

The Prayer of Jabez by Bruce Wilkinson: A critique by Todd Tyszka

"Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, 'Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.' And God granted his request." (1 Chronicles 4:10 NIV)

From the start of the book the reader is being offered a method for success in their spiritual life by one daily prayer. This is a very bold statement that Wilkinson needs to prove from scripture. Instead he attempts to prove it from personal experiences through testimonies. The reason for this is obvious. Because no one prayed Jabez' prayer in the Bible except for one person, Jabez. Wilkinson offers himself and his ministry as the testimony of "almost shocking evidence of what God's grace and Jabez praying can do" (pg. 89). Really? It's due to a discovered prayer formula of Jabez? We will also look at what happened to his infamous "Dream for Africa," the crowning achievement of his praying the "Prayer of Jabez."

NOTE: This is not a complete list and compiled from various sources. I do not have a copy of the book personally but if I did, this list would be longer.

1. It says in the **Preface (pg. 7)** that this is "a daring prayer that God always answers." This is NOT true. This is IDOLATRY. Psalm 66:18 tells us that "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear." And Proverbs 21:13 warns, "Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be heard." James 4:3-4 explains another reason for unanswered prayer: "You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?" "The effective, fervent prayer of a **righteous** man avails much." James 5:16
2. In the next sentence of the **Preface (pg. 7)** it says it is "tucked away in the Bible" but that Bruce believes it contains "THE KEY to a life of extraordinary favor with God." This is NOT true. This is IDOLATRY. There seems to be more of a whiff of Gnosticism here -- an appeal to a piece of esoteric knowledge that brings those who know it special blessings from God. If this prayer, prayed word for word day after day, has such power to revolutionize our Christian lives, then why didn't our Lord and his apostles stress it?
3. He then claims in the **Preface (pg. 7)** that "thousands of believers who are applying its truths are seeing miracles happen on a regular basis." This is shameful promotion (manipulation), and sets up false hopes.
4. "The next morning, I prayed Jabez's prayer word for word. And the next. And the next. Thirty years later, I haven't stopped. If you were to ask me what sentence—other than my prayer for salvation—has revolutionized my life and ministry the most, I would tell you it was the cry of a gimber named Jabez." (pg. 11). This is probably not true but if this HAS been his mantra for over 30 years, why has he held off giving us this incredible discovery for that many years? If you had a prayer that was answered exponentially like he promises, wouldn't you tell everyone?

5. "How do I know that it will significantly impact you? Because of my experience and the testimony of hundreds of others around the world with whom I've shared these principles. Because, even more importantly, the Jabez prayer distills God's powerful will for your future." (pg. 12) See how he treats the prayer as something special? It "distills God's powerful will...?" And on what basis does he make these claims? On the basis of subjective experiences. Nothing in the prayer actually mentions the ultimate purpose of man, which is to glorify God/worship Him(cf. John 4:21-24, Ecc. 12:13-14, etc).
6. Jabez was a "man who had no future." (pg.12) What? We have no idea what kind of future Jabez would have had.
7. Wilkinson presents Jabez's prayer as a sanctified incantation that can guarantee us blessings. He states "I want to show you just how dramatically each of Jabez's requests can release something miraculous in your life." (pg.15)
8. Wilkinson then cites men who have prayed the same prayer of Jabez for 15, 10 and 5 years with similar results (pg.16).
9. "It reveals that your Father longs to give you so much more than you may have ever thought to ask for." (pg.17) The Bible says God simply gave him his request, not "so much more than...[Jabez] thought to ask for."
10. This enterprising individual sought to counter the precarious future that such a name "defined" (p. 21). This is not true and again, a gross misrepresentation. His name does not mean pain (addressed later).
11. Jabez was "weighed down by the sorrow of his past and the dreariness of his present" (pg. 22) due to his name. His name sounds similar to, but does not mean, "pain" (addressed later).
12. "Is it possible that God wants you to be more 'selfish' in your prayers?" (Ibid.) He asks this question in light of Jabez' prayer that the Lord would bless him indeed. He paraphrases this petition this way. "Father, oh, Father! Please bless me! And what I really mean is ... bless me a lot!" (pg. 22). No, God doesn't want you to be selfish in your prayers.
13. This led him to pray "the biggest, most improbable request imaginable" (pg. 22). Really?
14. The author talks about how maybe Jabez was born breech and that was the pain his mother felt, or maybe his father died or abandoned the family, or maybe the family had fallen into financial straits, etc.. All of this is just conjecture and for the most part is harmless, however, the author does not

stop there. By the time he was an adult, Jabez believed and fervently hoped in the God of miracles and new beginnings. (Pg. 22) Where did the author get this insight? It is not recorded in scripture. It doesn't even say in the Bible that he had put his faith in God! What if his brothers and his community were full blown baal worshipers and Jabez was not as bad as them and decided to call upon the God of his forefathers? Not because he had great faith in Him, but because he wanted to see what would happen? Couldn't God bless him just to show the community who He is, not because Jabez was such a hero of faith? I have no idea and that is the point, neither does the author. We don't know about his faith. To go further then what we know is to go outside of scripture for your own purposes. That is adding to Scripture.

15. *"so many Christians are not desperate as Jabez was to receive it!" (pg.23)*
How do we know how "desperate" Jabez was to receive anything?
16. "When we seek God's blessing as the ultimate value in life, we are throwing ourselves entirely into the river of His will and power and purposes for us." (Pg. 24) Seeking blessings are **"the ultimate value in life?"** Really? No! This is IDOLATRY! Do you see what the author is doing here? He is making a selfish prayer for our own blessings into an unselfish placing of ourselves in God's will. Notice too that he says when we make this our ultimate value in life... I thought **pleasing God and bringing glory to Christ should be our ultimate goal in life**. By the way, where is Christ in all of this? I praise God that when Jesus was in the garden of Gethsemane He did not pray like this but instead, he prayed like this: (Matthew 26:39 NIV) Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." His Father's will was utmost in His mind and I believe should be in ours also.
17. This book espouses Word of Faith doctrine. I commend Wilkinson for his attempt to distance himself from the Word of Faith Movement (pg. 24), but he fails with the rest of the book. He mischaracterizes the movement by implying that Word of Faith (WoF) seeks blessings from God that God does not wish for them, while Prayer of Jabez (PoJ) only seek blessings God wishes for them. This is not how the WoF would explain it. He is also saying that speaking this prayer is creating miracles and blessings which is exactly what the WoF movement teaches.
18. " . . . the Jabez blessing focuses like a laser on our wanting for ourselves nothing more and nothing less than what God wants for us." (pg 24)
Really?
19. "Let me tell you a guaranteed by-product of sincerely seeking His blessing: Your life will become marked by miracles" (pg. 24-25). Another

