

## MONDAY MANNA

23 September 2019

### WHAT DO YOU WANT IN LIFE?

By Jim Langley

*"What do you want in life?"* Has anyone ever asked you that question? The best way to answer is by determining what is most important to you. Over more than 50 years, I have watched many business people become obsessed with success in their chosen profession. Some have even prayed for personal gain.

I see nothing wrong with striving for success, but believe God wants us to direct our prayers not toward ourselves, but for the needs of others and the advancement of His kingdom. I do not envision God anxiously waiting to fulfil our every selfish prayer when there is so much good, we could be doing for others.

Sometimes I think of the Lord's sobering words to Baruch who became despondent and questioned the prophet Jeremiah in his time of sorrow and pain. Here is what God said through the prophet to Baruch and anyone looking for special treatment in this life: *"The Lord said, Say this to him: 'This is what the Lord says: I will overthrow what I have built and uproot what I have planted, throughout the land. Should you then seek great things for yourself? Seek them not. For I will bring disaster on all people, declares the Lord, but wherever you go I will let you escape with your life'"* (Jeremiah 45:4-5).

We need to understand we are not owed any special dispensation. Some come into this world with much, while many arrive with very little. But we all arrive naked and will leave the same way. There was a time in my life when I often prayed for success and financial reward. That changed drastically after reading a book by Bruce Wilkinson, *The Prayer of Jabez*, in 2001. It helped me realise how superficial my prayer life was.

The book is based on two verses in a passage tracing the lineage of the tribe of Judah. It starts, *"Jabez was more honourable than his brothers"* (1 Chronicles 4:9-10). Why was this guy more honourable? Wilkinson explains Jabez specifically prayed for God to bless him, enlarge his territory, be with him continually, and not let him be harmed so that he would be free from pain. It says God granted his request!

Since then I have been praying my own customised version of Jabez' prayer. I pray, *"Lord, I ask you to bless me beyond my expectations. Expand my borders, my areas of influence for Your glory. Keep Your hand on me constantly Lord and keep evil from me so I may not cause pain."* I continue to pray that without any expectations and have been blessed immensely over the years. As we pray, what is most important is the condition of our heart – more than the specific words we direct to our Heavenly Father. He knows our heart and wants to bless us in ways we cannot comprehend.

This has helped define what I want in life but has nothing to do with earthly wealth and riches. Many of my blessings did not even seem like blessings at the time. Yet through it all, I have drawn closer to God; His hand has been on me constantly. He has expanded my borders and areas of influence and used me in ways I would never have imagined. He's truly blessed me beyond my expectations.

I have come to realise it is not about my own accomplishments or skills. All that matters is knowing I am in His will and one day will know Him, as described in 1 John 3:2: *"Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."* Is a relationship with Jesus your main focus – what you want in life?

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© 2019, all rights reserved. Jim Langley has been writing for more than 30 years while working as a life and health insurance agent. In recent years, his passion has turned to writing about his personal relationship with God and his goal to encourage others to draw near to Him as well. He is a long-time member of CBMC.

### **Reflection/Discussion Questions**

Suppose someone were to look you in the eye and ask, “What do you want in life? What do you really hope to get out of it?” How would you respond?

If you pray about your job and the work you do, have you prayed for success and achievement? If so, in what ways – and what has been the response to those prayers? Explain your answer.

In the book mentioned, *The Prayer of Jabez*, two verses from the Bible’s Old Testament highlight the prayer of an obscure man for personal blessings? Some people would be eager to submit such a request to God, while others might consider it inappropriate to do. What is your view about this? Explain your answer.

How do you think expressing a prayer as Jabez did could affect one’s perspective on what they want in life? If you were to personalise this prayer, how would you like it to be answered?

NOTE: If you have a Bible, read and reflect on the following passages:

Psalms 1:1-6, 23:1-6

Matthew 6:9-13; 18:2-4

John 17:20-22