

SECTION ONE

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THE DISCIPLE'S WALK**

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Time alone with God

What a man is when he is alone with God is what a man really is. Therefore to be more real to yourself and others, you must spend time everyday with God. One of the first things we teach a new believer is how to set aside a regular, consistent, time to be with God. The old time theologians used to call it “the Quiet Time.” I still think it’s a good description. Do you have a daily “Quiet Time?” If not, then why not? It is impossible to be a public Christian without first being a private Christian. Your public behavior is a direct reflection of your time spent alone with God. In order to grow spiritually, every believer needs to structure his day around his quiet time.

A Time

When is the best time to meet with God? If you are like King David, you meet the Lord before you meet the day. David said, “*In the morning, ‘O Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you...*” This is sound advice. The Lord Jesus had his quiet time before he began the day. “*Very early in the morning while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place; where he prayed.*” **Mark 1:35** It occurs to me, that if Jesus needed time alone with His Father before he faced a busy demanding world, then how much more do we?

I don’t care how you do it, but do it! Schedule your devotional time first thing in the morning.

A Place

Jesus went to a “solitary” place. He needed privacy, and so do you. Is there a place you can set aside, early in the morning where you can read your Bible and pray? Is this place private enough that you can pray out loud without waking others up? Yes, prayer is a vital part of a meaningful quiet time. Praying verbally is critical to your talk with God. Your ears need to hear what your heart feels. Using your mouth and crying out to God is a normal conversation between a sinner and his merciful Father. What do you need in your “God meeting place?”

- Your Bible
- Your notepad
- Your pencil
- Your devotional book
- A journal for daily accountability

A Commitment

Now, promise yourself and the Lord that you will meet Him every morning for a set period of time. Can you promise Him a week? If so, then do it for a week. Probably, it will become such a joyful time for you you’ll want to continue. A warning: Satan will oppose you! He’ll let you go to church, sing in the choir, and teach a class, but the Devil trembles when he sees, the weakest saint upon his knees. Expect him to bring every kind of distraction to keep you from being alone with God! He hates and fears the believer’s quiet time.

A Method

Now that you have it scheduled, and you have your tools, what do you do? A few suggestions might be helpful:

- Begin with prayer, using the four minutes with God
 - A= Adoration**, start praising God for 60 seconds.
 - C= Confession**, ask for forgiveness for 60 seconds
 - T= Thanksgiving**, praise God for all your blessings for 60 seconds
 - S= Supplication**, pray for the needs of others for 60 seconds

- **Select a passage of Scripture** to read for the week. Begin with something easy, like the 1st Psalm.
- **Read, Study, Meditate, and Memorize.**
Using your notepad, begin to take notes on key thoughts and phrases. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal truth to you. You may want to put a column in your notepad for “what does this mean God wants me to do?” This is personal application.
- **Journal what the Father is saying to you**
Keep a notebook, and daily make entries of God’s words to you from His Word. This is your private dairy, and will record your growth, struggle and victories. From it you may want to think on one thought for the day. Like, “today I will believe Jesus loves me no matter what comes my way.”
- **Take that one thought with you.** Write it on a card or piece of paper and look at it throughout the day. This is meditation.
- **Memorize a verse or two for that week.** Psalm one is so brief you can memorize the whole psalm if you chose.
- **End your time in prayer.** Pray now for yourself and God’s guidance for the tasks of the day. Pray the prayer of Jabez in 1st Chronicles 4:9. That’s a great way to start the day!

Four Minutes with God in Prayer

Praying is not easy for beginners. Every new believer seems to struggle in knowing how to pray. However, Jesus in the Model Prayer (sometimes called the Lord's Prayer) gave us the guidelines for approaching The Father in prayer. By following this outline we can have a pattern for our prayer time.

In Luke 11:1-4 Jesus taught us:

I. **Begin your prayer with ADORATION**

“Our Father who is in Heaven, sacred is your name...”

We approach the throne of God with praise and adoration. Begin your prayer by asking God for nothing, but praising Him for just being the God he is. Start “adoring” God by telling Him how much you love and adore Him. Scripture is full of the mighty names of God. You can praise Him by just saying His Names, or just a simple “I love you Lord for being the Loving Lord of my life”. Take one minute to adore our Father in Heaven.

II. **Continue your prayer with CONFESSION**

Jesus taught us to ask for forgiveness, *“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”* When we begin in adoration, seeing God as He is, we then see our self as we are. Now we confess our sins, knowing that in Christ there is no condemnation. We claim the promise of 1st John 1:9 that, *“if we confess our sins, he is faithful to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us of all iniquity”* Take at least one minute to Confess all known sin.

III. **THANK God for all His Mercy and Grace**

All prayer must include thanksgiving. Spend time expressing to God a grateful heart for his blessings. Take at least one minute to say, “thank you” Jesus for your kindness to me.

