

*Note: The Rev. Caleb Kim will deliver the sermon below on Sunday, January 25, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. at St. Andrew's, Fenelon Falls and via Zoom.*

### **Title: Enlarge My Territory–The Prayer of Jabez (II)**

We are continuing our series, “The Prayer of Jabez,” rooted in the book of 1 Chronicles, chapter four, verses nine and ten. Last Sunday, we explored Jabez’s first petition: the plea for God’s blessing. We looked at the lives of Jacob, the Apostle Paul, and King David—three prominent biblical figures who, in their own ways, cried out desperately for God’s favor. They understood a fundamental truth: only God’s provision can truly satisfy our deepest needs. Praying for God’s blessing is not selfish; it is a vital practice for every believer seeking God’s guidance and strength for themselves and their loved ones.

Today, we turn our focus to the second petition of this prayer, which concerns God’s prosperity and expansion in our lives. Jabez asked God to “enlarge his territory.” In this context, the word “enlarge” simply means to increase or expand, while “territory” refers to one’s physical boundaries or borders. To understand why this mattered so much to Jabez, we have to look at the history of the people of Israel.

As we saw in the children’s Bible video, twelve spies were chosen from the tribes of Israel and sent by Moses to explore Canaan—the Promised Land. They returned with reports of a land that was richly blessed and overflowing. After Moses passed away, Joshua led the people to conquer that land, eventually dividing the property into twelve portions. Once a tribe of Israel received its God-given territory, its members were expected to cultivate, protect, and expand it. As a descendant of the tribe of Judah, Jabez lived in a society where land was the primary measure of success and influence. In an agricultural world, more land meant more room for crops, larger flocks, and a greater ability to provide for one’s family and community. When Jabez prayed to God to increase his borders, he wasn’t just asking for more; he was asking for greater influence and the resources to fulfill his God-given potential.

In our Old Testament reading today, we find a request strikingly similar to Jabez’s. The Prophet Isaiah says to the people of Israel, “Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes” (Isaiah 54:2). At that time, the Israelites were held captive in Babylon. Their situation was like that of a barren woman—humanly speaking, there was no reason to expect growth. Why would a people in captivity need a bigger tent? However, Isaiah encouraged them to prepare for an expansion even though they could not yet see it. He told them, “Do not be afraid; you will not be put to shame... For your Maker is your husband – the Lord Almighty is His name – the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; He is called the God of all the earth” (Isaiah 54:4-5). Isaiah wanted them to look beyond their current situation and see the bright days ahead God had prepared. This is the heart of Jabez’s prayer: praying by faith for a future growth that their current circumstances cannot explain. Like Jabez, we are invited to open our mouths wide in faith and ask God for His abundance (Psalm 81:10).

In our Epistle reading, we find the deeper spiritual meaning of “enlarge our territory.” The Apostle Paul compares infant believers to mature disciples, describing infants as being “tossed back and forth” by every wind of doctrine or teaching. This imagery depicts

instability and vulnerability. But Paul encouraged the church in Ephesus—and he inspires us today—to “grow to become in every respect the mature body of Him who is the head, that is, Christ” (Ephesians 4:15). In other words, we are called to move from spiritual helplessness toward becoming independent, mature disciples who make consistent progress in our walk with Christ. Our growth should not be measured relatively by comparing ourselves to others. We often look to the left or right to see how we’re doing, but Paul tells us to look up. Our goal is to attain the whole measure of the fullness of Christ, “the pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2).

In another Epistle text, we uncover the importance of development in every area of our lives through the prayer of the Apostle John. He writes, “Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well” (3 John 1:2). Here, John asks God to bless the well-being of the believer—not only in their physical health but also in their mental and spiritual capacities. He encourages us to pray that God would prosper every part of our lives: our bodies, our minds, and our spirits.

Through these lessons from Jabez, Paul, and John, we see that we are called to ask God to enlarge our territories in three specific areas during our sacred adventure with Him. Let me ask a simple question. How are we doing with our New Year’s resolutions so far? Some of us are doing well, while others—including myself—may need encouragement to keep pressing forward. Many of us set goals to take care of our bodies, our minds, and our spirits. I believe these are the three territories we should courageously and confidently bring before God today. This morning, I want us to explore each of these dimensions in detail and learn how to apply them to our prayer lives.

