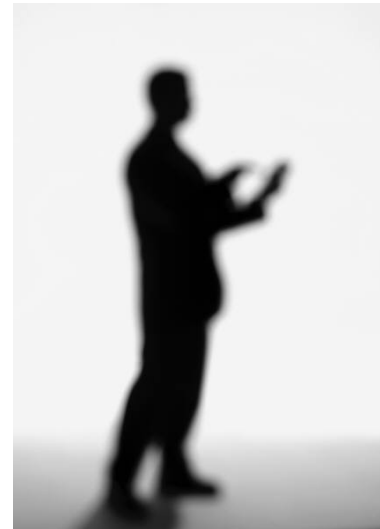




Ordinary Men



Studies in being a man

Study 01
Jabez

Ordinary Men – study One – Jabez – Painful Reality
1 Chronicles 4:9-10

Just one more burden in an already difficult time. Those foolish men didn't know what they were doing. First this man, then another went off to the local shrines hoping to find an answer to all the troubles they were experiencing. I know better. They just wanted to see the women. They hoped that they might get a chance to lay with a goddess. A lot of good that will do. Sleeping with a prostitute and fooling themselves into believing it will put them in contact with the gods.

If that wasn't bad enough Alsenaph, yes my husband Alsenaph, decided he would join them. I tried to talk him out of it but he wouldn't listen. He wouldn't listen to the old prophet either. Thought that he knew better. He said that if God was going to abandon us then he might as well go and see what those other gods had to offer. He had heard that up in the north all of the people were doing it and the rumor was that they had all the food they need.

At first he only went once in a while, then it was once a week, then it was so often I never saw him at home. Life was getting very hard. He lost interest in our marriage and in me. When he did come home we just fought. There were nights when he didn't come home at all. During that time is when Jedan showed up. He was passing by and asked me for a drink. We started chatting. It was so good to have someone take an interest in me. Over the next month things got more serious. I never intended it to happen but one day he just stayed for the evening meal and one thing led to another.

Alsenaph showed up early. Fortunately we heard him coming and Jedan escaped out the back. He stopped by the next day but I told him not to come back again. But it was too late, I was pregnant. In a few months everyone would know what happened, especially my husband.

The next month the Amalikes attacked our village. My foolish husband, as usual, had gone to the temple of the that goddess again. The fool was so drunk he didn't know what he was doing. He tried to fight one of the soldiers. A farmer against a soldier; well you can imagine what happened. Now, I was not only pregnant, but a widow as well.

The Amalekites were raiding on a regular basis and it is was soon time for me to give birth. What was I going to do? No one cared what happened to me. I had nowhere to go. Everyday the people laughed at me. "There's that woman who committed adultery, whose fool of a husband followed after that false God." The baby growing inside of me was a reminder of all the bad that had happened to me. I decided that if it was a boy I would name him Jabez, because he would remind me and others of the pains of life and all the sorrow it brings.

Years Later

Jabez speaks to his mother. "Mother, it is time for us to make some serious choices. All these years we have suffered and I believed it was because of my father's sin in choosing to follow after that false God. However, the judge came through here yesterday. He told us that we needed to recognize that our choice of denying God has led us down the path of suffering. We are the ones responsible. Mother I have decided that it is not life that is the cause of our pain. It is the wrong choices that bring us pain. We have the opportunity to choose. Today I choose to return to the worship of the God of our fathers."

"Mother, there is no dishonor in admitting one's sin and confessing it to God. The judge said that God is willing to forgive us if we will return to him. I know that your life has been hard. We have had to work hard to survive. You may think that God abandoned us, but really we abandoned God. Today I choose to serve God. Today I am going to ask Him to be my God.

"Today, I will ask him to open my eyes and expand the boundaries of my vision so that I may see what He has for us. Today, I will ask Him to bless us. Today, I will ask Him to be with us. Today, I will ask Him to free me from the pain of my past and protect me from the consequences of my sin. Today, I will tell Him that I will serve him and no one else. Mother, hear me and what I say. Believe me when I tell you that when we trust God, He will care for us and change our pain to joy because He is with us.

Week One – Read Psalm 31- Think about something in your past that has made your life difficult and brought pain to you. What can you learn from the Psalm that will help you deal with your pain and be like Jabez?

Week Two – Read Psalm 16 – Think about the limits or boundaries that exist in your life. Why do they exist? What effect do they have on you? Who set those boundaries? How do they affect your ability to serve God? What will you need to do so that God can expand your area of ministry?

Week Three – Read Isaiah 41:8-16 – How does one know when God is with them? Why do you want God to be with you? What changes need to be made in your life so that God will be pleased to be with you?

Week Four – Read Matthew 6:9-13; Proverbs 30:8-9; 2 Timothy 4:17-18 – Take a moment to reflect on what each of these passages is referring to when it talks about evil. What does evil represent in your life? What is the source of the evil you deal with? How is evil different from sin? What do you need God to do in helping you deal with evil?