IV. **Now SUPPLICATE for others**

There are friends and others who need you to pray for them. To “supplicate” is to intercede for others before the Throne of God. Take a minute to pray for others.

ACTS= 4 minutes with God

A=Adoration

C=Confession

T=Thanksgiving

S=Supplication

This little “ACTS” is an easy way to teach a new convert to begin to Pray. One minute in praise, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication, equals 4 minutes in prayer. This is a very good start to an effective prayer life

The Laws of Spiritual Harvest

“Sir we would see Jesus”

John 12:20-25 *“except a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it abides alone...”*

This passage begins with some Greeks coming to the disciples and asking to see Jesus. These Greeks represent lost humanity, the non Jewish world for whom Christ will die. Phillip comes to Jesus to tell Him that there are Greeks who wish to see Him. Christ’s mystical & mysterious response to Phillip contains what some have called the Laws of Spiritual Harvest. We must be “Jesus” to a world that does not know Him. Only as we become seed in the soil of others can life come forth. The “harvest” represents our success in life, our legacy as a leader. You will not have a spiritual harvest if you do not become a seed Christian.

You and I will never make a difference in this world until we understand these laws of spiritual harvest, and live them out in our daily walk.

Truth #1 The Law of Urgency: The seed must get into the soil and die to bear fruit.

In Kingdom living we are to be like a seed = you were Born to Reproduce. We are a seed planted in the soil of others. If we die to self, and are investing our lives in the soil of others we can have a harvest. However, it is urgent that we begin now. Seed in a sack on a shelf in a store does no one any good. It must enter the soil and die to be of any value.

1. Jesus was speaking of Himself, and His soon coming death [**Rom.5:8; 8:29**] He was God’s seed, dying for the sins of the world.
2. Jesus was describing His followers. We are to be seed for God to use. It is urgent that we begin now investing in the soil of others lives.

Truth #2 The Law of Life coming forth out of Death: The seed dies, and life is born.

In Kingdom living life comes forth out of death **vs. 24**.

1. Jesus is speaking about Himself, *“the hour has come for the Son of Man to be Glorified”*
2. Jesus is describing the lifestyle of His followers, **Luke 9:23**

Only as we die to self and selfish ambitions can we produce life in others. Whoever would save his life must lose it. The Seed must die before life can come forth. We must become seed Christians to produce a harvest.

Truth #3 The Law of Quality over Quantity: The seed must be good seed.

In Kingdom living, Quality counts more than quantity = it’s not what you have, but Whose you are.

1. Jesus is speaking about Himself= it’s the character of the seed that determines the quantity & quality of the fruit. Jesus was God’s good seed planted & raised to life to save millions.
2. Jesus is describing His followers, *“whatever you, do all to the Glory of God”*
3. We are to be good seed, men & women of character, commitment, & sacrifice so God can plant us in the soil of others. Good seed can produce much fruit.

Truth #4 The Law Of Imminence verses Permanence: The seed has its “hour”

In Kingdom living, the principle is= it’s not how long you live, but how well. *“The hour has come...”*

1. Jesus is speaking about Himself; he knew His death was imminent. He did not live long, but He lived well and died a death that brought many sons to glory.
2. Jesus was describing His followers, *“to whom much is given, of him shall much be required”*
“Seek first the Kingdom...” **Matt. 6:33; John 15: 5 & 8**

“Except a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it abides alone, but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit.”

The Seven-Fold Work of The Holy Spirit

There are in Scripture seven different descriptions of how the Holy Spirit works in the life of a born again believer in Christ. These seven descriptions are not seven distinct different works of the Spirit. Some of them are but different ways of describing the same experience. The seven descriptions are:

The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit, John 14:17

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 4:4,5

The Sealing of the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 1:13

The Earnest of the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 1:14

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Romans 12: 6-13, 1st Cor. 14, Ephesians 4: 7-11

The Filling of the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 5: 18

The Anointing of the Holy Spirit, 1st John 2:27

Six came as Birthday Gifts

Although there is some discussion and difference of opinion on the matter; most Biblical scholarship will agree that all but one of these works of the Spirit took place at the moment one is saved. A person receives Christ as savior and is born “from above” of the Spirit; and is indwelt with the Spirit of Jesus, baptized into the body of Christ, given spiritual gifts, filled with His Spirit, and sealed forever, which is the earnest of our salvation. Wow! What a marvelous thing it is to become a child of God. It is a supernatural transaction and transformation!

We leak

So every believer has been filled with the Spirit at least once. At the instant of the new birth, the new babe in Christ is full of Jesus. The problem is many times we “leak” like a rubber inner tube on an old tire. We don’t stay filled. Through disobedience we can quench the Spirit. This is why Paul urges the Ephesians to “*keep on being filled day by day,*” **Ephesians 5:18**. Note that we have emphasized the tense of the verb, which is continuous action. Living the Christ controlled life, or the Spirit filled life is the result of our yielding to Christ, moment-by-moment and day-by-day.

