

**Practicing This One Thing:
How to Pray for Myself
1 Chronicles 4:9-10**

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Text Introduction: We are in the middle of a prayer challenge. We are calling our challenge “This One Thing.” This is not only guiding our times together on Sunday morning as we examine the Scriptures about prayer, but we are also challenging one another about our discipline and habits of prayer. And what a time it is to pray! I could not have imagined the importance of this effort when God birthed this in my heart early this summer. But, now, all of this makes perfect sense, right?

We are in a phase of our study where we are considering Biblical instructions for praying in different areas. I want to examine with you today the subject “How to Pray for Ourselves.”

One of our speakers during the Prayer Revival shared with us a simple approach to praying using the hand to guide us.

The Hand—

1. Let the thumb remind us to pray for those closest to us.
2. Let the index finger remind us to pray for those who teach us.
3. Let the middle finger (tallest) remind us to pray for those who lead us.
4. Let the fourth finger remind us to pray for those who are weak.
5. Let the last finger (smallest) lead us to pray for ourselves, last of all.

Though last of all and maybe even least of all, we still want to learn to pray for ourselves.

Let’s talk about that.

Text: Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. His mother named him Jabez and said, “I gave birth to him in pain.”

¹⁰ Jabez called out to the God of Israel: “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.” And God granted his request.

Introduction: Chronicles cannot be understood properly without reading it from the right perspective. Scholars have traditionally attributed the writing of Chronicles to Ezra. If this is correct, then we can begin to see the perspective of his writing. Ezra’s passion was to rebuild the temple and resurrect right worship after the exile. What better way to call people to action than to remind them of the glorious ancestry and the glory of the former temple? For us, Chronicles provides a historical perspective of the temple, but for the original readers, the Chronicles were a call to action.

For us chapters 1-9 might seem pointless. But if you have ever worked on your family genealogy, your opinion of 1-9 might be somewhat different. For these post-exilic Jews, most who had never yet lived in

the land of Israel, this list of ancestors should have been a great reminder of their glorious past and at the same time the reminder of why the exile occurred. (9:1)

In an otherwise mundane list of genealogy, we get these powerful two verses about an otherwise unknown man named Jabez. The brief mention is about this one thing of prayer—specifically a prayer for himself.

Are you afraid to pray for yourself? Are you afraid to ask God to bless your life? If your response is “yes,” maybe you have said more about your beliefs about God than you intended. Why wouldn’t God want to bless you? Don’t you want to bless your children? In the same way, God wants to bless you—His child!

The prayer of Jabez gives us a Biblical prayer that we might pray for ourselves. In the prayer of Jabez we can identify four specific requests that can become our model for praying for ourselves.

Before we consider these four requests let’s consider what we know about Jabez, the person. The Bible does not tell us much about Jabez, but we do learn a few things about his life.

1. We know that Jabez was named for the pain that he brought in childbirth.
2. We know that Jabez stood out among his brothers.
3. We know that God granted his request.

In addition to all of these things, the most important thing to note is that Jabez had a special character to his life that caused the Biblical writer to pause and elaborate on this man’s life in the midst of a genealogy that traced back to Adam.

What was the content of the prayer of Jabez? That is, how should we pray for ourselves?

1. **Lord, explode your blessings in my life.**

Many of us have a barrier in praying for our lives to be blessed. Perhaps one of these two reasons explains our barrier.

- (1) We do not understand God’s blessing.

God’s blessing is not something that happens to us when we sneeze, but the outpouring of God’s supernatural power upon our lives. God’s blessing is not about material blessings. God’s blessing is His provision of what we cannot provide for ourselves.

- (2) We do not understand the person God blesses.

Deuteronomy 28 helps us to understand the person God blesses. God blesses the person who is obedient to Him. So, the prayer for God to bless us, Biblically understood, is also a commitment that you are going to be obedient to God.

Notice the general nature of Jabez' prayer. He only wants for his life what God wants. Remember Matthew 6:33. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you.

2. **Lord, expand my borders.**

We ought to want to have maximum impact on our city, region, state, nation, and world. For the people of Israel, land was not so much about possession as it was influence. God gave His people the Promise Land so that they would have influence throughout the world.

JOHN NEWTON wrote:
THOU ART COMING TO A KING
LARGE PETITIONS WITH THEE BRING;
FOR HIS GRACE AND POWER ARE SUCH
NONE CAN EVER ASK TOO MUCH

3. **Lord, be with me.**

As our blessings and borders grow, we will soon find ourselves involved in things bigger than us. We will not survive long unless the hand of the Lord is upon us. The presence of God is a blessing.

4. **Lord, build protection around me.**

We better be careful in praying this prayer. If the Lord blesses us, enlarges our borders, and His hand is upon us, Satan is going to become real frustrated. As much as God wants to bless, Satan cannot stand God blessing us. Unfortunately, the more we are blessed, the more we are going to be tempted to feel over-confident in our own abilities. The result will be a temptation to fall into evil. We must pray for God's protection. The protection of God is a blessing. Sometimes, we must pray, "Lord, protect me from me."

Final Warning: You better pray all of this prayer or none of this prayer.

Final Thoughts: How do you make this prayer your prayer?

- (1) Don't be afraid to pray for God's blessing to fall on your life.
- (2) Pray that you will be a blessing to others.