The first area where we must ask God to enlarge our territory is in our physical capacity. The Psalmist reminds us that we are “fearfully and wonderfully made” by God, knit together in our mothers’ wombs (Psalm 139:14). Because we belong to the Creator and the Holy Spirit dwells within us, we are called to take care of these “God-given temples” (1 Corinthians 6:19). To “enlarge our territory” physically, we first need to understand the nature of the vessel we’ve been given. Science tells us that as we reach the age of 30, we begin to lose muscle mass in the body at a rate of about 5% per decade. After age 60, this decline accelerates, increasing the risks of falls, fractures, and injuries. This is not an inevitable defeat. Through strength training, proper exercise, and a healthy diet, we can not only prevent this damage but even reverse it.

I recently watched a documentary about a working mother who never felt she had time for herself. She was always busy caring for her children and her husband, leaving no room for exercise. After she retired at 60, she decided things had to change. She wanted to walk—really walk. It wasn’t easy. She struggled with arthritis in her knees, and every step was a battle. But with the Lord’s help and her own firm determination, she overcame the pain and built her stamina. Today, in her mid-seventies, she has completed numerous long-distance walking journeys. She proudly displays a collection of walking shoes—many of them worn thin with holes in the sides. Those shoes are her trophies; they remind her of the physical territory she has reclaimed through discipline over the years. Another group of seniors offers this advice to anyone in their 60s, 70s, or 80s who wants to try something new...

Developing physical “territory” doesn’t happen overnight. We can’t build leg muscles just by buying running shoes; we have to put them on and leave the house. In a spiritual sense, we must also pray for God to enlarge our “physical muscles”—our endurance, our stability, and our health. Whether we are 19 or 90, God wants us to have the strength to do His work. Having the desire is a great start, but action is the essential requirement. As we pray, “Lord, enlarge my territory,” let us also pray for the discipline and determination to strengthen the temple God has entrusted to us. We cannot fulfill a large vision with a neglected vessel. Let us move forward with both faith and footsteps.

The second area where we must ask God to enlarge our territory is in our mental capacity. As I approach a significant milestone myself—turning sixty in less than two years—I’ve noticed some “territory” shrinking. For instance, I find myself struggling to spell tricky words or forgetting daily tasks on occasion. While I thank God for computer spell-checkers and smartphone reminders, I’ve realized that this convenient technology can sometimes prevent us from exercising our brains to their fullest extent. If we are not careful, our “mental muscles” can begin to weaken simply because we’ve stopped using them diligently.

While reflecting on brain health, I’ve been inspired by a revolutionary truth: “You don’t have to be discouraged or stuck with the brain you have.” ...The good news is that we can change the course of our mental health. By choosing nutritious foods, engaging in regular exercise, and replacing unhealthy habits with life-giving patterns, we can actually enhance our brain function as we age.

I see this principle in action every day with my mother. As I have shared before, we speak several times a day via video calls. One of the things we do with that time is to “exercise” our minds. We do simple math together, practicing addition, subtraction, and multiplication. When she gets the questions right, we celebrate each victory! I also ask her to recite her identification number, her address, and contact information for our family. We usually conclude our calls by reciting the Apostles’ Creed. Even with mild cognitive impairment, my mother is doing a remarkable job. You see, our brain operates on a simple principle: “Use it or lose it.” Unlike physical muscles made of tissue, our brain is made of cells that communicate through complex networks. When we challenge our brains—whether through memorizing scripture, learning a new hobby, or solving puzzles—we build what scientists call “cognitive reserves.” If we build these mental reservoirs now, they provide us with the strength we need if memory issues arise in the future.

Friends, are we willing to ask God to enlarge our mental capacity? Just as Jabez prayed for his physical borders to expand, we can pray for God to protect our cognitive reserves, guard us against mental decline, and maintain our wisdom in our golden years. We must do the work—the healthy choices and the mental stimulation—but, once again, we must also ask the Creator of the Mind to prosper our mental territory. May we serve Him, our families, and our neighbours—not only with all our strength but especially with all our minds, for as long as we live.