The Normal Christian Life

Being filled with the Spirit is not a second work of the Spirit, or even a “deeper” work of God in us. Being Spirit filled **is** the Christian life. Only Christ is “Christian” and only His life in us can live a life pleasing to God the Father. His filling us produces the fruit of the Spirit Paul wrote about in Galatians Five. The fruit of the Spirit is nothing less than the character of Jesus being lived out in our behavior. God wants every child of His to walk in the Spirit, filled with the life of His Son. The Spirit filled life is the normal Christian life. Anything less is subnormal!

The Anointing

This brings us to the seventh work of the Spirit in us. The first five are completed works of God in the believer. The sixth began at salvation and is to be God’s work in us every day, (the filling is a process based on our obedience and yielding to the Holy Spirit.) Now we come to the seventh Holy Spirit work, the anointing of the Spirit. John the Apostle says, “*the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things...*” **1st John 2:27** The anointing seems to be a special, yes unusual, work of the Spirit which God bestows on a few chosen men and women.

The Anointing in Scripture.

Even as the filling is for holiness and Christ-like living, the anointing is for power in service to God. There can be no anointing without the filling. Being filled, and totally surrendered to God is the prerequisite for the anointing. One need only look at the Old Testament to see how God from time to time anointed those whom He sovereignly chose to anoint.

- He anointed certain kings, like Saul and David.
- He anointed the prophets, like Elijah and Elisha.
- He anointed Samson.

We read how the Spirit of Jehovah God from time to time, “came upon them.” Then for various reasons the Spirit would leave them. Usually, he left for two reasons: 1) the task He called them to was done, or 2) the anointed person committed some sin and the anointing was taken away.

In the New Testament, we read of Jesus, “the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor...”(See **Luke 4:18,19**) as He quotes Isaiah 61. Even Paul knew when this anointing was upon him. He describes his preaching as “*with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power.*”(1st Cor. 2:4)

Anointed Servants

As you read of great men of the church you will hear them allude to the need for the anointing. They struggle to minister in their own strength, then comes a barren time and they know they need the Holy Spirit’s power.

Dwight L. Moody the gifted American evangelist of over 100 years ago once wrote, “Right there on the streets of Chicago, the power of God seemed to come upon me so wonderfully I had to ask God to stay his hand...I was filled with a sense of God’s goodness, and I felt I could take the whole world to my heart. I took the old sermons I had preached before without any power, it was the same old truth, but there was new power. Many were impressed and converted. This happened years after I was converted myself.”

Charles G. Finney, of the early 19th Century had a similar experience with the Holy Spirit coming to anoint and empower him years after he had begun his ministry. He describes it this way; “as I turned and was about to take a seat by the fire, I received a mighty baptism of the Holy Spirit without any expectation of it, without ever having the thought that there was any such thing for me, without any recollection that I had ever heard the thing mentioned by any person in the world. The Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through me body and soul.” He says the results of this fresh anointing were seen the next day as every person to whom Finney spoke was deeply convicted or converted. In the evening of the next day, he had invited an atheist over for dinner and as Finney was blessing the food, the atheist was saved! This is the power of an anointing of the Spirit.

Billy Graham

How else do you explain the mighty ministry of Billy Graham? His message is simple and direct, but certainly not eloquent or impressive. The results are because of the anointing upon him. God has chosen him and empowered him to preach the simple gospel message.

Have you this Anointing?

So, can every believer have a special anointing for service in the Kingdom? Yes we can.

Because the Bible says we have this anointing (**1st John 2:27**), why don’t we see more of it? In fact, a better question is, do you have this anointing upon you and your leadership? Is there a freshness to your testimony and your witness? Are people’s lives being changed when they come in contact with you?

This anointing for service is not a permanent thing. In Acts the Disciples were filled with the Spirit to preach at Pentecost (**Acts 2:4**); then we see them in Chapter four in the upper room again praying for more Spirit power and for boldness to overcome their enemies (**Acts 4:31**). Peter was present both times the Holy Spirit empowered them and he was filled both times. This tells me that each task God calls us to, needs a fresh anointing to accomplish that task! The Disciple leader cannot live on yesterday's experience with God to do today's work for God. The question is, "have I this anointing upon me now?"

Wait, Tarry, Receive

In Luke **24: 49**, Jesus tells his followers to do three things after He leaves them to ascend into heaven. He tells them to:

1. Wait till they are empowered by the coming Holy Spirit.
2. Tarry in prayer as you wait. This was for cleansing, surrender and humility.
3. Receive the Holy Spirit and His seven-fold blessing. They obeyed, waiting, tarrying at prayer, and they received the mighty power of the Spirit.

