

Sunday School Class HANDOUT for January 11, 2009 By Rev. Kyle A. Sorensen  
The Prayer of Jabez vs. *The Prayer of Jabez*

Some Lessons we want to explore in this lesson are:

1. What is Biblical Prayer?
2. What is the value of the prayer Jabez prayed as found in the Bible?
3. Is prayer a neutral activity that all Christians can do together? Is it the common ground, despite serious doctrinal differences?
4. What should we do when a fad like the book *The Prayer of Jabez* hits the Christian bookstores and our Christian friends want us to get involved?

**Read 1 Chronicles 4:9-10.**

- a. These are the **ONLY** verses in the Bible about the man named Jabez. However, the book by Bruce Wilkinson *The Prayer of Jabez* has sold several million copies. The author claims this prayer is “the key to a life of extraordinary favor with God.”
- b. What do these Bible verses mean?

POSITIVES of the book *The Prayer of Jabez*

1. Reminds us that prayer is very important. What does our catechism say on this?
2. The book says that prayer should be for ministry needs, not only personal desires

DANGERS: three main ones can be mentioned

**A wrong view of what Prayer is**

FROM THE BOOK: The preface states, “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.”

1. Do you agree or disagree? Explain. Are there any other examples of people praying in the Bible that can help you agree or disagree? See Isaiah 1:15; John 9:31; 1 Peter 3:7
2. What is Jesus’ view of only praying memorized prayers, word for word? (Matthew 6:7)
  - a. What is a ‘mantra’?
3. When the disciples asked Jesus how to pray, what did He answer them? What does that mean for us as we consider the relevance of using the prayer of Jabez as a model?
4. Apply this to your use of the “Lord’s Prayer” or “Come Lord Jesus Be our Guest”, etc. Is it okay for Christians to pray such prayers?

### **A wrong view of Prosperity**

FROM THE BOOK: "If Jabez had worked on Wall Street, he might have prayed, 'Lord, increase the value of my investment portfolios.'" (p. 31).

"Is it Bruce's message that we should pray for a BMW? . . . No, but if that's what you want, ask for it, and if that would convince you of God's love for you, then it might be granted."—David Kopp, editor, *The Prayer of Jabez* (Fort Worth Star Telegram, May 19, 2001).

1. Do you agree or disagree with this perspective? See James 4:3
2. Why do you think a message like this is popular among Christians today?
3. What is the original meaning of the Bible text about "enlarging my territory"? Remember that Jabez was a member of the tribe of Judah.

### **A wrong view of Providence**

FROM THE BOOK: When was the last time God worked through you in such a way that you knew beyond a doubt that God had done it? In fact, when was the last time you saw miracles happen on a regular basis in your life?—(pp. 15-16). If you pray this prayer, Wilkinson says we are promised "a front-row seat in a life of miracles." "It's when you thrust yourself in the mainstream of God's plans for this world . . . that you release miracles" (p. 44).

1. Does the Christian faith depend on miracles? If you answer yes, which miracles?
2. Where does the Bible teach that Christians should pray for and expect miracles on a regular basis in our life?

FROM THE BOOK: Christians who do not 'pray Jabez' will miss out on the blessings God has in store for them. "If you didn't ask Him for a blessing yesterday," Wilkinson writes, "you didn't get all you were supposed to have" (p. 27). By this reasoning, a believer who forgets to pray Jabez is relegated to Plan B of divine providence.

3. How is the Biblical and Reformed Faith the answer to the confusion and misleading guidance on prayer found in this book?
  - A. Do troubles come to Christians because they didn't pray a certain prayer?
  - B. May Christians be disappointed with God when He doesn't give us what we want?

Reflect on Catechisms #26-28 in answering these.

4. Is it true that God's sovereignty is limited by man's actions? What does it mean to be sovereign, anyway? Read Isaiah 46:10, Ephesians 1:11.
5. What are we to think about the generations of Christians who have NOT prayed this prayer?