- false guarantee. Is it true that if I ask the Lord to bless me richly, my life will be full of miracles?
20. The fictitious story about Mr. Jones in heaven (**pg 25-27**) is awful theology.
 21. Wilkinson cites Matt.7:7 and James 4:2, and then interprets them as follows: “Even though there is no limit to God’s goodness, if you didn’t ask Him for a blessing yesterday, you didn’t get all that you were supposed to have.” (**pg. 27**) There is no Scriptural support for this claim and this takes these passages beyond any meaning of the original writer’s intentions.
 22. “Jabez was blessed simply because he refused to let any obstacle, person, or opinion loom larger than God’s nature. And God’s nature is to bless.” (**pg. 29**). Where does Scripture say this about Jabez?
 23. Through a simple, believing prayer, you can change your future. You can change what happens one minute from now. (**Pg. 29**) This prayer? Really? Guaranteed?
 24. Here is what Wilkinson says about the petition to enlarge one’s territory: “The next part of the Jabez prayer — a plea for more territory — is where you ask God to enlarge your life so you can make a greater impact for Him” (**pg. 30**).”

Huh? How do we get there from Jabez’ prayer? How do we rightly, correctly, and justifiably interpret that petition to mean that we are to ask God to enlarge our life so that we can make a greater impact for him? For Wilkinson, the conclusion is simple: “From both the context and the results of Jabez’s prayer, we can see that there was more to his request than a simple desire for more real estate. He wanted more influence, more responsibility, and more opportunity to make a mark for the God of Israel” (**pg. 30**). All right, then, let’s think for a moment about what he has said. First, he speaks about the context. What context? Wilkinson has not taken the time to give us any semblance of a context. How can he now appeal to that which is unknown to us? If you go back and look at the abrupt appearance of this prayer, what can you deduce concerning its context? This violate the principle that we should not add to what Scripture actually says (see Prov. 30:5-6; 1 Cor. 4:6). No place in the passage is this stated or even hinted at. This is complete eisegesis (reading into a passage what isn’t there). Then Wilkinson goes on to say that our use of this prayer as a rote petition will be a request for ministry opportunities. Does this prayer even remotely make this request? This is making it mean whatever you want it to mean.

25. Acts of divine providence (God's preserving and governing of the world through second causes) in providing ministry opportunities are renamed as "Jabez appointments" (pg. 37)
26. And "Jabez experiences" (pg. 38).
27. God will happily "credit your account." (Ch. 2)
28. "If Jabez had worked on Wall Street, he might have prayed, 'Lord, increase the value of my investment portfolios.' When I talk to presidents of companies, I often talk to them about this particular mind-set. When Christian executives ask me, 'Is it right for me to ask God for more business?' my response is, 'Absolutely!' If you're doing your business God's way, it's not only right to ask for more, but He is waiting for you to ask" (pg. 42)
29. Interpretation of this petition causes Wilkinson to conclude that praying this prayer in the 21st century has to do with "appointments to keep" (pg. 42).
30. Praying this prayer is synonymous with asking God for miracles (pg. 43). Not really.
31. "God always intervenes when you put His agenda before yours and go for it! Amazingly, if you have prayed to the Lord to expand a border, you will recognize His divine answer. You'll have a front-row seat in the life of miracles" (pg. 44).
32. "When you take little steps, you don't need God." But when you take big steps, according to Wilkinson, "which are beyond our ability to accomplish," then "you release miracles." Contradicts John 15:5, "Without me you can do nothing." (pg. 44).
33. He states that, "As God's chosen, blessed sons and daughters, we are expected to attempt something large enough that failure is guaranteed... unless God steps in." He then continues, "It is God's plan for His most-honored servants." (pg. 47) Again, there is no evidence from Scripture to support these claims, and it begs the question of testing God. To "jump into the river" expecting God to rescue us in utter foolishness.
34. "Notice that Jabez did not begin his prayer by asking for God's hand to be with him. At that point, he didn't sense the need. Things were still manageable" (pg. 48). There is no biblical basis for concluding that the four requests of Jabez's prayer form the kind of sequence that Wilkinson

assumes. In his interpretation, each request in turn must be fulfilled (and an undetermined amount of time must pass) before the next is warranted.

35. Wilkinson makes the claim that **we** make God great (**pg. 49**) Wilkinson states "If seeking God's blessings is our ultimate act of worship, and asking to do more for Him is our utmost ambition, then asking for God's hand upon us is our strategic choice to sustain and continue the great things that God had begun in our lives. That's why you could call God's hand on you "the touch of greatness." You do not become great; you become dependent on the strong hand of God. Your surrendered need turns into His unlimited opportunity. **And He becomes great through you.**" (**pg. 49**)
36. "seeking God's blessings is our ultimate act of worship" (**pg. 49**). This is wrong. Scripture affirms the believer's uppermost good is to honor and glorify God. It is essentially self-centeredness to say that seeking God's blessings is the all-encompassing goal in life. It is disconcerting to read that praying for God's blessing is the paramount "act of worship," for the Bible declares that glorifying the Lord is the essence of worship (Psalm 86:12; Rom. 15:6; 2 Thess. 1:12).
37. Wilkinson draws some more erroneous conclusions about ministry:
"When you start asking in earnest—begging—for more influence and responsibility with which to honor Him, God will bring opportunities and people into your path. You can trust Him that He will never send someone to you whom you cannot help by His leading strength. (**Ch. 3**)" Not true. God sends detractors to try us by fire and to refine our faith. Some may be sent by God so that His Word through us might condemn them for their hard hearts. Wilkinson's careless approach implies that nothing but overtly "good" things will come our way. Tell that to Paul, Peter, and all the saints who have suffered for their faith.
38. Chapter four espouses the "numbers game" where "If we don't have one hundred kids in each club by the end of the week, we should consider it a failure" (**pg. 57**). Wilkinson and his group asked the Lord for thirty decisions for salvation by the end of the first day (**pg. 58**).
39. God blessed their efforts beyond expectation, "but right in line with the scope of our Jabez prayer." (**Ch. 4**) What kind of message does this send? Are we "failing" because we don't pray the Jabez prayer every morning? Is it because our faith is too small? Is it because we're not trying hard enough? And what about all the others that have witnessed faithfully and have seen little or no "results"? Are we even supposed to look for results? What is to be said — if anything — for being used of and by God to plant a seed in a person's life? Don't some just plow, water and/or plant?

