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DENNIS BURKE MINISTRIES

The Way to a New Life
SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2010



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UNLOCKING THE POWER TO REDEFINE YOUR LIFE

BY DR. DENNIS BURKE

The Gospel of God's grace is designed to completely redefine our lives. The limits we have lived with all our lives can be changed, and everything can be turned into a testimony of God's goodness and of His power to reshape our lives.

Every one of us is in the process of being redefined by God's grace. We are no longer destined to be defined by our past, problems, failures, or weaknesses. We have received Christ, and our destiny has now changed. We are in Him and have been made into newly defined people.

But why do some people see very dramatic changes in their lives, while others struggle with the same problems they've always faced year after year? Often it's a matter of what a person has come to believe. If there are truths about who he is now in the light of God's grace and power that he doesn't seek to grasp by faith, that person may continue to struggle the rest of his life.

Lasting and redefining change first begins deep within our hearts at the core of our belief system. Our new birth in Christ changes everything between us and God. From that point on, it's our individual grasp of His finished work that makes available to us every other kind of change that leads to more freedom.

For many years, Vikki and I have seen God's grace empower people to experience victory over the limits they have lived with in the past. However, we have also seen many others who, after gaining spiritual ground, fail to keep themselves in the new life of freedom they have discovered.

The apostle Paul points to the power of God's grace to redefine our lives many times in his letters. For example, He said of himself, "But by the grace of God I am what I am..." (1 Corinthians 15:10).

In another epistle, Paul said of us all: "Now we have not received the spirit [that belongs to] the world, but the [Holy] Spirit Who is from God, [given to us] that we might realize and comprehend and appreciate the gifts [of divine favor and blessing so freely and lavishly] bestowed on us by God" (1 Corinthians 2:12 AMP).

In yet another reference, Paul said, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

These statements underscore the truth that our faith in Jesus as Lord of our lives gives us a new identity. We are not who we once were. But as Vikki pointed out in her article entitled, "The Identity Thief," we are dealing with Satan, the ultimate identity thief who continually seeks to steal from us our identity in Christ.

Every one of us can experience freedom from the negative things that have defined us in our past — but only as we discover the power of our new identity in Christ. The New Testament reveals who we are. God's Word defines us in Christ outside the limits that once contained us.

We are in Christ; now we must discover what that means. James 1:22–25 says, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does."

God intends for us to observe ourselves in the mirror of His Word and see who we really are. Then as we allow His Word to define us, we begin to walk in His perfect law of liberty. (Vikki has also written a very powerful book, entitled *Transforming Your Self-Image*, which describes in more detail how we

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lived with all our lives
can be changed.**

can apply God's Word to change our self-image.)

The limits we face as believers come only from forgetting who we are and what God has promised us. But through conscious, consistent application of the Word, we can change the negative patterns we learned in our past outside of Christ and create lasting victories. James 1:21 tells us how to begin the process: "Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls." There are going to be some

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things we must lay aside.

Does this mean a person who receives Jesus as his Savior may not have his soul saved? This may surprise you — but the answer is yes! James indicated that even though a believer has Jesus in his heart, he must still receive the Word in order for the power of his salvation to save his soul.

A person can be a Christian and still live his life with his soul unrenewed by the Word of God. Of course, this doesn't mean he won't go to Heaven — but it does mean that the saving power of God must be received into his mind, will, and emotions if he is ever to live free from the limits of his past.

The Word implanted in your heart at the new birth must be received for your soul to be saved. It is this soulish part of your

makeup that can keep you tied to your past. If you fail to receive the Word, not allowing it to change your habits and thinking patterns, you will remain weak. This failure to grasp the word of God's grace will cause the wholeness of salvation to remain limited in your life.

Just think back to the time when you first received Jesus as Lord of your life. You knew He had changed you and forgiven you of your sins, yet there remained so many things in your life that were still not pleasing to God. But the process that would change your way of thinking and of responding to situations had begun. The Word of God and the work of His Holy Spirit began to show you a much better way — Jesus' way. You started to allow His love to get bigger inside you and to diminish your fears. Forgiveness took the place of bitterness and hardness of heart. From that time forward, God began to show you sins, habits, and negative thinking patterns He wanted you free from, and you began to reach out to Him for help to change.

The renewing of the mind is an ongoing and continual process that makes you stronger with every step. The more you are changed, the more your soul leans toward the strength of God in your spirit rather than toward the lusts and desires of the flesh.

Romans 12:2 (*NLT*) clearly describes this process: "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think." Lasting and sustainable transformation comes from letting God's Word change the way you think about yourself. The more you apply His Word to who you have been, the more you will become the person He has made you to be.

I want to share a powerful scriptural example of someone who redefined his entire life by looking to God for change.