How unlike leaders today! We may organize but we seldom agonize! We may plan and prepare but we know little of waiting and asking for the anointing. But then we don't often see the results these early followers saw!

What is the secret of the Spirit's Anointing

Let's examine how we can have this anointing upon our ministry. The steps are not mystical or magical. Assuming you are a yielded, Spirit-Filled leader already, then the steps are direct and effective. God wants to anoint your gifts and your calling, more than you want it. That's part of the problem.

1. **There must be an intense desire and thirst for the Spirit's power in your life.**
Isaiah 44:3, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. For I will pour out my Spirit..."

Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

Jeremiah 29:13, "ye shall seek me and find me when ye shall seek me with your whole heart, says the Lord."

Remember when Jacob had an "all nighter" with the Angel of the Lord? Jacob holds on, desperate for forgiveness and a blessing. He tells the Angel, "I will not let you go till you bless me." Now what kind of a puny angel is this anyway? He is so weak he can't get loose from Jacob? Something's wrong with this picture! I have always felt this fight was fixed from the start! God wanted Jacob to struggle and desperately seek the blessing. God wanted him to have it more than Jacob did.

For the average leader in Christian work the prevailing problem is self and self-sufficiency. Until we are humbled and desire what only God can give, we'll never have the anointing.

2. **There must be prevailing Prayer**
If we want to be endued with power, we must pray for it, just as those pre-Pentecost disciples did. Jesus said, "You have not because you ask not." All the great saints of God have travailed and prevailed in prayer till the power came. In **Acts 4:31** we read, " and

when they had prayed they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.” Moody, Finney and R. A. Torrey all tell of long hours before the throne of grace seeking a fresh anointing for service.

Where the power comes from

Many years ago, when Billy Graham was a very young preacher beginning his citywide crusades, he came to preach a crusade in Fort Worth Texas. A young student evangelist at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary there in Fort Worth, came to Billy Graham’s hotel room during the days of the Crusade. He knocked on the door of Billy’s room and asked to see Billy Graham. Cliff Barrows who told me this story, told the student, “Billy is busy now and cannot be disturbed.” The student was insistent saying, “I’ve got to know the secret of Billy’s power. How is he so mightily used of God? Cliff took the student to the bedroom door, opened it silently, and showed the student evangelist the secret. There on the floor, stretched out in agonizing prayer was young Billy Graham. Cliff Barrows shut the door and said to the student, “there is his secret, he does that for hours at a time, every day.”

Not begging God

Understand that when we have a deep hunger and thirst for the anointing the work in us is probably already done. We don’t have to plead with God to anoint us; He is ready when we are. However, much prevailing prayer is to prepare the soul to receive what God is ready to give. Only as we wait before Him in prayer can He talk to us, prepare our hearts and get us spiritually ready for His glorious power. After the filling comes the anointing!

3. There must be expectant Faith

After the waiting and praying, there must be faith that the anointing will follow. Here we distinguish between the normal Spirit filled life, based on surrender and faith, for which there is no waiting or tarrying long in prayer, except for heart preparation, and the repeated anointings of the Spirit which come only as we tarry in prayer. The key to these repeated anointings for each special task is the word “until.” Jesus, before He left this earth, told the disciples to tarry “until” the power came. They did and it came! God must know that we believe Him and that He can trust us to give Him the Glory. When He sees that in us, the power will come. Are you willing to pay any price He may require of you to be used of Him? If so, then believe and pray till the anointing comes.

What are the evidences of the Anointing?

How can you know God has answered your prayer? The evidences are very clear.

- There will be victory over sin in your life.
- There will be the Fruit of the Spirit in your life.
- There will be a burden for lost souls.
- There will be power in your service to God.

Jabez: Living in the Path of the Blessing

God wants to bless us more than we want to be blessed. This is a fact of Scripture. From the loving heart of God flow forth rivers of Blessings. In the Old Testament is recorded the prayer of a man who believed this. His name is Jabez. We read his prayer in 1 Chronicles 4: 9 “*and Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother named him Jabez saying, “because I bore him with pain.”*”

Three things seem remarkable about this introduction to the man named “Pain” (Jabez). First, is that as you read the book of 1 Chronicles, you notice that it is very boring reading for the first four chapters. You notice it is just “begats” from verse to verse. Almost no comment, just line after boring line of “begats.” You might as well be reading the phone book! Then just like the Word of God, comes this insightful verse. In the middle of all the who begat whom, comes the phrase, “*and Jabez was more honorable than his brothers.*” He just jumps off the page at you!

The second interesting thing is that he has a funny name. Jabez means “pain” or painful. His mother seems to have had a difficult delivery giving birth to him, so she named him “Pain.” Wow! What a way to go through life with your Mom. Every time she calls your name you are reminded of how you pained her!