40. "Jabez's last request is a brilliant but little-understood strategy for sustaining a blessed life" (pg. 63). Did Jabez find some secret that would guarantee God's blessing to all? More Gnosticism? Wilkinson certainly presents this fact as those who pray Jabez's prayer will receive and those who don't will miss it.
41. "The further along in a life of supernatural service you get, the more you'll need the final plea of Jabez's prayer" (pg. 64)
42. Chapter five says the prayer of Jabez will keep you from temptation/evil (pg. 65, implied from the story). Ridiculous.
43. "Staring blankly out at the traffic, I reached for the Jabez prayer" (pg. 65). Need a quick fix of spirituality? Just pray the Jabez prayer!
44. Without a temptation, we would not sin (pg. 67) That statement is totally unbiblical. It gives the impression that we only sin because of outside influences. The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done. Every inclination of the unregenerated heart is evil. (Genesis 8:21 NIV) When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. (James 1:13-15 NIV) Our own evil desires are what tempt us. So to say that without temptation we would not sin is unbiblical.
45. "That's why, like Jabez, we should pray for protection from deception" – (pg. 69). Jabez didn't pray that.
46. "Like Jabez, then, we should ask to be spared dangerous misjudgments" (pg. 70). Jabez didn't pray that.
47. "Like Jabez, we should plead to be kept from the powerful pull of what feels right to us but is wrong"(pg. 71). Jabez didn't pray that.
48. "Do you believe that a supernatural God is going to show up to keep you from evil and protect your spiritual investment? Jabez did believe, and he acted on his belief. Thereafter his life was spared from the grief and pain that evil brings." (pg. 74) Scripture doesn't say this, so it must be a new revelation by God to Mr. Wilkinson. Scripture simply says that God granted Jabez's prayer. It does not say he didn't suffer grief and pain from evil.

49. "With the fourth plea of Jabez as part of our life, we are now ready to move up to a higher level of honor and exponentially expanding blessings (pg. 75)." Yeah, sure.
50. Chapter six goes back to the mistranslation that Jabez was "more honorable" "Certainly God makes His love available to all, and Jesus came to earth so that 'whosoever' might call on His name and be saved. But Jabez, whose prayer earned him a 'more honorable' award from God, might have made the case that God does have favorites" (pg. 76).
51. Wilkinson asks "*what of Idbash, Hazeleponi, and Anub what honors and awards did they get from God?*" (pg.76) Just because it does not have their names does not mean others did not have God's blessings.
52. "Let me encourage you, friend, to reach boldly for the miracle" (pg. 82). Prayer of Jabez=miracle.
53. "As you repeat the steps, you will set in motion a cycle of blessing that will keep multiplying what God is able to do in and through you" (pg. 83). This is nothing more or less than a mantra or incantation principle. We seem to be guaranteed that as we repeat these steps we shall receive an ever-increasing cycle of blessing from God. This is IDOLATRY.
54. In a chapter called "**Welcome to God's Honor Roll**," Wilkinson writes, "You don't reach the next level of blessing and stay there. You begin again -- Lord, bless me indeed! Lord, please enlarge...! And so on. As the cycle repeats itself, you'll find that you are steadily moving into wider spheres of blessing and influence, spiraling ever outward and upward into a larger life for God.... You will know beyond doubt that God has opened heaven's storehouses because you prayed." Scary!
55. Wilkinson mentions the "mostly ordinary, easy-to-overlook people" listed in Hebrews 11 who won honor from God (Ch. 6). But Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah and Moses hardly fit that description. Then he fails to mention the faithful men and women who received the opposite of honor and blessing in this world: "...others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented— of whom the world was not worthy." (Hebrews 11:35-38)
God shows us that suffering -- not prosperity, power or influence -- is an essential part of our life in Christ. We cannot be one with Jesus without sharing His battles as well as triumphs. "For to you it has been granted on

- behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake," wrote Paul to the Philippians (Phil.1:29). Jesus told us to "count the cost" of discipleship -- not the blessings of the world: "If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you.... for they do not know the one who sent me." (John 15:20-21)
56. Wilkinson also promises something else: "This is the exponential growth I referred to at the close of the previous chapter. You have asked for and received more blessing, more territory, more power, and more protection. But the growth curve soon starts to spike upwards (**pg. 84**)" More unrealistic expectations and unfounded speculation.
57. The "miracle of Jabez?" (**Ch. 7**) Wilkinson is determined to see Jabez in every nook and cranny of the Christian life. And it is precisely that determination that colors every experience he relates in the book – witnessing opportunities become "miracles of Jabez", and personal success in ministry is not so much attributed to God's faithfulness and a general pattern of prayer and watchfulness, but to the recitation of the prayer of Jabez. ". . . I promise you that you will see a direct link: You will know beyond doubt that God has opened heaven's storehouse because you prayed" (**pg. 84**). This is IDOLATRY.
58. "Repeatedly during your life ... you will be so overwhelmed with God's graciousness that tears will stream down your face. I can remember saying to the Lord, 'It's too much! Hold some of your blessings back!' If you're like many who use the Jabez prayer, including me, you'll come to times in your life when you feel so blessed that you stop praying for more, at least for a while" (**pg. 84**).
- I can't speak for you, but I can never get enough of God's blessings in my life. If I'm truly praying for spiritual blessings and the Lord grants them I cannot conceive of a situation or time when I'd ask him to stop! But then again, I haven't prayed the Prayer of Jabez!
59. When sin is mentioned as a barrier to God, it is discussed only as something that the sinner himself can make right (**pg. 85**). This truly borders on the ancient heresy known as Pelagianism, in which sin is seen as a mere habit that a person himself can break rather than as a condition of the soul that can be cured only by Jesus Christ.
60. Instead of sin hindering a lifestyle of obedience for the glory of God, the author couches it in terms of hindrance to a "Jabez blessing": You should know that when you sin after experiencing the Jabez blessing, you'll experience a deeper grief over your disconnect from God than you ever thought possible. It's the pain that comes from having once tasted the exhilaration of God working in you at a higher level of fulfillment and then turning back" (**pg. 85**).

