

receive the answer they want—but He can still answer their prayers for the good of all.

### **We Do Not Have to “Settle for Less”**

Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, “Because I bore *him* in pain.” 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 4:9-10).

Amazingly, the prayer of Jabez is recorded in a long, five-chapter list of genealogies in the Bible. Hundreds of other people are listed with no more detail than who their parents and children were. But Jabez decided that he did not want his difficult lot in life. He prayed for more and promised to use it for good and follow God—and God answered him! We can do the same!

### **Jesus Teaches us to pray**

“And when you come before God, don’t turn that into a theatrical production either. All these people making a regular show out of their prayers, hoping for stardom! Do you think God sits in a box seat?

“Here’s what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won’t be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace.

“The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They’re full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling techniques for getting what you want from God. Don’t fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need. With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply. Like this:

“Our Father in heaven,  
Reveal who you are.  
Set the world right;  
Do what’s best—as above, so below.  
Keep us alive with three square meals.  
Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others.  
Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil.  
You’re in charge!  
You can do anything you want!  
You’re ablaze in beauty! Yes. Yes. Yes.

“In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do. You can’t get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others. If you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God’s part”(Matthew 6:5-15, *The Message* translation).

We cannot lie to God or trick Him into doing what we want. He knows our thoughts and motives. We need to think about the eternal life that He wants to give us—and how He is making each of us into a unique person whom others can get along with forever. God will take care of us on a daily basis, but His goals are eternal. Whatever your need, **you can pray!**

by Norman Edwards, Church Bible Teaching Ministry  
PO Box 204r, Port Austin, Mich. 48467; 989-738-7700;  
e-mail: [info@cbtm.info](mailto:info@cbtm.info) web: [cbtm.info](http://cbtm.info).

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# You Can Pray

If you are reading this, you can pray!

If you are hearing it read, you can pray!!

If you are remembering this, even many years later—you can pray!!

### **You can pray even if:**

- you are not going to church,
- you are not religious,
- you are not doing everything right,
- you have not read the Bible,
- you are not a Christian.

You can pray even if you are not really sure there is a God to pray to. If you ask and receive an answer, it might convince you that He is real! You really have nothing to lose.

Prayer is not about clever words or a religious sounding voice. You can talk to God just like you can talk to a friend whom you love and respect. Think of God as a good parent who never does anything wrong.

*continued inside...*

Sometimes, parents cannot give their children what they ask for because it would not be good for them. So it is with us; we can talk to God about anything, but He will only do what is ultimately good for us. As a parent would wisely decline a 10-year-old asking for a car, so God declines our requests for things which we are not yet ready. Suppose a child asks, "How do I live more peacefully with my siblings?" The parent will be overjoyed and give them an answer—as God does for this kind of question.

Let us read some of the prayers of ordinary people in the Bible. These examples are not priests and prophets, but working people like you and me.

### **Prayer of a Sinner**

"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men -- extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:10-14).

The Pharisee, a religious leader of his day "prayed with himself"—because God was not listening to his vanity. The tax collector, a man who sinned, obtained mercy from God, because he understood his spiritual

state. This is incredible. This means that you, whoever you are, can come to God humbly, sincerely, and be heard and answered by God. You can be heard more than a minister or a religious person you know who is always talking about God. We can never be "too bad" to pray. We simply need to recognize our condition and ask God to have mercy and change it.

You do not need a religious or righteous person to pray for you—you can do it! You do not need to be in a temple, church or Jerusalem for God to hear your prayer:

Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.... But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him" (John 4:21,23).

### **Prayer of a Servant**

When a servant of Abraham was sent on long trip to bring back a wife for Isaac, Abraham's son, he realized what a difficult job he had been given. What would happen if the woman did not want to go? What would happen if Isaac or Abraham did not like her? There was no way to be certain of success in a job like this! So:

Then he [the servant] said, "O LORD God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham. Behold, *here* I stand by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. Now let it be that the young woman to

whom I say, "Please let down your pitcher that I may drink," and she says, "Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink" -- *let her be the one* You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master." And it happened, before he had finished speaking, that behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her pitcher on her shoulder.

God heard this prayer, and Rebekah went on to marry Isaac. They stayed married their whole lives and were buried together (Genesis 49:31). They had the famous twin sons, Jacob and Esau.

God is concerned about our lives and families, and he answered the prayer of this unnamed servant. If the servant had asked for someone for a "one night stand", he probably would not have received an answer.

Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us (1 John 5:14).

God is similarly concerned about our lives and our families. If we ask for a job or money so we can have a good time, we may not receive an answer from God. But if we are seeking to take care of ourselves and our families in a positive way, God is interested. You can read His word, the Bible, every ay so you can better know what His will is.

Also, we must realize that God answers prayers for everyone at once: so if competitors are praying to win a sports competition or a single scholarship or job, they cannot all