So, what are the life messages we are to learn from Jabez? It is so obvious the Holy Spirit wants us to learn from this man who alone stands out in the list of “begats.”

Jabez was an ordinary man

Born in pain, Jabez lived all his life with adversity. The only thing extraordinary thing about him is his relationship to God. Can you relate to that? You and I can be special if we can be special to our Heavenly Father. Regardless of how you started out in life, you can live in God’s favor and stand in the path of His divine blessing.

Jabez was an honorable man

He was more honorable than his brothers. Does that mean he was more honorable than all the generations before him, or does it mean he was more honorable than his “immediate” family or tribe? It really doesn’t matter! He was honorable enough to God that he could ask to be blessed and he got what he asked!

What about you? Are you the kind of man God can bless indeed? Notice the prayer of Jabez, “*Oh that Thou wouldst bless me indeed...*” He doesn’t just ask to be blessed; he asks to be blessed “indeed.” His prayer is for God to really bless him significantly! Some have found this request to be selfish, or materialistic. Not so! He was an honorable man. How can an honorable man pray a dishonorable prayer that God answered?

The lesson for us is that “*the eyes of the Lord go to and fro*” seeking a righteous man or woman that He can bless! The lesson is that obedience opens the doors to God’s blessing and favor. He loves us all unconditionally; however, He has a special place in His heart for the honorable man or woman.

Not everyone can be intelligent, wealthy, of noble birth, or physically beautiful and charming. However, we can all be honorable in God’s eyes. And, frankly that’s the view that matters most. How God views you is ALL that matters.

Jabez prayed the most unusual prayer!

Listen carefully to his prayer’s four parts:

1. “*Oh, that Thou wouldst bless me indeed,*”

2. *and enlarge my border,*
3. *and that Thy hand might be with me,*
4. *and that Thou wouldst keep me from harm . . .”* (1 Chronicles 4: 10)

Notice the four parts to his request of God:

1. “Bless me indeed . . .”

To some this seems a selfish idea. Why, the very thought of asking God to bless him, give him territory and such is just too self-serving. Yet, Jabez is an honorable man. It seems that because he is an honorable man, he feels he can ask God to trust him with more.

Have you ever felt you were on such intimate terms with God that you could ask Him to bless you, even really bless you?

This prayer is about the man’s relationship with God. He asks God to bless him because he knows God’s heart. He feels God is a blessing giving Father. Indeed, this is the picture of God we get from Jesus in Luke 11:9-11. Jesus tells us to ask, seek, knock, and the Father eagerly gives good gifts to his children. You and I have not because we ask not. Also, we have not because for other reasons we feel unworthy to ask the Father to bless us.

When you do not have an abundant blessing in your life, it tells us more about you than it does about God. An honorable man feels he can go to God and say, “bless me indeed.”

2. “Enlarge my border”

This request is more than a plea for more territory or property on which to graze his sheep. Jabez wanted to increase his influence for God and for Good in the world. He wanted more ministries, to give God greater glory. In his day, only those with land had great influence. (Proverbs 3:9-10)

This is not a selfish prayer from a vain, money-hungry man. He is available to God to enlarge the circle of his influence. This is an honorable man asking an honorable thing of the King of the universe. Too many times we ask to be blessed for selfish and material things only to waste the blessing on ourselves. (James 4:3)

Every disciple of Jesus should pray this honorable prayer, “God bless me indeed, increase and enlarge my influence, so I can in turn bless you and your kingdom.”

To enlarge your borders can mean to make me a better Father, husband, friend, witness, or disciple. It can mean to get you out of your predetermined “comfort zones” so God can lead you into relationships and blessings beyond your wildest dreams. Remember, that to him whom much is given, of that person shall much be required. It is a good thing to ask God to stretch you, and enlarge your influence.

3. “Lay your hand upon me”

This is a request for God’s presence and God’s power to be on him. Jabez needed to feel that God was with him and God’s anointing was there in all he did. Only an honorable man prays this kind of prayer. To ask God to lay His mighty hand on you is to volunteer for service in God’s kingdom work.

You need God's power to do God's work! We, just like Jabez can ask the Father everyday to lay his hand upon us. We can feel his presence, and go forth in His power.

Need we be reminded that to ask for this from our Holy God is to severely restrict what you do and where you go! God's hand on a man is an awesome thing! Only a life totally yielding to God's will can be blessed with the Power of God and the Presence of God.

Jim Elliot, the martyred missionary wrote in his diary:

“Father, make of me a crisis man
Bring those I contact to decision.
Let me not be just a milepost on a single road,
But make me to be a fork,
that men must turn one way or another after having faced Christ in me!”

In the spirit of Jabez, Jim Elliot asked God to lay His hand upon him.

4. “Keep me from evil (harm).”