61. Pray it for thirty days and you'll get all these blessings. And not just pray it, keep a journal, mark it on a calendar, tape it everywhere, have others hold you accountable to pray the prayer (**chapter seven**)... Are you serious?
62. "I challenge you to make the Jabez prayer for blessing part of the daily fabric of your life. To do that, I encourage you to follow unwaveringly the plan outlined here for the next thirty days. By the end of that time, you'll be noticing significant changes in your life, and the prayer will be on its way to becoming a treasured, lifelong habit." (**pg. 86**). Jabez didn't pray this prayer for thirty days, he prayed it once, thousands of years ago, he was a Jew, and we are not even close to being Jabez or in his situation.
63. God is not a force/power that is released when we pray this prayer (**pg. 87**)
64. "In 1998" says the author, "World Teach was birthed from the womb of the Jabez prayer", which is the "miracle of Jabez" (**pg. 89**). No mention of Jesus, the Holy Spirit or Almighty God?
65. His concluding remarks at the end are all about his numbers (**Ch. 7**)
66. Wilkinson relates the success of his WorldTeach Ministry, stating:
"Humanly speaking, this kind of growth is unexplainable. We are only weak humans who seek to be clean and fully surrendered to our Lord, to want what he wants for His world, and to step forward in His power and protection to see it happen now. I don't know what you call that, but I have always called it the miracle of Jabez. (**pg. 90**)."
67. "Just by looking at what is happening, I can assure you that God still answers those who have a loyal heart and pray the Jabez prayer." (**pg. 90**). There's so much wrong with this statement. His evidence is success (the heathen has success) and to Wilkinson, it comes down to a loyal heart and praying this prayer?
68. "God wants your borders expanded at all times with every person." At one California college, he challenged students to pick some island somewhere in the world and then just go and "take [it] over" for God. Often -- as when his youth group prayed for thirty decisions for Christ by the end of their first day of beach evangelism -- his stories encourage us to specify to God the terms of our success. But is this scriptural? In Scripture, do God's people just decide what they want to do and then "Just do it!" -- even while recognizing that their accomplishments come only through God's strength? Do we ever find any apostle praying, "Lord, give me thirty decisions for Christ today"? The apostle Paul had some borders closed to him (see Acts 16:6-7). His desire to minister to the Romans was frustrated

repeatedly (see Rom. 1:11-13; 15:22). Satan stopped him from revisiting the Thessalonians (see 1 Thess. 2:18). In some cases, his preaching had very little positive effect (see Acts 17:32-34; 18:5-6). Were these restrictions on his ministry unnecessary? Did Paul lack faith? If he had prayed Jabez's prayer, then would those borders have opened and would he have had more success? James urges us always to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that" (James 4:15). Scripture requires our faithfulness without promising us success. Indeed, sometimes things will go badly for us, in spite of or because of our faith (see Job; Heb. 11:35-39; Acts 7; 1 Pet. 1:6-7; 4:12-19). Wilkinson's relentlessly upbeat stories, where praying Jabez's prayer has guaranteed triumph after triumph, don't acknowledge this.

69. He even goes as far as to say that the very purpose of redemption is to experience the blessing of "Jabez praying," which he describes this way: Your spiritual expectations undergo a radical shift, though it might be only slightly apparent to someone else. You feel renewed confidence in the present-tense power and reality of your prayers because you know you're praying in the will and pleasure of God. You sense in the deepest recesses of your being the rightness of praying like this. You know beyond a doubt that you were redeemed for this: to ask Him for the God-sized best He has in mind for you, and to ask for it with all your heart (**pg. 91**).
70. "Join me for that transformation, You will change your legacy and bring supernatural blessings wherever you go. God will release His miraculous power in your life now. And for all eternity, He will lavish on you His honor and delight. (**pg. 91**)"
71. The very last section of the book is called "Redeemed For This," (**pg. 92**) and implies that we were saved so we could successfully pray the prayer of Jabez and unleash God's power in our lives. And like the teachings of some "word of faith," pentecostal, charismatics and some cults/false teachers, if we fail to see God's power unleashed, then we must be spiritually deficient.
72. He ends with a promise: "You will change your legacy and bring supernatural blessings wherever you go. God will release His miraculous power in your life now. And for all eternity, He will lavish on you His honor and delight" (**pg. 91-92**). What is my legacy if I'm a Christian? Wilkinson seems to suggest that whatever it is, it'll get substantially better if I pray this prayer enough. This might come as a surprise, but as a Christian, I believe that I receive supernatural blessings from my heavenly Father because of Christ.

GENERAL PROBLEMS

73. This book is full of faulty hermeneutics and faulty exegesis (eisegesis).

“Bruce Wilkinson would surely proclaim that he both understands and believes in the commonly accepted principles of the normal/literal hermeneutic. In practice, however, for reasons that are quite inexplicable, he has chosen to ignore these principles and write a book using the devotional methodology. The result is that Wilkinson has elevated a little-known, and seemingly unimportant prayer to be the very apex of the Christian life and experience. (Compare this prayer to some of David's or Paul's or Jesus', especially John 17, and ask yourself, "Why has the author chosen the prayer of Jabez?") As has been shown, The Prayer of Jabez is not a proper interpretation of 1 Chronicles 4:9-10 at all. Rather, the author has chosen to spiritualize the text. He made up what he wants it to mean, called for an application based upon his faulty exegesis, underwrote the whole thing with testimonies and anecdotes instead of Scripture, and foisted it upon the church as the long-lost key that will unlock the unfathomable blessings of God.” (Source: “I Just Wanted More Land”—Jabez, by Gary E. Gilley, pp. 61-62.)

The book mentions "God" over and over but no-where does Wilkerson ever get to the single most important issue : you cannot approach God except through Jesus.

74. When asked why he focused on this one prayer from the Bible, he replied, *“I just centered it out because I have been praying it for so long, Bobbie. I have been praying it for 30 years.”* Not because of any Scriptural reasons, just because, as he continues, *“I was in a chapel at graduate school, and this -- the chaplain came and spoke to a whole auditorium full of the seminarian students about 1 Chronicles Chapter 4, in which he says "Jabez was more honorable than his brethren." And he preached to us, and every single one of us felt in our heart, oh, I would love to be Jabez. I would love for God to say about us, when it's all said and done, he was more honorable than his brethren.”* (CNN interview, July 5, 2001 - 15:00 ET). Yeah, it's all about being “more honorable than” our brethren.
75. The prayer of Jabez is a Jewish prayer, not a Christian prayer. Wilkinson said a Jew can pray the prayer and expect results as well. (CNN interview, July 5, 2001 - 15:00 ET)
76. Wilkinson says you have to say it precisely. “whenever somebody adds something to the Jabez Prayer, it's not the Jabez Prayer anymore. The Jabez Prayer's very simple. It says, dear God, would you please bless me indeed. And there's no, how do you do that?” (CNN interview, July 5, 2001 - 15:00 ET). He obviously therefore thinks of this prayer as an incantation which is defined as “the words spoken during a ritual, either a hymn or prayer, invoking or praising a deity.” “The Prayer of Jabez” as defined in this book is exactly this, a prayer spoken ritually (every day), invoking God, but even worse, the idol of blessing, and for many, the idol of

mammon (prosperity).