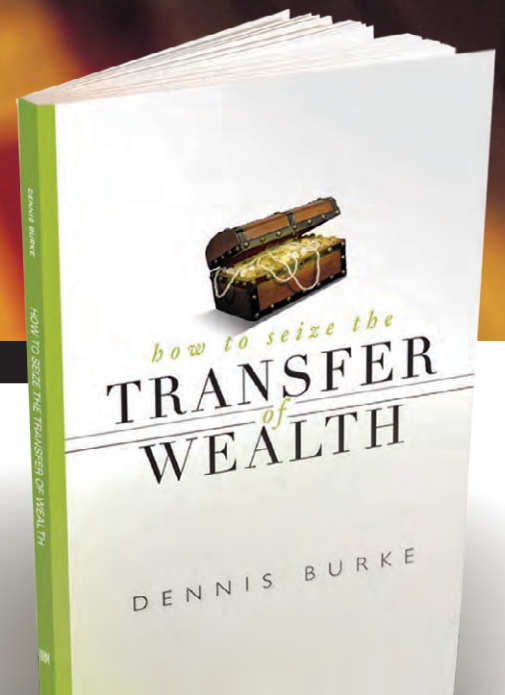
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This man is so obscure that there are only two verses in the entire Bible devoted to him, yet in these two verses is an abundance of life-changing truth. I am referring to Jabez — a young man from a household that did little to empower him for success, yet who discovered how to redefine himself and change his life for good.

“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).

In some ways, Jabez would have been like any other young man. He surely faced the same questions nearly every young man through the centuries has asked himself: *Do I have what it really takes to be a man? Can I really be a strong, protecting, and productive person? Isn't that what a man should be? Where is a man I can look to who can show me what it is to be a real man?* But to his credit, Jabez followed his heart beyond the words of his own family and turned toward God to boldly receive blessing, increase, and freedom. And as a result, God granted him everything he requested.

Each one of us is also destined to step into greater blessing, increase, and freedom. The only limits that remain are those we

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continue to allow.

You are a new creature in Christ and a child of God. In Him old things are now and forever passed away; all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17). Now you must let the new you rise up from your heart and fill your soul.

Jabez' prayer demonstrates this very principle. This young man changed everything about who he was and created a new future and destiny for himself.

There is something very honorable in the way Jabez called on God. To understand how powerful this prayer is, we must notice some important insights.

First, there seems to be no father in the picture. In Hebrew society during biblical times, the father would always give a child his name. Yet these verses clearly point out that Jabez was named by his mother. When a mother gave the name to a child born into the family, it usually meant the father was absent. Therefore, these verses seem to point to a single-parent family, or at least to a family with a deeply disconnected father. In either case, Jabez would have missed his father's input from the start.

Second, the name Jabez' mother gave him reveals something about this mother herself. The name Jabez means misery, pain, or

sorrow. Who names their child “Misery”? Some parents look into their newborn infant's face, and from the joy they feel, they name their baby Joy. Yet this mother called her infant son Misery. By giving him that name, she reminded Jabez every day of his life what she believed he had brought into his family: misery and pain.

This kind of rejection and negativism would have a painful impact on anyone. In such an environment, a child's personality can be stifled, causing him to be handicapped for life. Words like these can also tend to be self-fulfilling prophecies. Jabez could have grown up to become a man who actually did bring a great deal of misery to those around him.

One of the ways the sins of mothers and fathers continue for generations is by their passing on of negative ways of thinking, attitudes, unbelief, and fears that have contributed to their problems and failure. The patterns that surround children as they grow up and the environment they live in can affect the way they make their decisions and what they consider important and can even influence how freely and deeply they are able to love people.

How many times have children grown up telling themselves that they will never treat their children as their parents treated them? Then once they become parents, they are shocked to see themselves act in many of the same negative ways their parents did when they were children.

The patterns they hated have become a part of their lives. When faced with fears or crises of their own, they often resort to those same destructive patterns — and will continue to do so until they face and replace them with the truth of God's Word.

Jabez faced the challenge of breaking free from his own mother's pain that she was passing on to him, and he made a decision to choose a very different path from the one being thrust upon him. His brothers weren't taking this different path. Jabez stood alone. He faced the problem and replaced it with God's better way.

In the end, every one of us must make the same decision that Jabez did before God. No matter what anyone else around us chooses to do, we must stand in our resolve to break free from the defining issues that have held us captive.

