



Let's Consider . . .

A Mighty Little Prayer

1 Chronicles, chapters one through four, lists over 500 names representing the family tree of the Hebrew tribes. We often tend to skip over genealogy lists, especially one this long, but in the midst of the list of genealogies in 1 Chronicles 4 is a brief little prayer with giant results that should not be missed.

Verse 9 tells us Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez saying "I gave birth to him in pain". In the Old Testament times, names were given that would serve prophetically of the life one might lead. With a name like this then his future did not look promising.

Jabez was a man not remembered for any deed or any accomplishment, rather for his prayer request. In verse 10 he prayed to the God of Israel, "Oh that you would bless me and extend my lands! Please be with me in all that I do and keep me from all trouble and pain! And God granted him his request". Jabez recognized God as the giver of all his blessings and needs.

It was only a little prayer of four parts, but God granted his request. He asked God to:

- Bless Him – This may sound selfish at first, but he was fully aware of where his blessings came from. He did not specify the kind of blessings he wanted or when he wanted them or where. He left the fulfilling of this request to God.
- Expand his lands – He asked God to help him in his work. Asking for more territory was asking for more responsibility but that would also provide him more opportunities to influence others
- Keep him from trouble and pain - We live in a world full of sin and need to pray to God for help with the unavoidable evil that confronts us and causes us pain in our daily lives.
- Be with him in all he did – Beyond what happens as a result of the world we live in, we need to pray for help not only with what will confront us, but with that which results from within us – with our motives, desires and actions as we live in this world of evil.

Times today are much different than 20 even 50 years ago. The lay back hazy days of summer are gone and today we are confronted with so much to do that it may seem difficult to ask God to give us more responsibility. But with that petition, if we ask for the responsibility God will provide the means to achieve it. Remember our number one responsibility in life is to do His will.

This is not the prayer of a man satisfied with the ordinary or the status quo. He wanted all God had in store for him. I heard someone telling a joke about a man who arrived in heaven and was being shown around. He saw a place with all these boxes

with his name on them. He asked what was in all those boxes. The reply – those were all the blessings available for you but you didn't ask.

When you pray this prayer, remember to take time to make this petition on behalf of

- your family,
- your friends,
- your brothers and sisters at church,
- your.....,

then watch for the tremendous opportunities that avail themselves.

Work as if you were to live a hundred years, pray as if you were to die tomorrow.
Benjamin Franklin

Nehemiah grieved about the condition of those who survived the captivity and returned to Jerusalem. After he grieved for their condition, he didn't just brood about it, rather his first response was to pray. We can learn a lesson from his prayer in Nehemiah 1:4-11.

Nehemiah turned to God in prayer. This was not something he did after he exhausted all other options. Prayer is not to be a last ditch effort. It should be an immediate, instinctive response to our needs.

- He recognized the sovereignty of God – that He is the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenants with His people who are obedient.
- Prayed day and night. His prayer was not a one shot deal he expected God to just fulfill. We are told to pray without ceasing until our prayers are answered
- Acknowledged their sins.

This prayer in chapter one was not a one-time effort on Nehemiah's part. He appeared to be a man who often turned to God in prayer and there are other occasions when Nehemiah used prayer:

- During his conversation with the king 2:4
- After being ridiculed by Tobiah and Sanballat 4:4-5 - he didn't pray for revenge but for Gods will to be carried out.
- After threat of attack from his enemies 4:9 - combined prayer with preparation and planning
- When he reflected on the actions of his enemies 13:29
- When he reflected on his efforts in serving God 5:19. 13:14

"I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go". Abraham Lincoln

When is it time to pray?

When you don't feel well

When the kids just won't behave

When it seems you just can't take this job one day longer

When you are mad at everyone else or they are mad at you

You are out of work and need a job in a hurry

When you see a brother or sister in pain

When temptations just seem to come one right after the other

When you have lost someone close to you

When you feel overwhelmed with responsibility

When you need to be more aware of your own faults, not others

When the whole world is just getting you down

When you are in crisis, when you are not in crisis

In adversity and in prosperity

For your daily needs

When you have been blessed beyond measure

When a previous prayer has been answered

For opportunities to teach others

When you begin a study, when you end a study

Oh and don't forget – morning, noon, and evening.