



## **Week 1: Not Your Average...Year**

### **January 4-5, 2020 | Tim Harlow**

In the first week of our "Not Your Average..." series, Pastor Tim walked us through a little-known Old Testament prayer. In it, we learn how to pray for God's blessing in this new year!

#### **CELEBRATE**

At the beginning of your small group time, it's good to share about your week and share with each other how you're doing. So, spend some time, right now, connecting before jumping into the discussion questions. You can use the *Connect* section as a guide. If you're doing this Study Guide on your own, take a moment to focus your mind on God and what He might want you to hear today.

#### **CONNECT**

1. Talk about the best moment from this holiday season. Why choose that moment?
2. Talk about what comes to mind when you hear the word "blessing." Give a few examples of times in life when you've been "blessed."

Before watching the *sermon*, or moving on in this study, take a minute to remember that God is always with you. Pray as a group for God to bless your conversation and open your eyes and hearts to what He wants you to hear.

## REFLECT

Before moving forward in your study, take a moment and review the key points from this weekend's message.

1. Someone said that in all of us are 3 people: the person we are right now, the person we could be for evil if we allowed Satan to control our life, or the person we could be for good if we allowed God to control our life.
2. There are four parts to Jabez's (and our) prayer: a prayer for blessing, a prayer for growth, a prayer for God's companionship, and a prayer for protection.

**SCRIPTURES USED IN THE MESSAGE:** 1 Chronicles 4:9-10, 2 Chronicles 16:9, Proverbs 10:22, Matthew 6:7, 7:11; John 10:27-29, Acts 11:21, James 4:2-3

## RESPOND

1. Talk about a thought, phrase, or moment from this weekend's message that stuck out to you. What made it resonate with you?
2. Read Ephesians 3:14-21. Read slowly, making a note of any words or phrases that stand out to you. This prayer is written by a man named Paul to churches throughout a city called Ephesus. Paul has history with this city; some *crazystuff* happened to him there in Acts 19:24-41. This prayer is meant to be an encouragement and a blessing to the people in Ephesus who followed Jesus.
3. A blessing is a way of speaking goodness and encouragement to someone as they enter different stages of life. After reading Paul's blessing, talk about the different types of encouragement you heard. Which one stood out to you the most? Why?
4. Paul talks about the Father, the Spirit, and Jesus Christ (3:14-15). Traditionally this is known as "the Trinity." Talk about the specific idea Paul attaches to each "person" of the Trinity. How would your life change in 2020 if you involved the Father, Jesus, and the Spirit to bring these ideas and attributes into your own life?
5. In 3:18, Paul talks about all "the saints." In his language, "saints" refers to anyone who has set aside their life to follow Jesus. Talk about the blessing Paul hopes all the saints will enjoy. How does the amazing power of God's love change the way you look at life ahead in this new year? What area of life have you set aside as perhaps "too big" for God? Why?
6. Pastor Tim talked about how Jabez prayed a bold and very specific prayer for himself. Talk about how Jabez's prayer mirrors the end of Paul's blessing to the Ephesians (3:20-21). Talk about how God doing "immeasurably more than we ask or imagine" changes the size of your prayer for this coming year. Where do you need God's power to accomplish critical relational, emotional, spiritual, or vocational moves this coming year?
7. Spend some time as a group reading the Jabez prayer (in 1 Chronicles 4:9-10). Talk together about a specific area in each person's life where you are asking for a blessing in the coming year. Plan to check in throughout 2020 to see how God is working through this prayer.

**Closing Prayer:**

*God, you do more than we could ever think to ask. Forgive us then for hesitating to ask. We know you love us like a Father - a good Father who wants the best for his kids. Help us not only to ask for your blessing but to live into the blessings you give, even when they aren't quite what we asked for or imagined. You are always good to us. We love you.*

Amen.