The third area where we must ask God to enlarge our territory is in our spiritual maturity. Think for a moment about a parent’s heart. If a child stops learning or growing as they get older, the parents feel a deep sense of concern and sorrow. In the same way, our

Heavenly Father desires to see His children grow. He doesn't want us to stay spiritual infants; He wants us to expand our capacity to know Him and reflect Him as time goes by.

In our reading from Ephesians, the Apostle Paul encourages us to set an example in various areas of spiritual "territory." Let us ask ourselves the following questions. In speech, are we using faithful and encouraging words? Do our words build others up, even when we are under pressure? In life, does our daily walk match our talk? Is there integrity between what we say on Sunday and how we live on weekdays? In love, is our capacity expanding—are we loving our families more today than we did yesterday? Will our love for Jesus be stronger tomorrow than today? In faith, is our trust in God deepening, allowing His image to be revealed through our confidence in Him? And in purity, are we guarding our hearts against a world of materialism and compromise? How are our spirits growing in these areas? Remember, this is not about being perfect; it is about making a sincere effort to live according to God's Word.

To develop these spiritual muscles, we need more than just a desire to grow; we need spiritual nutrition. Just as our bodies need food and our minds need stimulation, our spirits need the Word of God and an intimate relationship with Him in prayer. This reminds me of a famous story about a man who wrote a letter to the editor of his local newspaper...

Friends, we may not remember every verse we read or every sermon we hear, but every moment spent in God's presence nourishes our souls. It stretches our hearts and enlarges our spiritual capacity. So, this morning, let us pray like Jabez. Let us not be afraid to ask for more—not out of greed, but for more capacity to love Him, more strength to serve Him, and more territory to reflect His glory to a world in need.

Before I conclude this message, I want us to ask one final question. "Why should we concern ourselves with this request to enlarge our territory on our journey of faith?" One critical reason is this: "Where there is no growth, there can be no maturity." If our whole being is not renewed by God, our old self remains unchanged, no matter how hard we try to remodel our lives from the outside. Without a transformed heart, our life's outcomes will simply remain the same. This is why we must pray for an expansion of our three-fold capacity: body, mind, and spirit.

Today, God is inviting each of us to make a commitment to growth in these areas. He wants us to give Him the "best of our lives" by choosing to grow, regardless of our circumstances. It is true that on this journey, many things are beyond our control. We did not choose our personal background, our family heritage, our natural gifts, or our physical appearance. We cannot control the external situations we encounter today or the challenges that may arise tomorrow. In many ways, the future is out of our hands, and that uncertainty might lead us into fatalism regarding our physical, mental, and spiritual destinations.

But we must remember this truth: While we cannot control our circumstances, we have the God-given freedom to choose our response. How much we choose to trust God is up to us. Once again think about Jabez's reaction and faith. He did not settle for the destiny

his name implied. His name meant “Pain,” but he refused to be a man of sorrow. He cried out to God to transform him into a man of blessing and to enlarge his limited capacity.

I believe God uses people like Jabez—people who live by the famous motto of the missionary William Carey: “Expect great things from God: attempt great things for God.” God uses those who catch a vision and pursue it by faith. That is the choice before us today.

Friends, let us pray boldly that our physical, mental, and spiritual territories would be made healthier today and in the days to come. Supported by the power of God, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the love of Jesus Christ, let us recommit to the goals we have been given. I am confident that God will bless our prayers and our recommitment to Him, enabling each of us become stronger in body, sharper in mind, and deeper in spirit. God will expand our capacity so that we may be a greater blessing and a more powerful influence within the Kingdom of our Triune God. Amen.

*\*In this sermon, I have drawn on ideas from the sermon series titled “The Prayer of Jabez,” based on the following texts: 1 Chronicles 4:9-10; Isaiah 54:1-8; Ephesians 4:14-24; and 3 John 1:1-4.*