Jabez, born in pain, and used to living with it, asks the God of his fathers to deliver him from pain. God answered his prayer! The final part of this wonderful prayer request is that he be protected from evil and pain. This is a prayer you can pray everyday for yourself and for those you love. It is a prayer for God's protection.

Peter at Pentecost quoted Psalm 16:11 when he said, *“I saw the Lord before my face, He was on my right hand that I should not be moved.”* (Acts 2:25) Every child of God has God's protection if we only have faith to ask for it. He can and will bless you with victory over the Evil One.

See then the four parts to this prayer of Jabez:

- 1) Bless me indeed= God's provision
- 2) Enlarge my territory= God's purpose
- 3) Lay your hand upon me= God's presence and power
- 4) Keep me from harm= God's protection

What a challenge from God's word for us. This brief reference in Scripture to Jabez is there to inspire us to claim God's blessing in our daily lives. Seek to be a person God can bless “indeed.” Ask Him repeatedly to empower, protect, and provide for you, that your influence may increase to His glory.

Great Things to Know about Good Leaders

1. They know that leadership is influence.

Leadership is many things, but essentially it is about influence and the ability to influence others. The English word, “influence” means literally to “flow into” others. A leader is a person who directly and intentionally “flows into” others. The greater the influence he has, greater the leader. You can measure your effectiveness as a leader by the number of persons you directly influence each day, week, month a year or a lifetime.

2. They know that leadership is a process.

It has been said that leaders are born not made. This is only a half truth. Some are born with a temperament that can facilitate leadership skills, but the great leaders of the world know that leadership develops over time and requires discipline. Leadership grows daily not in a day; so busy yourself by sharpening your skills. The greater your skills the greater will be your opportunity to influence people. Moses begins by saying to God, “But Lord I stutter, how can I go to pharaoh and speak?” After God equips him, and faith moves him, Moses can leader a nation! He grew into the job. You can become more than you are if you set your mind and heart to do so.

3. They know that only you set the limits of your influence.

John Maxwell calls this “The Law of the Lid.” How great a leader do you want to be? Whatever you decide will “cap” or determine your influence and your future as a leader. You can increase your skills and only you can decide how good a mentor you wish to be; it means you are as good as you set out to be. “Hitch your wagon to a star, open your eyes and there you are!” Many people of great potential accomplish little because they cannot hitch a trailer to a car, much less a wagon to a star! Don’t limit yourself or God’s purposes thru you, by being lazy, or indifferent to a high calling.

4. They know that the fuel of the leader’s drive is his passion.

Leaders are passionate about their cause. Leaders have a fire in their belly that drives them to succeed. The leader is usually “consumed” with his vision or passion and he must share it with others. Leadership is as much caught as it is taught. Much of a leader’s ability is in his emotions as it is in his knowledge or ability. Give me a warrior who loves the battle any day over a soldier who has all the training but no heart for the fight. Passion wins over planning most of the time. Both are needed for success, but it is difficult to stop a passionate leader.

5. They know that leaders are Navigators & Visionaries.

While flying my airplane I asked my wife if she wanted to “fly” the plane. She said “yes.” After holding the wheel for a few minutes, she said, “I can steer the plane but I don’t know where I’m going.” This tells us that most anyone can steer the ship, but only the leader can set the course. A leader is like the pilot who navigates. They have a vision, a direction they are going. To say a leader is the navigator, or pilot is to say that they are “big picture thinkers.” Usually leaders will leave the details to others. That’s why managers are not leaders. Managers must give attention to the details of the day to day. The Leader has a bigger vision than “our daily bread.” He is planning how to make enough bread to feed the world!

6. They know that leaders have learned to prioritize.

Jesus told us to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. [Matt. 6:33] This is the way great leaders think. They are good at putting 1st things 1st! Leaders have a unique ability to focus on the things that really matter. They don’t “sweat the small stuff.” The ability to prioritize your values, your time & energy is a good leadership talent.

7. They know that leaders are servants not bosses.

In the national best selling book, “**Good to Great**” we learn that all the really great companies have a leader who is a servant to his people. This is a Jesus principle of Leadership. In John 13 is recorded the experience of Jesus washing the disciples feet. He tells them, “Do you know why I have done this to you? I am giving you my example, that even as I have washed your feet, you must also wash one another’s feet.” A great leader will never ask his followers to do something he himself is not willing to do. Military people tell legendary stories of their commanding officers leading the charge into battle. Risking life and limb, their general leads the fight. Like Mel Gibson in “**Brave Heart;**” portraying William Wallace he fearlessly leads his men into the fray. Leaders are servants, not bosses. Great leaders are not so much “Supervisors” & over-seers as they are “under-seers” and supporters. They lead from the bottom up, not from the top down.

