

Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church (USA)

Changing Lives and
Growing In God's Love

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Rev. Dr. Daris S. Bultena, Pastor
Minister of Word and Sacrament

May 8, 2009

Evelyn Benser

Dear Readers,

I remember that Sunday, now well more than a handful of years ago when Evelyn Benser came to me at the coffee hour and asked—"The Prayer of Jabez, what do you think?" I always gave her answer to such inquiries, but usually I would first turn the question back to her, "So, what do you think?"

Her response, "I just read it this week..."

There was nothing uncommon about Evelyn Benser saying, I just read it this week. Here was a voracious reader. She could read something and quickly glean the matter of significance. She also was a ferocious reader. She read a whole range of books, articles, and materials. I could give her a document and I knew that she had read it; others may take the document but I was never quite sure if they read it. My Evelyn always did.

So when she said she had read "The Prayer of Jabez," I knew that she had not simply read it, but had taken it in and had a view on it. She was ready to discuss and even debate it with me. When I responded to her with, "So, what do you think?" Her face lit up with that big smile and those bright teeth showing through. She said, in that voice of authentic excitement—oh, do you remember how she could be so excited and thrilled with something and it came through in her tone of voice and her whole demeanor... Do you remember that?



I remember it—I remember how she responded to my "So, what do you think?" Filled with delight she said, "I think its wonderful." And it was the way she emphasized, "wonderful" that was just so her. Ah, she was what was wonderful. Smart. Beautiful. Full of life. Deep. Faithful. Trustworthy. Loving. She was all that and wonderful too.



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"I think its wonderful." And we talked specifically that day and in many days to come about that prayer of Jabez: "Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from hurt and harm!" We talked especially about those words: "That you would bless me and enlarge my border."

The prayer had become popular because of the little book that was written about it. The book looked at the prayer in four distinct parts. The focus of many who read the book was on the blessing and keeping from hurt and harm. The focus of the book became about how personal abundance and gain.

This was not where Evelyn focused as she looked at the prayer. She focused on those words, "enlarge my border." I remember that it was at the time we were doing Project 6:15 and we had discussions about systems theory. Evelyn and I were jazzed by those discussions and they partially formed the basis for what I have been doing in Deep Shift. Anyway, Evelyn and I talked about that concept of "circles of influence" and how "enlarge my border" is really about "enlarge my circle."

"Who is in my circle? Who else could God be trying to draw into my circle? How have I drawn the circle to small? How has the church drawn the circle to small? What can we do in order to help God draw the circumference of the circle larger?"

Evelyn was all about those questions. She was a thinker. A dreamer. A discerner. She could listen to the Spirit. She was not afraid to have her circle drawn larger.

Blessings,
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