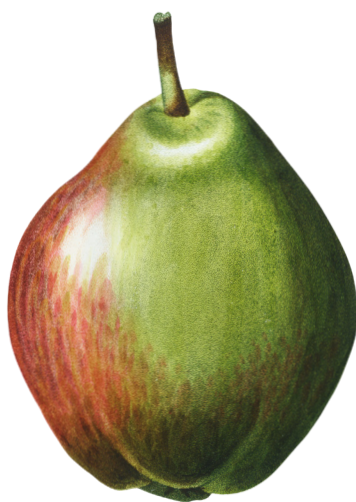




LESSON 6

Keep Me from Evil



“And Jabez called on the GOD of ISRAEL saying,
‘Oh, that You would BLESS me *indeed*, and ENLARGE
my *territory*, that Your HAND would be *with* me, and that
You would KEEP me from *evil*, that I may *not* CAUSE *pain*!’
So GOD *granted* him what he *requested*.”

1 Chronicles 4:10



IN SEASON

Keep Me from Evil

LESSON 6

Keep Me from Evil...The Prayer of Jabez
1 Chronicles 4:1-23

I remember the last time I dove into the prayer of Jabez. It was probably 15-20 years ago. Some of my Christian friends were laminating index cards with 1 Chronicles 4:9-10 on it. I was given one of these cards and asked to join a 40-day challenge to pray this prayer and “see what God would do.” No one studied the verses; no one read the chapters and verses before or after these two verses. I’m sure the author of this movement did not mean it to be a strategy to “get what you want from God,” but for some of my friends, that is what it became. Over the forty days, as circumstances came and went in our circle of sisters, some became frustrated that “it wasn’t working.” Some felt “it was working.”

From the beginning, something didn’t feel right to me. It felt like an attempt to manipulate God. When we have overwhelming needs, it can be a temptation to follow a set of directions to overcome the problems and meet the needs. I have sometimes done this without considering the motivational flaw of my actions. I am still trying to have something “to do or say” in the process. I am still trying to have control over the outcome. I have not truly surrendered the situation to God’s will and hand. It is different than obedience to God’s prescribed directions to me discovered through Bible study, prayer, and repentance. It is my lazy approach to doing what I want God’s will to be.

I think our little gang’s mistake was not studying the scripture we were reciting. We missed the fact that this was a prayer for God’s will to be done, to bless Him. To see the blessings HE wanted, over the ones we wanted, in the ways we pictured them. That’s what didn’t feel right to me. It was about us getting our way and not about God getting HIS way. I learned from this experience that even in praying for myself, I am releasing my requests to His will. I may want things to change or look a certain way, but above all, I do not want to grieve God in the process. I do not want to “make myself a blessing” and cause pain or sin in the process. So, join me this week in studying this scripture. My prayer for us is that we would be blessed indeed because our heart’s desire grows stronger and purer to bless our Heavenly Father.

I know it will be a challenge to read all 23 of these verses with all the names we cannot pronounce correctly, but try reading this section out loud to yourself. It may be even a little entertaining. After you have read it, then pray. Ask for understanding and revelation. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you study and to keep your time with Him protected and your mind focused.

After reading this lineage of Judah, do you wonder why all the names are recorded? I do. We don’t know much or anything about many of them, and yet God has recorded their names. Hebrew culture does not give a name carelessly. Every name means something. It may be given as a mark of what the parent hoped this person would become or live out. It may mark a situation occurring at the time of birth. It may be a description of the physical attributes of the babe. If you were to look up the meanings of all these names, you would see that sometimes a family had God-honoring hopes for their children, some had self-centered or circumstance-related choices for their children. Some who had strange names to us became great in the Lord. Caleb, for instance, means dog, but he became a brave and mighty spy



for Israel. Some meanings get lost in cultural translation. The fact that God sees and records these names tells me that He sees us all. He knows our name. He told Moses in Exodus 33.17, and He tells us, “*You have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name.*”

Though a name is important and can be a hopeful edifying label, it can also misrepresent and bring shame. Until we know who we are in Christ and the names He calls us (beloved chosen, treasure, prize, redeemed), we will be exposed to the names others call us, or we call ourselves. If you have given your life to Jesus, your name is on His lips; you are named “the one I love.”