77. This book does not spend its time interpreting the text in its historical context, which is how it should be interpreted.
78. The basis of the book is based on a mistranslation of 1 Chronicles 4:9. Some translations say "more honorable" but a better translation of the Hebrew is said to mean "more honored."
79. Wilkinson says "In Hebrew the word 'Jabez' means 'pain.'" This is wrong. Jabez's name was a wordplay on the Hebrew ozeb. The name "Jabez" is a meaningless word in itself, a clever way of hinting at the mother's difficult childbirth without actually naming her son "Pain." Thus, it is incorrect to suggest that he lived a life of pain or was "weighed down by the sorrow of his past and the dreariness of his present" (pg. 22). Such a suggestion goes beyond the Scriptures. (This is from Dr. Roy Zuck (professor of Theology at Dallas Theological Seminary) in his review of The Prayer of Jabez in the book review section of Bibliotheca Sacra, 159 (633), 112-117).
80. The book also translates "keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain" to read "that I may not cause pain!" which isn't necessarily what it is saying. Out of twenty published translations that I consulted, only one supports his view, the New King James Version (for which Wilkinson served on the editorial board). The NKJV rendering, "that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain," sounds strikingly similar to the final request of the Lord's Prayer. However, most translations understand the request much differently. Dr. Roy Zuck (DTS) and others reject the rendering "that I may not cause pain" on the basis that the verb stem of 'atsab here is Qal, not Piel or Hiphil. Note, for example, the following variations: "keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain" (NIV); "keep me from all trouble and pain" (NLT); and "keep me from hurt and harm" (NRSV). The four-word Hebrew text here is somewhat difficult, lending itself to a variety of renderings. Therefore, Larry Pechawer, a professor of Hebrew and OT in Missouri, in a privately-published book, The Lost Prayer of Jabez, proposes the following new translation which modifies the Hebrew vowels while retaining the original consonants: "and provide me with pastureland (MiR'eH rather than MeRa'aH), so that I will not be in distress." This suggestion, which is worthy of serious consideration, would negate Wilkinson's interpretation of the fourth request, making it quite similar to Jabez's second request.
81. Wilkinson also misinterprets the second petition of Jabez. The NASB's "enlarge my border" is said to mean Jabez "wanted more influence, more responsibility, and more opportunity to make a mark for the God of Israel" (pg. 30). Wilkinson also writes that to pray for enlarged territory means to

pray for more "opportunities" and "impact," "more ministry," "more influence and responsibility with which to honor Him," or "more ministry and influence for Him" (pg. 32, 36, 41, 82). But where in the Bible is there even a hint that Jabez wanted to expand his ministry? It is unsound interpretation to take a word that means "land" or "property" and make it mean "ministry" or "influence." (This is from Dr. Roy Zuck (professor of Theology at Dallas Theological Seminary) in his review of The Prayer of Jabez in the book review section of Bibliotheca Sacra, 159 (633), 112-117).

82. The true test would be to try this with a whole population that is persecuted for their faith and see the results. Did the people in concentration camps just need **this** prayer? How about the Africans Wilkinson abandoned in Africa when he fled the ministry he established there leaving tens of thousands of AIDS orphans and the nation of Swaziland in confusion and disappointment?
83. Might some readers be seeking the power of prayer rather than the power of God? There's a big difference. Most people would rather memorize and repeat a formula prayer that "works" than take time to seek to know the heart of God.
Formula prayers dominate in pagan religions. Compare Mr. Wilkinson's preface and publicity statement with the following quote from Medicine Buddha Sadhana, a small book given to thousands of people who attended the "Medicine Buddha Empowerment" workshop led by The Dalai Lama:
"To recite the Medicine Buddha Mantra brings inconceivable merit. ... If you recite the mantra every day, the buddhas and bodhisattvas will always pay attention to you, and they will guide you. All your negative karmas will be pacified and you will never be born in the three lower realms.... and all your wishes are fulfilled."
Sounds tempting, doesn't it? It appeals to human nature and its "felt needs." Who wouldn't want to recite a prayer or mantra that promises easy access to higher powers that will fulfill your dreams and satisfy your wants?
84. Is it Biblically accurate to expect that the evils that surround us not touch and "grieve" us? Of course not!
85. This book contradicts Matthew 6:33 - We are to seek God's kingdom and his righteousness, and everything else will be given to us as well.
86. This book contradicts Matthew 6:7 - "When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. The NIV says not to keep on babbling instead of heap up empty phrases. So

what did Jesus mean by that? I think He meant don't pray like the pagans who just say the words, don't just repeat empty prayers. Isn't that what happens if a person picks a prayer out of the Bible and says it word for word, day after day? We are to have a relationship with our Heavenly Father. What kind of a relationship would you have with your spouse if you repeated the same phrase word for word, day after day with no thought or feels from the heart? We Protestants are quick to accuse the Catholic church of violating this very command of the Lord by saying their canned prayers day after day, yet I watch in amazement as church after church embraces this book and this prayer in the same way the Catholic church embraces the rosary.

87. This book contradicts "godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6).
88. Could an habitual prayer such as the prayer of Jabez, distract from hearing and praying according to God's will for the day? The Bible tells us that " we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us.... according to the will of God." (Romans 8:26-27) Remember, Jesus always prayed and served according to His Father's will and purpose on each occasion. If we give ourselves unreservedly to do the same, He will answer our prayer: "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him." 1 John 5:14-15
89. What about the apostle Paul who asked the Lord to take away his infirmity. God said no, but instead gave him grace. Paul wrote most of the New Testament, yet he did not get his request. Nor did he ever pray Jabez's formula. But Jabez who was not an apostle prayed and received his requests. We need to ask why? The answer is simple, God's will and purpose is different for everyone, there is no set formula for success.
90. We are to pray in Jesus' name, this book makes no mention of this. Jesus said, "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it." (John 14:13-14).
91. This Book Promotes a Form of Prayer That is Easily Identified as Heathen or Pagan - One of the plainest of the teachings of Jesus Christ concerning prayer had this to say, "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto

