



LESSON 10 // HOW TO PRAY FOR YOUR FUTURE—PART 1

Through prayer we can pursue a better and blessed life, a new future—making the changes that are necessary for a different and better destiny. For this to be your date with destiny, or better yet, a date that changes your destiny, you must “make the date.”

Think back over your life. There are moments in the past, actual calendar dates, when something changed in your life for good or bad. What happens with the moment is what you make of it. Will you “make the date” that will forever change your future and the future and legacy of your family for the better?

The Apostle Paul challenged us to be “making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:16). How do we say “yes” to this? How do we communicate to God, ourselves and others that we’re serious about this date with destiny? There’s a great story in the Old Testament about a man named Jabez who made a date with God that forever changed his destiny for the better.

1 Chronicles 4:9, 10 (NIV) *Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez, saying, “I gave birth to him in pain.”¹⁰ 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.*

In this lesson, we’ll look at two things Jabez did that we must do. Then we’ll look at two more in our next lesson. To make a DATE for a better future:

1. **D = DECIDE to be done with the things that are diminishing and destroying your life.**

One day in a particular year, a particular date or season of time, Jabez did something he had never done before. He decided that enough was enough.

Turning points only happen when we come to a decision point that says, “I’m sick and tired of having my life diminished and destroyed! It’s time to do something about the way I’m thinking, living, relating and responding to life!”

The Bible tells us about many people who were called to these kinds of decisions. What they did in those moments made a difference in where they ended up in life. Notice one example of this:

Haggai 1:6, 7 (NIV) *You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.”⁷ This is what the Lord Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways.”*

The “prodigal son” in Luke 15:11-18 provides another clear illustration of someone who had to make a life-changing decision after his choices had led him to a very low point.

2. A = Be prepared to honestly ADMIT the things God wants addressed in your life.

In every life there are spiritual, emotional, psychological and relational issues that hinder us and hold us back. These are strategic points we must recognize and address that will yield the highest reward and bring the most progress. Jabez was very specific in his prayer in 1 Chronicles 4:9, 10. He knew strategically what needed to be addressed:

- *His curses*—"Bless me!"
- *His limitations*—"Enlarge me!"
- *His weaknesses*—"Let your hand be with me!"
- *His vulnerabilities*—"Keep me from harm!"
- *His pain*—"Free me from pain!"

Jabez was honest about the issues that were diminishing and destroying him. He did not deny them and this was a key to the turning point in his life!

Sadly, many of us never experience the changes God has for us because we're simply unwilling to address the things He wants us to address. Why do we resist in this way? What keeps us from addressing things in us that are restricting, damaging or destroying us?

- *Blindness*. We don't even see what we need to see about ourselves. We're "in the dark" about these things.
- *Vested interests*. Sometimes we're not willing to do anything about certain issues in our lives because, although they are both diminishing and destructive, we're getting something out of them that we're unwilling to give up—some carnal, temporary pleasure, reward, material benefit, emotional comfort, etc.
- *Fearfulness*. We may be fearful of letting go of things or people we've grown comfortable with. We're afraid to honestly own up to our own issues. Sometimes we are fearful of failing or not having what it will take to overcome the challenges.
- *Self-defensiveness*. Some are reluctant to address their issues because they are too busy protecting themselves and blaming somebody else.
- *Stubbornness*. Some people will never "see the light" until they adequately "feel the heat." They haven't had enough pain to want to change yet.

In prayer, Jabez honestly addressed the specific things in his life that God wanted him to address. We need to do the same if we want to experience real change and a better future.

Discussion questions

1. What can happen when you decide that you're "sick and tired" of having your life diminished and destroyed? What might happen if you don't make that decision?
2. Read 1 Chronicles 4:9, 10. Why is it so important to be honest in prayer, like Jabez, about the issues that are diminishing or destroying your life?
3. Look again at the five things that can keep you from addressing issues in your life. Which of these do you most struggle with? How can you overcome this resistance and move forward in prayer?