

Day 3

Today's Scripture reading: 1 Chronicles 4:9-10

“There was a man named Jabez who was more honorable than any of his brothers. His mother named him Jabez^a because his birth had been so painful.¹⁰ He was the one who prayed to the God of Israel, “Oh, that you would bless me and expand my territory! Please be with me in all that I do, and keep me from all trouble and pain!” And God granted him his request.”

Backstory:

Unless you've done a 'Read Through The Bible In A Year' program, chances are you've never read these two verses. Almost no one reads the first 8 chapters of 1 Chronicles, because it's just a bunch of genealogies. But tucked away in the middle of 8 chapters of 'so and so begat so and so' are these two awesome verses that tell the story of a man named Jabez.

Jabez literally means 'he will cause pain.' His birth was so excruciating that his mom---through gritted teeth and agonizing cries---told her husband, 'His name will be PAIN!' And apparently growing up with a name like that---growing up around a mom who constantly reminded him of the pain he'd caused her, affected Jabez deeply and inspired him to rewrite his story by living down his name. He didn't want to be known as a 'bringer of pain,' but rather a 'bringer of life.'

So he prays a prayer that's often misunderstood. Jabez asks God to 1) Bless him; 2) Enlarge his territory; 3) Let God's hand rest on him; and 4) Keep him from evil. At first blush, it feels like Jabez is asking for an easy life filled with bounty, blessing, and smooth sailing, but I don't think that's what's happening here.

What we often miss is the last line of his prayer---*that I may not cause pain.*

Jabez' motivation wasn't personal gain; it wasn't an uncomplicated, undemanding, unchallenging life. He wanted God to give him the necessary resources and abilities to make life better for others. He asked God to fill his life with good things; so he could stop bringing pain and start bringing life. He was asking for more and more of God's blessing; so he could be more and more of a

blessing to the world around him. *So God granted his request.*

Think about it:

How often do we pray selfishly, asking God to make our lives easier and easier, with little or no thought about the needs of others?

What if we asked God to pour out His blessing on us so *that* we'd have more to offer others? What if every time He increased our income or expanding our influence our first thought was, 'How can I use this to make life better for someone else?' What if when we ask God to protect us and empower us it was for the purpose of us being better equipped to protect and empower the marginalized and oppressed? What if we started asking God to loose the chains of addiction and temptation in our lives so we can support and encourage others in their journey to wholeness?

Do you think God would grant our requests? The story of Jabez says He will.

So let's pray for more and more of God's life to be poured out on our church so we have more and more life to give Las Vegas.

DAY THREE JOURNAL

What does this say about God? _____

What does this say about people? _____

What am I going to do about it? I will _____