- them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." (Matthew 6:6-8).
92. This Book is an Ecumenical Book Moving the Church One More Step Toward a "One World Religion" – Mr. Wilkinson himself has been deeply involved in ecumenical-type activities where Catholicism, Mormonism, Robert Schuller's universalist church, and other strains of cultic worshippers are being united. This book is clearly absent of the fundamentals of our faith and isn't a Christian book at all. It is a further uniting of the church with psychology and modern waves of thought. He has told Jews that this is a Jewish prayer and to pray it. It's a prayer for everyone that can offend no one.
 93. This Book is Unashamedly Selfish - The Son of God left no room for a selfish Christianity. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:24-26).
 94. The Prayer of Jabez Novel, The Prayer of Jabez Journal, The Prayer of Jabez for Teens, The Prayer of Jabez for Kids, The Prayer of Jabez for Young Hearts (up to 12), The Prayer of Jabez for Little Ones (preschoolers), The Prayer of Jabez for Women, and all the other spinoffs have heretical teachings in them as well, as do the related books from people who "jumped on the bandwagon."
 95. The "Jabez Foundation" and their stated mission statement is:
"We are dedicated to supporting ALL GOD'S CHILDREN, including but not limited to, Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals, Transgender and Allied Persons by helping them understand that God's bounty is limited only by us, not by God's resources, power, or willingness to give." They promoted it and even offered a place for readers to buy it until Wilkinson's publisher, Multnomah, threatened them with a lawsuit. Again, everyone likes a vague sterile prayer with a narcissist benefit!
 96. "The Prayer of Jabez" is nothing but a "feel good" book. Simply a book with no conviction for the reader. A book with no real biblical basis other than the quotation of the prayer of Jabez.
 97. The blatant over-commercialization to include over 100 items such as Prayer of Jabez stones, wall crosses with the prayer etched all over it (sacrilegious), prayer shawls, a Jabez money clip, backpacks, mugs, calendars, an entire jewelry line, key chains, Christmas ornaments, scented candles, mouse pads, a framed artist's conception of Jabez himself, T-shirts, ties, pens, desk calendars, wall plaques, even a Prayer

of Jabez shield (metallic with the prayer inscribed on the front). and there are whole catalogues of Jabez merchandise (commonly called “Jabez junk”). A disgusting attempt to fleece the sheep with junk.

98. This book is a fad. Rick Warren said in *The Purpose Driven Church*, “At Saddleback Church we’ve . . . tried to recognize the waves God was sending our way, and we’ve learned to catch them. We’ve learned to use the right equipment to ride those waves, and we’ve learned the importance of balance. We’ve also learned to get off dying waves whenever we sensed God wanted to do something new. The amazing thing is this: The more skilled we become in riding waves of growth, the more God sends!”
99. The formula Wilkinson is teaching leaves no room for God to say “NO” or “WAIT.” Faithfully pray the prayer of Jabez, and you’ve got God in a box. Yet the Bible teaches that when one trusts Christ, a relationship is begun with Him that is in part defined by submission to the will of God and recognition of His absolute right to do whatever He pleases with us. Frequently, that can mean that God says no to our prayer requests. According to Wilkinson, sin in our lives is the only thing that will stop the repetition of Jabez’s prayer from working. Of course God answers prayer—in His own time and His own way and for His own purposes. Wilkinson reduces the notion of confident prayer to a gambit unworthy of an infinite God. He reduces Jabez’s heartfelt prayer to a get-rich talisman.
100. LASTLY, The real tragedy of Bruce Wilkinson’s book will be the carnage created as desperate souls follow his advice and pray Jabez’s prayer for a month, and yet see no change or see things getting worse around them. The book has no discussion of what to do when the prayer seems to fail (e.g., a child dies, a marriage fails, a job is lost, healing does not come, etc.). Many of them will turn to themselves seeking the reason. Yet Wilkinson has guaranteed that the prayer *will work*. The clear implication is that a failed prayer equals failed faith.

101. God’s Dream -

Much can be said about the false teachings in Bruce Wilkinson’s other books, including “Dream Giver.” Controversial Emergent Church leader Brian McLaren and *Prayer of Jabez* author Bruce Wilkinson—along with Rick Warren and many others—are definitely helping to popularize the Schuller concept of “God’s Dream.”

*“Behold, I am against them that prophesy false **dreams**, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD (Jeremiah 23:32).”*

102. Wilkinson's "Dream For Africa" Project

On December 19, 2005, *The Wall Street Journal* published this article about Bruce Wilkinson: "[In Swaziland, U.S. Preacher Sees His Dream Vanish.](#)"

"In 2002 Bruce Wilkinson... moved to Africa and announced his intention to save one million children left orphaned by the AIDS epidemic. In October, Mr. Wilkinson resigned in a huff from the African charity he founded. He abandoned his plan to house 10,000 children in a facility that was to be an orphanage, bed-and-breakfast, game reserve, bible college, industrial park and Disneyesque tourist destination....

"Mr. Wilkinson won churchloads of followers in Swaziland, but left them bereft and confused. He gained access to top Swazi officials, but alienated them with his demands. And his departure left critics convinced he was just another in a long parade of outsiders who have come to Africa making big promises and quit the continent when local people didn't bend to their will....."

Wilkinson said he "is trying to come to grips with a miracle that didn't materialize despite his unceasing recitation of the Jabez prayer" (Wall Street Journal). Pathetically, he said, "I asked hard enough."

This clearly shows that Wilkinson's "Prayer of Jabez" philosophy is wrong and he has demonstrated that beyond question in his own life. God is never obligated to answer my prayer, regardless of how right it might seem in my own eyes or how carefully it is worded or how sincerely it is asked or how many times it is repeated or how earnestly it is voiced.

103. Association with Robert Schuller

It is disturbing to many Christians that Bruce participates in meetings of Robert Schuller's Institute for Successful Church Leadership. Schuller is a universalist and Pelagian. He also relies on psychological self-esteem programs to change people's lives, rather than the gospel message which tells us that lost people must first be under the conviction of their sins, failures and lost state before God (the opposite of self-esteem) before they can be forgiven and saved. Positive thinking is of no value in evangelization as it keeps the preacher from proclaiming God's judgments upon the wicked, and also induces him to neglect the very real danger of spiritual deception. Positive thing also breeds arrogance and pride. Even outwardly successful Christians must humble themselves before the Lord, clearly follow His instructions on how to win the lost for His kingdom which is not of this world, and always refrain from boasting of their own achievements (cf. (Rev. 3:17).

104. What's He Doing Now?

Bruce Wilkinson has resigned as president of the organization he founded 25 years ago, Walk Thru the Bible Ministries. He has recently announced he is venturing into television and film to reach more people with his message. "My desire is to open more people's hearts to everything God has for them," Wilkinson said. "My goal is to take this message beyond

America to every nation across the globe.”