1. Read 1 Chronicles 4:9 NKJV. What does Jabez’s name mean?

2. Even though Jabez’s mother named him because of her own sorrow, despite his name tag, what character trait caused him to stand out from his brothers?

3. We don’t know all the things that made Jabez honorable, but we do know one thing from verse 10: “*And Jabez _____ .*”

4. Chuck Smith has said, “A man of prayer is always outstanding.” How does your prayer life shape your character?

Read verses 9-10 out loud again.

5. Who is Jabez praying for?

6. Who is Jabez praying to?

7. What are the five requests Jabez asks of the Lord? “*Oh that You would _____ , and _____ , that _____ , _____ , and that You would _____ , that _____ .*”



IN SEASON

Keep Me from Evil

LESSON 6

Jeremiah 29:11-13 *“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me, and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.”*

John 14:13-14 *“And whatever you ask in My Name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My Name, I will do it.”*

Calling on the Name of Jesus, calling on the Name of the God of Israel, means that the person who is calling is in relationship with Him and wants what He wants.

8. As you consider these requests, from what you know of God, do any of them seem out of His will? Why? Why not?

That You would bless me indeed...

Though Jabez is praying for himself, he is not praying selfishly. He is asking for a blessing, yes, but a **blessing indeed**. In the Hebrew language, the word **indeed** is not different from the words **bless me**. It is a repeat of the word **bless me**. It is like saying **bless me, bless me**. Whenever a word is repeated in Hebrew, it takes on a larger meaning, the perfect tense of the word. For instance, a common greeting in Hebrew is ***Shalom-Shalom***. *Shalom* means *peace*. So ***Shalom-Shalom*** means *perfect peace, complete peace to you*. To say **bless me indeed** is like saying, *“Don’t just bless me, but bless me bless me. Bless me with YOUR perfect blessing, YOUR complete blessing.”* Asking for a blessing indeed is asking for the ultimate blessing of God’s choosing for His glory. When God blesses us indeed, it is His choosing and with His abundance which overflows to others and to generations that follow us.

On Blessing indeed: “Let the grace of God prompt it, let the choice of God appoint it, let the bounty of God confer it, and then the endowment shall be something God-like indeed.” (Charles Spurgeon)

Sometimes a “blessing indeed” does not come in a pretty package. Sometimes a pretty package is not really a blessing.

9. Now that we understand what a perfect blessing is, what are some of the “blessings indeed” God has worked into your life and how have they blessed the Him in return?

A decorative banner at the top of the page features a white rectangular box with a thin black border. The box contains the text 'IN SEASON' in a simple, uppercase font at the top right, 'Keep Me from Evil' in a large, elegant cursive font in the center, and 'LESSON 6' in a simple, uppercase font at the bottom center. The background of the banner is a collage of various fruits, including a large red apple on the left and several green olives on the right, all set against a light, textured background.

IN SEASON

Keep Me from Evil

LESSON 6

10. How do you want God to bless you?

With this understanding of blessing, let's look at the next request Jabez makes: *Enlarge my borders*. This word, **borders**, is also translated as *shores or territory*. During this time in history, Israel was attempting to conquer Canaan. God was enlarging Israel's territory and driving out wicked nations in the process. If we have received Him, God has made His home in our hearts. It is His territory, as are our workspaces, our professional influence, and the family influence He has trusted us with. There are enemies that want to take that territory in our lives or keep us from inhabiting the ground God owns. As you pray, "*enlarge my borders*," it may involve spiritual warfare. You may have to battle pride, fear, and other strongholds.

Answer one or more of these questions, and pray about your answers.

11. What does it mean for you as you pray "*enlarge my borders*"? What are the strongholds you battle? Are there scriptures you can apply to keep you courageous as you take new territory? Where is God enlarging your shores? If you don't know how to answer, ask the Holy Spirit to show you.

I pray for you, sisters, and for myself, that we would be free of the restrictions the enemy would bind us with and that we would be hungry to move humbly into the spaces He has made for us to tell His story.