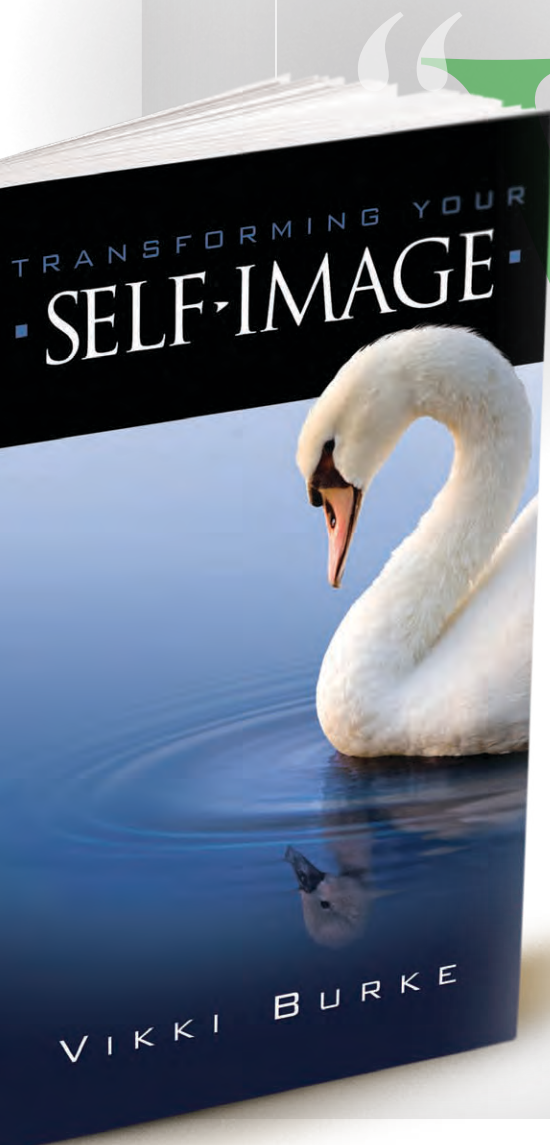
Scripture doesn't tell us what made the difference for Jabez. Did someone in his life not mentioned in these two verses help him recognize that it was possible for him to call out on God for help? Did he become so heavy under the crushing weight of his mother's words that he cried out to God for help in desperation? Was Jabez an outsider in his own family, who stood aloof from his other family members, including his brothers?

Exactly what happened to Jabez isn't clear. What is clear is that he did what none of his brothers seem to have done — he called on God. Consequently, God declared that Jabez was “more honorable than his brothers.”

As a result of his hunger for God, Jabez prayed one of


 testimonies

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Vikki Burke's book, *Transforming Your Self Image*, may be one of the most important studies for any believer. The Bible is filled with wonderful promises from our Father, but it's up to us as believers to learn how to effectively use them. James 1:22 tells us to be doers of the Word, and not hearers only.

Transforming Your Self Image is helping me finally reach that goal. Like many Christians, a war has raged in my mind for years about many aspects of my life. Satan would bombard me with thoughts of inferiority and fear. At times it was so frequent I didn't even realize it was abnormal! Vikki showed me how dangerous this practice can be.

Quoting Proverbs 23:7, "as a man thinks in his heart, so is he," Vikki warns that we are mistaken if we assume the law of sowing and reaping doesn't apply to the things we dwell on. Vikki shows how to first "arrest" these thoughts. Second, we learn how to forbid them, in Jesus Name, from entering again. And last, she teaches step by step how to meditate on God's Word to replace the old, corrupt thoughts consistently with the Loving Promises from our Father.

I am gradually becoming a new man because of the thoughts I now make myself think from this teaching. Whenever Satan attempts to distract me with words of inferiority and or fear, I now know how to do the Word by renovating my mind and, therefore, changing my self-image. Any Christian, young or old, who puts the principles from this book into practice will change into the image that God already sees us: victorious champions in Christ!"

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Although his environment would have left anyone feeling undeserving and unworthy, Jabez lifted his sights to see God's heart for him.

the most powerful prayers recorded in the Bible. The *New King James Version* translates the purpose of his prayer this way: "that I may not cause pain." Jabez was looking to God for help in breaking the pain cycle, which began in him as an infant.

He was about to step out of the past and into a new future.

There are five things Jabez prayed to receive from God. Each of these is a vital truth that will help us redefine our own lives and future.

First, Jabez prayed, "Oh, that You would bless me." He grasped that God's blessing was obtainable. Although his environment would have left anyone feeling undeserving and unworthy, Jabez lifted his sights to see God's heart for him.

God has always wanted to bless and empower people. Religion has taught people that He is demanding and difficult, requiring servitude and self-abasement. But God is love, and love gives. God so loved us that He gave to us the most precious gift possible — His own Son. His love gives, and Jabez was positioning himself to receive.

Second, Jabez prayed, "Enlarge my

territory." In his decision to redefine his path, he saw that God would expand his life and even his influence. He asked God for more land, seeing himself in the light of promises found in Scripture.

