

## **A HUMBLE PRAYER WORTH PRAYING**

**By Jim Langley**

In 2000 I read a powerful little book by Dr. Bruce Wilkinson, *The Prayer of Jabez*. It has had a great impact on the way I have prayed ever since. The book is based on two lines dedicated to a man named Jabez in 1 Chronicles 4:9-10, a man not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible. The second verse in the passage states, *"If only You would bless me, extend my border, let Your hand be with me, and keep me from harm, so that I will not cause any pain."*

Consisting of just over 60 words, the two-verse passage describes Jabez's birth, his prayer, and God granting his request. Since reading the book, I often end my morning prayer-times with a customized version of the prayer that fits what I desire to convey to God every day. Here are the parts to my prayer:

**"Lord, bless me beyond my expectations..."** – I know that my expectations fall short of what God has planned for me. Certainly none of us know what lies ahead. God has blessed me over the years, but many of those blessings did not feel pleasant at the time since they took the form of trials and afflictions. With time, however, I was able to see how God was orchestrating events to strengthen me for what He had planned for me. I learned to trust Him in all things, and He certainly has never let me down.

**"Expand my borders – my area of influence – for your glory Lord..."** – As I began praying I had no idea what God had planned. I believed this part of the prayer had nothing to do with my insurance career. Over time I concluded it had more to do with being influential in the lives of others, but at first saw this as being limited to my community. These days I see how he has taken some of my writings and carried them around the world through the Internet without any of my doing. And it has been all for His glory!

**"Keep your hand on me constantly, Father ..."** – For me, this is the most straightforward part of the prayer. God will never let me go, but I want Him to know I have no desire to leave Him. I need Him to take me through the depths of disappointment we all face with the uncertainty of life. He is my Strength, my Fortress, my Rock, and my Salvation.

**"And keep evil from me so I may not cause pain."** – I imagine Jabez prayed for God to keep him from evil so he would not cause pain – in the lives of others and his own life. Evil is all around us. Much of the evil in the world has been sugar-coated so it may not look or taste as bad. But Oswald Chambers reminds us God wants and deserves our best – nothing less. My desire is to give my Lord and Savior "my utmost for His highest," as Chambers termed it.

Without question, God has truly blessed me beyond my expectations. He has greatly expanded my borders (my area of influence) for His glory. I can attest that He has kept His hand in mine continually. And He constantly keeps me from the Evil One to prevent me from causing pain for others or myself.

In a nutshell, He has answered my prayer and I am certain He will answer yours as well, if you only offer a simple, humble prayer as Jabez did. Ask and you will receive wonderful blessings beyond anything you could imagine, from God Almighty!

© 2015, all rights reserved. Jim Langley has been an agent and chartered life underwriter (CLU) with New York Life since 1983 and an active member of CBMC of Santa Barbara, California, U.S.A. since 1987.

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## Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Are you familiar with the so-called “Prayer of Jabez”? If so, what has that meant to you before reading this Monday Manna?
2. Would you feel comfortable taking that simple prayer of Jabez and personalizing it for yourself, as Mr. Langley has done? Why or why not?
3. When people pray for God’s blessings, what do you think they typically might be asking for? Do you think such a prayer would be about achieving business or professional success, or receiving a desired promotion, or making more money? Why or why not?
4. What do you think it means to pray for God to “expand my borders” or “enlarge my territory,” as other translations express it? Does this – or should this – mean attracting more business, building a bigger company, or having greater status in the workplace? Or should this mean more than that? Explain your answer.

If you would like to look at or discuss other portions of the Bible that relate to this topic, consider the following brief sampling of passages: 1 Chronicles 4:9-10; Proverbs 10:22; Ecclesiastes 9:1a; John 16:24; Philippians 1:19-20