105. SOME REVIEWS YOU SHOULD READ

- <http://www.equip.org/articles/the-prayer-of-jabez-or-the-prayer-of-jesus-> CRI (Christian Research Institute) by Hank Hanegraaff
- <http://www.gpts.edu/resources/print/articles/jabez.php> - Benjamin Shaw, ThM, PhD (candidate) Assistant Professor of Old Testament Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
- http://www.sylvaniachristian.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=114&Itemid=134 - First Christian Church of Sylvania, Georgia
- <http://www.seekgod.ca/jabez.htm> - Seek God, written by Vicky Dillen
- <https://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=2686> - The Lutheran Church's Statement
- <http://www.opinionjournal.com/taste/?id=95000524> - Damon Linker wrote in the WSJ (May 25, 2001) an article entitled, "The Prayer of Jabez': New age self-help with Christian trappings."
- <http://www.testallthings.org/jabez.html> - An apologetics ministry of Calvary Sante-Fe
- <http://ontruth.com/prayerofjabez.html> - by Cky J. Carrigan, Ph.D., www.ontruth.com
- <http://www.biblebb.com/files/MAC/SC03-1046CDNotes.htm> - Phil Johnson, *Executive Director of Grace to You (John MacArthur)*
- <http://www.biblebb.com/files/macqa/IA-jabez.htm> - John MacArthur
- <http://www.gty.org/Resources/Articles/A282> - "What Would Jabez Do" by John MacArthur
- <http://watch.org/showart.php3?idx=12894&rtm=/index.html&showsubj=1&mcat=1> - The 'Prayer of Jabez': The New Christian Mantra - World Watch Daily, by Bill Koenig
- <http://www.pawcreek.org/end-times/prayer-jabez> - The Prayer of Jabez Faddish Idolatry - By Pastor Joseph Chambers
- <http://www.sfpulpit.com/2007/11/19/what-would-jabez-do/> - Pulpit Magazine
- <http://www.deceptioninthechurch.com/jabezjames.html> - by Sandy Simpson
- <http://www.deceptioninthechurch.com/magicaljabez.html> - by Sandy Simpson
- <http://www.deceptioninthechurch.com/biblicalprayers.html> - by Sandy Simpson
- <http://letusreason.org/BookR5.htm> - Praying like Jabez? - By Let Us Reason Ministries
- http://www.alliancenet.org/partner/Article_Display_Page/0,,PTID307086_CHID560462_CID1968988,00.html - Written by Mark Talbot, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Wheaton College, who closes this review by saying, "...there is good reason to fear that Wilkinson's book is encouraging many to think about God and the Christian life in ways that are insufficiently biblical. May God himself keep his people from falling prey to this book's inadequate theology."
- <http://www.intotruth.org/apostasy/Jabez.htm> - By John Miller
- http://www.banneroftruth.org/pages/articles/article_detail.php?18 - Banner of Truth, by John Bouwers
- <http://marturia.net/prose/essay0102.html> - The Problem With Jabez by Ian W. Hecht
- <http://www.behindthebadge.net/articles/a69.html> - by Ralph Dettwiler
- <http://bible.org/article/prayer-jabez-breaking-through-blessed-life> - By Sharad Yadav
- <http://watchmansbagpipes.blogspot.com/2009/08/prayer-of-jabez-analysis-of-book-by.html> - By Glenn E. Chatfield who closed with, "Since the book propagates error and has "arguments that merely sound good," it should be avoided by Christians."
- <http://www.mombu.com/religion/baptist/t-the-prayer-of-jabez-movements-crucifixion-merit-faith-heresy-4403015.html> - David Strand and Daniel Gard - Dean of the graduate school at Concordia Theological Seminary - "In summary, THE PRAYER OF JABEZ is a particularly dangerous work from a Christian theological perspective. It arises from a thoroughly anthropocentric (human-centered) rather than a Christocentric (Christ-centered) worldview."

- <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/BookReviews/jabez.htm> - By Biblical Discernment Ministries
- <http://www.crossroad.to/articles2/Jabez.htm> - By Berit Kjos
- <http://www.liberallikechrist.org/about/prayerofjabez.html> - By Ray Dubuque
- <http://www.valleybible.net/PositionPapers/Jabez.pdf> - Valley Bible Church Position Paper
- http://www.bbc.edu/journal/volume6_2/Jabez-Arp.pdf - Dr. William E. Arp, Baptist Bible Seminary
- <http://perspective.org.au/other/134/the-prayer-of-jabez> - Pastor Luke Tattersall
- <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/272919/An-Analysis-of-the-Prayer-of-Jabez/> - Steve Herr
- http://www.inplainsite.org/html/the_prayer_of_jabez.html - By Carol Brooks
- http://www.larknews.com/september_2005/secondary.php?page=2 - Jabez book devastates China house churches
- <http://www.trincoll.edu/depts/csrpl/RINVol4No3/Jabez.htm> - Gain, No Pain by Andrew Chase Baker
- <http://padresteve.wordpress.com/2009/08/16/the-battlefield-of-jabez%E2%80%99s-mind-the-prayerfully-purpose-driven-five-love-languages-for-the-late-great-planet-earth/>
- http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2001-04-24/features/0104240018_1_jabez-bruce-wilkinson-prayer - John Blake
- <http://herescope.blogspot.com/2006/01/bruce-wilkinsons-morality-lite.html> - Discernment Research Group/Herescope
- Zuck, R. B. (2002). [Review of the book *The prayer of Jabez: Breaking through to the blessed life*]. *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 159 (633), 112-117. Dr. Zuck is the Professor of Theology at Dallas Theological Seminary (where Dr. Wilkinson received his Masters degree).
- "[Praying Jabez's Prayer: Turning an Obscure Biblical Narrative Into a Miracle-Working Mantra: A Review Article](#)" by Dr. Richard Schultz, *Trinity Journal* NS, 24:1 (Spring 2003): 113-19.
- <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0107/05/tl.00.html> - Transcript of his CNN interview (July 5, 2001 - 15:00 ET)

SOME BOOKS YOU SHOULD READ

[The Mantra of Jabez: A Christian Parody](#) by Douglas M. Jones

[Prayers Jabez Didn't Pray](#) by Kenneth C. Hill

[The Cult of Jabez: And the Falling Away of the Church in America](#) by Pastor Steve Hopkins

[The Prayer of Jabez and Christian Spirituality: A Critical Evaluation of Bruce Wilkinson's Jabez Teaching](#) - Matthew Power

[The Prayer of Jesus](#) - Hank Hanegraaff

[I Just Wanted More Land](#)" - Gary Gilley

[A Letter to Jabez](#) - Neal Snider

[Praying Like Jesus: The Lord's Prayer in a Culture of Prosperity](#) - James Mulholland

A FEW CRITICISMS OTHER THAN THOSE LINKS ABOVE

- Richard Schultz, professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College. He concludes his critical review with these words:
- The sales of Wilkinson's little book *The Prayer of Jabez* is certainly a remarkable success story, but it may tell us more about contemporary American evangelicalism than about the accuracy of his interpretation of Jabez's original prayer. As my hermeneutics professor would say, rather ironically, "Wonderful things in the Bible I see, most of them put there by you and by me!" (Richard Schultz, "Praying Jabez's Prayer: Turning an Obscure Biblical Narrative into a Miracle-Working Mantra - A Review Article," *Trinity Journal*, Spring 2003, 118-119).
- In sum, from a biblical point of view, Wilkinson's Jabez teaching is seriously misguided and inaccurate in many respects. Thus we do not recommend *The Prayer of Jabez* to Christians desiring to improve either their prayer life or their ability to do ministry work for

