabez deserves neither commercial exaggeration nor embarrassed neglect. It belongs in the Bible because God wanted His people to remember that an honorable man asked for blessing, territory, presence and protection and that God answered him.

The prayer invites believers to bring real desire to God. It also invites them to distrust every method that turns desire into entitlement. Jabez called upon God. He did not control God.

Ask boldly. Let the Father define blessing. Receive responsibility with dependence. Seek protection from the evil that often accompanies opportunity. Rejoice when God grants and remain faithful when His wisdom supplies another form of grace.

Pain may explain part of a person's beginning, but it does not possess the final word. Territory may describe an earthly gift, but it does not contain the believer's greatest inheritance. Prayer may carry the request, but Jesus Christ carries the believer.

There is a prayer God always answers in the deepest and most important sense. Scripture promises that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. The certainty rests not in a formula but in the sufficient Savior who receives all who truly come to Him.

Jabez received an enlarged coast. The Christian receives Christ, and in Christ an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and reserved in heaven.

END OF BIBLICAL COMMENTARY