8. They know that people will follow the man, before they will commit to his vision.

Often a young or immature leader will be very passionate about his vision and will try to get others to accept his vision and follow it. John Maxwell calls it the Law of “buy-in.” However, when people don’t follow or “buy-into” his vision he cannot understand why. The reason is that men follow the leader before they accept and own his vision.

Think of how Jesus led his followers. He spent years with them letting them get to know Him, love Him, and eventually commit themselves to Him. Only then did He share His vision with them. Great leaders know that men follow a MAN of vision before they follow the vision. By being a humble servant, and a person of integrity & purpose, the leader is like a magnate drawing others to himself. Then he can compel them to follow his dream.

9. They know that a leader must win your heart before asking for a hand

Great leaders know that trust is a key to gaining followers. Men are not captured by ideas so much as by a man’s spirit. When people trust you they will follow you. Jesus knew this and before He asked his followers to do anything for Him like “take up your cross and follow me;” He first won their hearts. Far too often immature Christian leaders will ask others to support them financially, or to get involved in their projects, without first winning the trust and confidence of those they are asking to help them. For an example, some African pastor will hear that this “white guy” loves Africans and helps churches & pastors financially. So without so much as knowing the “white guy” he e-mails him his “vision” to build an orphanage. The white guy gets the e-mail proposal asking for money for orphans, and thinks, “Who is this African guy, whom I do not know, asking me for money?” I don’t know him and yet he dares to ask me to fund his work. Let me tell you Jesus would not do that. He would not ask for a helping hand without first winning your heart. A good leader will develop trust before asking anyone to adopt his vision.

10. They know that people follow a man they respect.

In Africa we call this the “Law of Mzee.” In Kiswahili language an “Mzee” is a wise older man. He is an older person whom many admire because of his life-experiences and wisdom. The African culture honors and respects the elderly. Our western culture tends to discount and devalue older people. However, a leadership principle is that people will not follow a man they do not respect. They may fear him, and come along, but they will not adopt his vision if they do not believe in him & respect him. Thus a good leader understands that it takes time and effort to win the people’s respect. His life message is the foundation of his leadership. It takes character to lead.

11. They know that great leadership is about reproduction.

A great leader can look at one man and see an army behind him. He knows that if he can inspire that one man, & train him to lead others, then he can multiply himself in his disciple. The Leader can do the math-multiplication is better than addition. To spread his vision he must reproduce himself in others. A truly great leader of Christian men, Dawson Trotman, used to say, “Activity is no substitute for production, and

production is no substitute for reproduction.” The apostle Paul, another great leader told his young disciple Timothy to reproduce himself in other faithful men. {2nd Timothy 2:2}

Ask not what you have been doing, but ask yourself, “what are others doing because of what I have been doing.” Leaders are born to reproduce. Jesus looked at the twelve disciples and saw the whole world in them! He trained them then gave them the great Commission to “Go and make disciples of all the nations...” He understood a leader’s need to reproduce.

12. They leave a legacy.

This desire to multiply your vision in the lives of your followers comes from a passion to leave a legacy behind you after you are gone. A great leader is not just living for the “now;” but rather is living for the next generation. In John 17 when Christ is praying for his disciples he prays, *“I ask not just for them, Father, but for those who will believe in me because of them.”* See, He was living for the legacy, for the future generations that would be saved thru the faithfulness of his followers. All great leaders believe that their cause, their vision is worthy to be perpetuated into the future. So leaders give themselves to investing their best time into their best people. They see a changed future; yes even a better future, lived out in their followers and their followers, followers. The leader’s legacy; you are either building yours now or you are neglecting yours now.

The Birthmarks of a Disciple

There is a good deal of discussion about who is a true disciple of Christ and what the characteristics of a Disciple are. Our Lord Jesus gave us definitive guidelines on the lifestyle of his true followers. I want us to look carefully at three “birthmarks” of a Disciple. We call these birthmarks or the “marks” of a Disciple. You can recognize one of Jesus followers by these distinctive marks.

The Mark of the Cross

First, we hear Jesus say in Luke 9:23; *“if anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.”* What are the implications of taking up the cross in the life of a disciple? Today this idea of carrying a cross has become ornamental in that we wear a cross for jewelry, rather than take up a cross in our daily living. A history lesson would help us here. Josephus the Jewish historian tells us that in about 12 AD there was a Jewish rebellion against the Roman occupation in Israel. Led by a rebel named Simeon, several thousand young Jews revolted against Rome and a civil war broke out. The Roman army quelled the rebellion, and to make examples of them, the Romans crucified two thousand revolutionaries along the road from Jerusalem to Nazareth. Josephus says the vultures darkened the sky as they came to feed on the dying bodies hanging on crosses along the road. In 12 AD Jesus and his future followers would have been young teenage boys. Those crucified revolutionaries would have been their family members, neighbors & heroes. So when Jesus says *“Take up your Cross daily and follow me,”* those words had great meaning. To take up a cross was to enlist for martyrdom. It was an invitation to die to self and even to die physically if need be.