We can find many promises in the Word that speak of God expanding our influence and territory as well.

Third, Jabez prayed, "That Your hand would be with me." This represents more than a mere request for God to be where we are wherever we may go. Asking God to be with us is wasted breath. He has made it clear that He will never leave us or forsake us.

However, when God's hand is with you, you are following His lead, taking His directions, and yielding to His influence. You are like a young child walking down the sidewalk with his hand securely in the hand of his father. That child knows that if he will simply keep holding his father's hand, everything will be all right.

Fourth, Jabez prayed, "That You would keep me from evil." It is a fact that the kingdom of darkness has no right to any

continued on back

dennis & vikki burke



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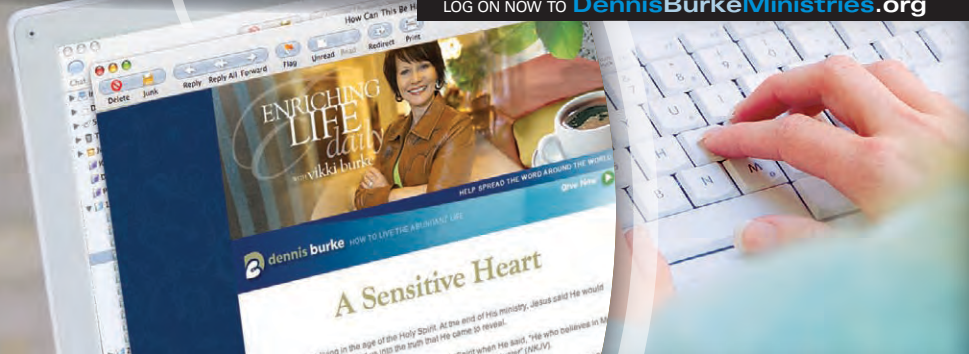
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part of your life. God is your Protector, and if you will stay in His loving care, He will keep evil from you and will keep you from evil. As First John 5:18 (*Message*) says, "The God-begotten are also the God-protected. The Evil One can't lay a hand on them."

Finally, Jabez concludes by declaring, "That I may not cause pain!" All the rest of his prayer was to bring him to this point. He was drawing a line in the sand and settling the matter of his redefined life before God. It was as if Jabez was saying, "I will not be the same person I have been or the person my environment created. I have been told all of my life I brought only pain —

but no more! I am now a blessed person. I am someone with influence, empowered to follow God's destiny and leadership for my life and free from the threats of the kingdom of darkness."

And remember how this passage of Scripture ends: "So God granted

him what he requested" (v. 10). God was pleased with Jabez.

We can only assume what Jabez' life became. We have no further insight into this brave man from Scripture. But we do know what God did — He granted Jabez everything he had asked for in his prayer. Jabez caused no more pain. From that point forward in his life, he was blessed, free, led by God, and protected from evil.

No one is inevitably destined to repeat past mistakes or to replicate his or her parents' negative patterns. Anyone can become free from the wrong ways of thinking, habits, or weaknesses he or she has learned. A person must simply know where to look for help, just as Jabez did. Somehow he knew to look to God.

It was important that Jabez identified the real issue — that he was being defined by the wrong thoughts. He discovered the key to leaving his limits behind: He had to redefine himself through a new relationship with God. As a result, Jabez' faith forever changed what would define his life.

Today it is faith in God's Word that will redefine us forever. Faith will say what God says about who we are and what our future can become. We truly can crush the lifelong negative patterns that have defined us in the past. We can think, feel, believe, and live life like we are in Christ and He is in us. We have taken God at His Word, and we are leaving all limits behind!

Unless otherwise indicated, all scriptures come from the New King James Version of the Bible.

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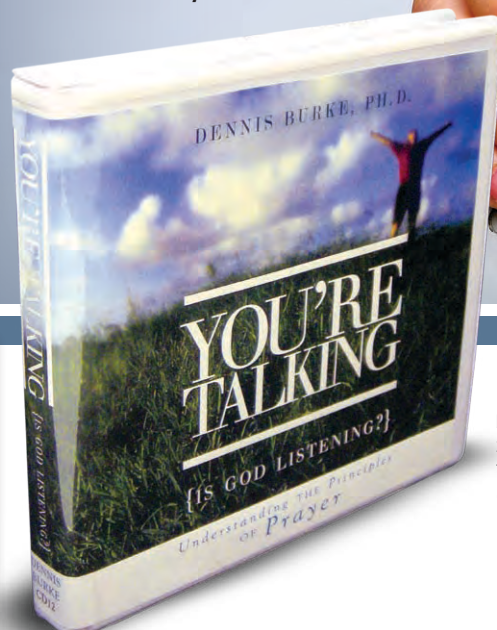
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