

# Prayer of jabez essay



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Prayer is one subject that every serious Christian holds very important in their spiritual lives. Through it, a child of God talks to his/her Father in heaven. It is a means of communication to God as prescribed in the Bible. Thus, given the importance of it in the minds of Christians in general, it's not surprising that a book which has prayer as a theme, much less one that promises positive results in the practice of it, finds a huge market among the majority of people who profess allegiance to the Christian faith.

This is, without a doubt, the reason for the great success of Bruce Wilkinson's book, *The Prayer of Jabez*. Its website claimed that the books already sold by 2001 alone have reached the total of 9 million copies; and it is still selling today ([http://www. prayerofjabez. com/](http://www.prayerofjabez.com/)). A book of this standing requires a careful scrutiny among those who are cautious and particular as to the quality of spiritual feeding it is actually able to give to its consumers. First, a best-seller status is not a guarantee to the spiritual/biblical soundness of any book which happens to be in the category of a religious literature.

A soaring sales in the market does not necessarily reflect a high spiritual standing according to biblical criteria. And since *The Prayer of Jabez* is questionable in many ways, especially, in its emphases and general teachings on prayer, a critique on some of its premises will be presented in the following paragraphs. 1. ) It is based not on the Scriptures' clear teachings on prayer. As can be noted, all of the arguments in the book are based on the little known passage of 1 Chronicles 4: 9-10. This particular passage tells about a person whose name was Jabez.

He was described as an “ honorable person” and one who has excelled his brethren in this position. There is no extra information given in the Bible as to some details which can help the readers conclude for the reason why Jabez was given such an accolade. To expand the story into such an extent as to fill in details into its gaps is plain speculation on the part of any author who would venture to use Jabez’s story to teach prayer. There are many passages in the Bible that has prayer as its theme, and about which Christian writers can use as scriptural foundation in teaching the subject of prayer.

How about Jesus’ teaching on prayer in Matthew 6: 5-13? In Jesus’ teaching, he clearly taught his disciples to pray exactly after the pattern which he gave them. Of course, the story of Jabez can then be used as a supplement, but never as a doctrinal passage on prayer that makes it more authoritative than Jesus’ clear teaching on prayer. Besides, in the order of God’s progressive revelation of his redemptive plan, which he made plainly clear in the person of Jesus Christ, Jabez’s prayer life is but a “ shadow” compared to “ substance” which can be found in the life of Jesus as shown in the New Testament.

This is not to say that the Old Testament is less authoritative than the New Testament; it only clarifies how people should take and interpret the whole Bible. There are many revelations of God in the lives of his people in the ancient times which he made very very clear in the New Testament. With regards to prayer, Jabez’s prayer, definitely, cannot be used as a secret magic formula for making God answer in such a way as to grant the petitioner everything he/she might ask God.

Furthermore, Wilkinson presented in his book Jabez's prayer as a kind of a cut-out phrase which anybody can use in their communion with God. In a sense, Wilkinson's promise is: use the prayer of Jabez word for word and God will grant your petitions. This is clearly not taught in the Bible; not by any of the biblical writers. 2. ) God answers on the basis of man's merits. What Bruce Wilkinson is suggesting in his book is that those who would pray could only secure a hearing from God when one's character is like that of Jabez.

Wilkinson focused on the words " more honorable" which seem to be in the English translation a description of Jabez' character that earned him the favored position that he had which gave God the occasion for blessing him. A more accurate translation from the original text in Hebrew could be translated " more regarded. " As is consistent with God's dealings with his people in the Bible, Jabez's case was another story of God having chosen to show his unmerited favor on this otherwise obscure Old Testament figure.

Wilkinson teaches that God's blessing depends heavily on man's part – on ones ability to make himself worthy of God's good will. This is not the position of the Bible. The New Testament teaches that all of the blessings which could be given by God, he gave to all believers in and through the person of Christ. In prayer, Christians are heard and answered not on any other bases apart from Christ (Eph. 1: 3-4). 3. ) Prayer depends on man's ability to discover the right formula. The tone of Wilkinson all throughout the book seems to suggest that one can just discover the right words.

It's like telling its readers that so many are praying worthless prayers and essentially wasting their time in that they haven't discovered the prayer of

Jabez. Bruce Wilkinson seems to be saying again and again that the secret is just there in that obscure portion of the Scripture in 1 Chronicles 4: 9-10, in the way Jabez articulated his request to God. In a way, what Wilkinson is saying is that in the area of prayer, Jabez is smarter. He even discovered in his prayer how to manipulate God, and this is the way to pray the right prayer. 4. ) We are not totally dependent on God.

In page 44 of *The Prayer of Jabez*, Wilkinson said that in certain things, man needs the power of God. In ordinary daily activities of life, man does not need God. However, in doing extra-ordinary exploits in life like taking huge leaps, that's when we need God. It's in those times when things are beyond our ability to perform, that's when we need miracles, and that's the time that we need no less than God Himself. Again, this is not the teaching of the Bible. According to Apostle John, all things exist because it is God who wills the very existence of those things.

And things exist for God's glory (Rev. 4: 11). 5. ) Prayer is all about getting what we ask. In Jesus' teaching on prayer in Matthew 6, a portion there is allotted for the petitioning of the children of the kingdom to ask God for his "kingdom to come on earth." Along with that line, petition for the "will of God" to happen on earth is also expressed. Hence, prayer is a means – among other things – of conforming the character of the petitioner to the heart of God. Wilkinson, however, in *The Prayer of Jabez*, teaches that what matters in prayer is to secure answer from God.

Conformity to the will of God seems to be not that important. It is not explained, nor emphasized throughout in the book. In 1 John 5: 14-15 and in

Romans 8: 16-17, the apostles highlighted the necessity of conforming to the will of God. They even suggested that suffering is part and parcel of God's arrangement for the lives of his saints. The implication is that there will be times when Christians will not get from God exactly what they wish. For sure, God answers the prayers of his children; but the Scriptures does not guarantee a positive answer to all of the whims of his children.

Answers are secured for those who are totally submitted to the will of God. In The Prayer of Jabez, no mention of asking God to change the petitioner's heart. No talk about sanctification. Prayer is not depicted as a meaningful exchange between God and his children, but instead, a means to get God in a position where he has no choice but to give the petitioner what he asked for. In pages 91-92, the author assures his readers " supernatural blessings now. " The Bible however emphasizes sanctification as the Spirit's work now in the lives of the people of God.