2 Corinthians 10:4 "*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds... bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ....*"

David, speaking to the enemy Philistines in 1 Samuel 17:47, says, "*Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD's, and He will give you into our hands.*"

Ephesians 6:11 "*Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*"

12. Write out Psalm 44:3.



IN SEASON

Keep Me from Evil

LESSON 6

This verse is a segue into the next part of Jabez's prayer: **Your Hand would be with me.** Our first thought on asking God for His Hand on US is usually that with it comes favor, healing, power, restoration, and victory. Scripture confirms that is so. The word for **Hand** in Hebrew is *Yad*, occurring 1627 times in 1446 verses. It means *sign, monument, strength, power, and means of direction.*

13. Look up these verses and write what the Hand of God brings beside each one.

- Exodus 15:6
- Psalm 10:14
- Psalm 18:35
- Psalm 31:5
- Psalm 32:4
- Psalm 44:3
- Psalm 95:4-5
- Psalm 109:26-27
- Matthew 8:15
- Mark 16:19
- Acts 11:21

These few verses shine light on what it means to ask that the Hand of God would be upon us. Whether it be conviction of sin, power to preach, healing, or favor over enemies, God's Hand accomplishes it all. In fact, Moses would not move unless God's presence went with him (Exodus 33:15). Without His hand upon us, we should pause and pray also.

14. Read aloud Psalm 77:10-12. What has the Hand of God done in your life?

15. What is it that you want the Hand of God to do in you, through you, or for you today?

A decorative banner at the top of the page features a white rectangular box with a thin black border. The box contains the text 'IN SEASON' in a simple, uppercase font at the top right, 'Keep Me from Evil' in a large, elegant cursive font in the center, and 'LESSON 6' in a simple, uppercase font at the bottom center. The background of the banner is a collage of various fruits, including a large red apple on the left and several green olives on the right, all set against a light, textured background.

IN SEASON

Keep Me from Evil

LESSON 6

Keep me from evil...

The word **keep** here means *to fashion, accomplish, make, deal with, effect, and put in order*.

There is no shortage of evil to get in to or tripped up by in our world. I must admit I face temptations to live a small life. In other words, to not go out to the borders that God is enlarging. I am not courageous. My fear of facing evil is that I would dishonor God by how I respond to it, not that it would injure me. The fear is real because, in the past, I have either run when I should stand firm or I have stood when I should have run. I wonder if Jabez had some experience facing evil. He was certainly surrounded by Canaanite culture with its perverse practices. He had no doubt seen relatives and heard of ancestors who succumbed to subtle enticements of evil and paid a price.

16. What are the evils that threaten you?

17. Read Psalm 97:10 and Psalm 121:7. What does God promise His followers as they encounter evil?

18. Read John 17:15. Who has prayed for you as you live in a world where evil is called good and good is called evil?

Romans 16:19 teaches us to be wise in what is good and simple in what is evil, but Luke 6:35 says to love our enemies and do good to them because God is kind to the unthankful and the evil.

19. How do you reconcile these two verses as you follow the Lord? Specifically, how have you responded to evil and practically married these two commands? It will help others if you can share some of your life lessons in this area. Read Ephesians 5:15-16 for help.



IN SEASON

Keep Me from Evil

LESSON 6

The final and lasting encouragement to remember is that Jesus has beaten evil permanently. Read Galatians 1:4-5.

That I would not cause pain... Literally this word **pain** means *to be grieved, to cause displeasure, hurt, difficulty, grief, or to be sorry*. Jabez is asking the God of Israel to keep him from living out his name tag. Whether he has caused pain in the past, grieved God in some way, or been the victim of pain, we don't really know, but the experience has compelled him to include this line in his prayer. I know that as I look back on life situations, it hurts much worse to hurt someone else than it does to be hurt by someone. The worst pain is when we have grieved the Holy Spirit. Do you feel the begging in Jabez's heart to not be a grief to God or anyone He loves?

20. Ask God if you have or are grieving Him. What did He say?

21. Is there a person to whom you have caused pain? Read Ephesians 4:30-32. What is the Lord instructing you to do?

22. As we come to the last sentence in verse 10, fill in the blanks. "So _____ _____ him what he _____."

Read Psalm 17:6.

God bends, inclines, to hear us when we cry out to Him. Jabez was praying the will of God for himself to be a blessing. When we pray to be equipped to do God's will, to bless Him, checking our hearts for sin, ready to repent and desiring His hand upon us, HE ANSWERS EVERY TIME. If the King and creator of all things, THE most powerful and Holy God, is bending to hear my cry, I will pray. Jabez prayed to be an overcomer. Jesus has overcome every evil and the grave. He was blessed indeed and indeed blessed His Father with perfect obedience. His promise to us is our closing benediction this week.

"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Revelation 3:21).