In His classic book, The Cost of Discipleship, German Lutheran pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote these opening lines; *“When Jesus says ‘come and follow me’ He is inviting you to come and die.”* The call to discipleship is a call to die. Bonhoeffer himself became a martyr because he took up his cross and followed Christ.

Let me visualize this for you. Suppose you are a new believer in Christ as your savior. You are a new convert, a young disciple. You may be saying to yourself, *“Well, what do I do now?”* My sins are forgiven and I’m saved for all eternity. What does Christ expect from me?” Then the next morning there is a knock on your door. You get up and go to the door. As you open the door you are shocked! There stands Jesus, and He has this huge 9 foot cross on his shoulder.

Christ then says to you, *“Here I’m bringing this cross to you. I had it made just for you. There is not another one like it anywhere in my Kingdom. It is your cross and I expect you to carry it everywhere you go. As you go through your day, you carry this cross on your shoulder as a moment by moment reminder of who you are. You are my disciple, and your life belongs to me. This cross is for dying to self. It is yours just as I have mine.”*

Now, what do you think of that? Can you imagine if a student went to school carrying her cross; or if a businessman went to the office carrying a 9 foot 80 pound cross on his shoulder?

I can tell you one reaction for sure; those who see you will know you are a Christian. The cross will define who you are and to whom you belong. The Cross will forever mark you as His disciple.

If you do not take up your cross, you can never call yourself a true follower of Jesus for He said, *“he who does not take up his cross and follow me, is not worthy of me.”* {Matt. 10:38}

The Mark of the Yoke

Just about the time you have gotten used to taking your cross with you every day & everywhere; Jesus comes to knock on your door a second time. As you open the door you are amazed to see a very large, heavy wooden yoke standing there by your door. Then the voice of Christ says to you, *“Here, take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

{Matt. 11:29, 30} You realize immediately that this large yoke is neck collar for oxen. It has a hole in it just the size of your neck. Jesus says to you, "Here try it on for size." Then he lifts this big wooden apparatus and puts your head thru the hole and then screws it tight. By now you are staggering beneath the load. Get a good look at you now! With a yoke on your neck & a cross on your back you are ready to meet the world! You may look strange to all who meet you this day, but you do not look strange to God. To Him you are beginning to look like a disciple of His beloved Son. Just as you have a cross for dying to self, you must have a yoke for learning the deeper ways of God. The Yoke is for discipline, learning and submission.

You see, my friend, to be a disciple of Jesus means more than being a follower; it means also that you are a disciplined learner. The word "disciple" has a root idea of discipline. The Disciple must be yoked to Christ to learn the ways, the will, and the walk of Christ. Do you have His yoke around your neck? Are you willing to be like those oxen; all hooked up and harnessed up in such a way that you cannot so much as move without direction from the masters hand? {or his whip}

The yoke speaks to us of submission to the Master's will and to His commands. We are to be so yoked to Him that when our Lord speaks, we obey. Why, because we believe that His way & will is best. In it we believe we will find rest for our souls. He is lord and that is all a disciple needs to know.

The Mark of the Towel

Now that you are willing to die to self everyday {the cross} and are willing to submit to His will and way with you {the yoke}; then Jesus come to knock on your door for a third time. Maybe a bit reluctantly you open the door thinking, "What will my Lord ask of me now?" Jesus says to you, "Congratulations, you are doing a good job of being my disciple. You seem adjusted to carrying your Cross and wearing my Yoke. Now I want one more thing of you. You are not dressed properly to be my disciple. Go disrobe, and then put on this bath towel and come back to me." So you do as Jesus says and return wearing only a towel wrapped around you. Then you pick up your cross & put on your yoke. Maybe we should take your photo! You look rather odd, but you for certain have the look of a follower of Christ.

You may ask, "Why am I wearing a towel?" Just as the cross is for dying to self, & the yoke is for submission; the towel is for serving others. In John 13, Jesus gave us the extreme example of being a servant. He laid aside his robe, and dressed only in a servant's "towel" He then washed his brother's feet. He served them so we could learn to serve others. Every follower of Christ must learn that the way up is down. We must learn that God is not interested in how many servants we have; but He is very interested in how many men we serve. All of Jesus' true followers must daily have a "towel" ministry of serving others. Messiah Jesus was a servant and the disciple cannot be greater than his Lord.

Leadership Principles

Do you see it? The Cross, the Yoke, and the Towel are all leadership principles in Christ's Kingdom. This is how Our Lord led men and now it is how His followers must also lead men.

The Christian leader is to be a crucified, submissive, servant of Jesus. This kind of leader can change the world. Those early disciple's turned their world "upside down." We can too!