- the sake of Jesus and His Kingdom (Matthew Power, The Prayer of Jabez and Christian Spirituality, 1st Books, 2003, 63-64).
- May 20 **New York Times Book Review** Judith Shulevitz wrote, "There is some "snake-oil" selling here. Wilkinson writes: 'If Jabez had worked on Wall Street, he might have prayed, 'Lord, increase the value of my investment portfolios.' She concludes "The Jabez prayer grants the supplicant full access to the American cult of success, an adoration of power and material satisfaction untroubled by any sense that the world may be a tragic place or the fear that the enlargement of one's territory might leave others' diminished." She thinks Reinhold Niebuhr would have called it "American idolatry."
 - Lauri Githen's June 5 article in **The Buffalo News** suggested that Wilkinson was preying on the weak. "Smack in the middle of a skittish economy, it's not hard to fathom why Wilkinson's if-you-don't-ask-you-won't-get philosophy has pushed its way to the top of best-seller lists, particularly in the depressed Buffalo-Niagara region."
 - "Let me see if I have this right," wrote **Knoxville News-Sentinel** columnist Ina Hughs July 18. "God will bless you with a bigger paycheck if you promise not to squander it on high living, and He will give you a Cadillac if you promise to drive it to church now and again."
 - And in a post-September 11 piece, **San Francisco Chronicle** religion writer Don Lattin, declared, "Of course, it's hard to top the spiritual corruption of Osama bin Laden. But his perversion of divine revelation can help us understand the temptation of Christians to use one little part of the Bible—in subtler and less violent ways—to justify our love affair with wealth, consumerism and endless economic growth."
 - "The British have always looked down on such religious vulgarity," sniffed Andrew Brown of the **London Times**. "Even the large and thriving evangelical churches in London would never sell something in such bad taste." In the article entitled : "Please Lord, make me rich" (Thursday 05-10-01), the writer Andrew Brown writes that Christians are greedy: "The Prayer of Jabez, a book based on a passage in the Old Testament, has sold four million copies in America with the message that greed is Godly. Of course, there is a gimmick: Jabez prayed for more cows, more sheep and more land; and by updating his prayer, modern Americans believe they will get more money." He feels that the book is only for the greedy Christians and that the book "has not sold outside the evangelical ghetto here." In his opinion, the book is nothing more than another "spirituality" book. A book that isn't really supposed to be read, but it's simply nothing more than a "good luck charm". He goes on to talk about how religion and merchandising are bound up together and how the "religious right pioneered many of the techniques of modern politics". Finally, he compares the book with the "prosperity gospel" which teaches that God wants everybody rich, and if you ask for riches He will give them to you. *"I once saw, at a Morris Cerullo show, a side stall advertising a scheme whereby God would multiply your investment a thousand-fold if you handed it over for "godly purposes". It is easy to laugh or shudder at such obvious con tricks and there is never any shortage of established religious figures to point out the blasphemy of treating God as a gigantic slot machine, with prayer as the handle you jerk to make Him disgorge a huge pile of money."* His conclusion is rather point blank : *"The Jabez prayer will spread through America for as long as people can still hope. In this country it is not even offered for sale on the "Walk Thru the Bible" website. Perhaps that is because we are not as gullible or as desperate as the Americans. Then again, whatever the chances of the Jabez prayer working, they must be higher than your chance of winning the National Lottery. And millions of people bet on that each week."*
 - Tom Baker of the **Daily Yomiuri** imagined Mother Theresa "sighing in dismay at the

realization that she could have gone through life contentedly fingering an eight-strand pearl necklace after all." Wilkinson's "gee-whiz" approach to religion, noted the **Ottawa Citizen**, "is even creeping out some Christian booksellers."

- **Heritage Foundation's** Joseph Loconte, a regular commentator for **NPR's** "All Things Considered." Jabez "asks God to keep him from evil, that he might not cause pain," Loconte said in a May 3 broadcast. "Now there's a refreshing thought: Live a life untainted by deceit and unentangled by selfish ambition."
- Dr. Layton Talbert, in a book review in the Sep-Oct 2001 **Frontline magazine**, notes one of the book's philosophical flaws—"a tendency to confuse 'blessing' with 'success.'" He says: "The underlying assumption seems to be that an increase in successful ministry opportunities is indicative of God's blessing, and the lack of an increasing number ... denotes the absence of God's blessing. This can create an unwarranted expectation on the part of readers which, when not realized, results in confusion, frustration, and disappointment with God or an introspective assumption that there is simply something wrong with them. The Biblical emphasis is on faithfulness, not fruitfulness. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel were explicitly forewarned that their ministries would be noticeably 'unsuccessful' in terms of tangible positive influence and results; despite that, they were exemplary successes because they faithfully fulfilled God's commission for them."
- One serious critic lumps this bestseller with what he calls "megachurch Christianity," the sort of money- and power-driven religion that came to be symbolized by the rise and fall of televangelists such as Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart. "It attempts to give a Christianizing to some of the worst characteristics of our culture. You throw in a little God talk, and now it becomes an immediately sellable thing." (Source: "Godliness or greed? Prayer book seeks 'exponentially expanding blessings'," 6/9/01, **AP story**.)
- Another critic has even published a spoof book about Jabez—"We figured this book was so popular that it had to be bad, so we went out and read it and we were right," says Douglas Jones, author of *The Mantra of Jabez: Break on Through to the Other Side* (Canon Press). Jones, who teaches philosophy at a Christian college in Idaho, adds: "It's not that we consider the book evil. It just captures everything that's silly about contemporary evangelical Christianity." Practice the Jabez mantra, says the book's dust jacket, and "soon you too will feel an adrenaline rush that you can call the Holy Spirit and use it to justify any fool thing you want to say." (Source: "A Phenomenon of Biblical Proportions," 8/14/01, **L.A. Times**.)
- I could go on and on...

"We have promoted an **unbiblical message** that becoming born-again is the answer to everything. It's not. It changes your eternity, but **it doesn't change your sexual behaviour**, for instance. The gospel does not always have the answer for **modern-day dilemmas**." –Bruce Wilkinson, *JOY!* magazine, April 2004 (emphasis mine)

"For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their **itching ears want to hear**. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths (2 Timothy 4:3-4 NIV)." This book is sadly a perfect example.