

Finding Favor: God's Blessings Beyond Health, Wealth, and Happiness

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"You've prayed for God's blessings. But what are you really asking for? How does God really bless us? In this eye-opening book, Brian Jones shares the answer in his engaging, straightforward, and incredibly practical style. It's a must-read for anyone wanting God's favor."

—Vince Antonucci, pastor of Verve Church and author of *God for the Rest of Us*

God's Favor Is His Alone to Disperse

As a pastor, I've had countless conversations with men and women with a similar story – Christians hungry to be used by God who know that anything less than God-sized dreams for their lives is not enough. They've been told that God is "able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us" (Ephesians 3:20), and they want to experience that.

If you're the kind of person who wants to see a 100X return in every area of your life, I have very good news for you.

You don't have to be a pastor or missionary, though God can use those people.

You don't have to be a visionary person, though God can use that.

You don't have to be a natural leader, though God can certainly use that too.

You don't have to be attractive, a great speaker, a graduate of a prestigious college, come from a strong family, or have personal magnetism.

You only need one thing . . .

You need the favor of the Lord.

If God lays his hand on your life and gives you his favor, no army is too strong, no task too great, and no challenge too daunting for God to accomplish what he wants to accomplish through you.

God's favor is his supernatural intervention to bring a blessing into your life.

Can you think of anything that would be more advantageous than seeking and finding the favor of the Lord to give you the supernatural assistance you need to solve your problems, be present in your trials, and make your hopes a reality? With your family? At your work? In your world?

Think of the lengths people in the marketplace go to in order to find a competitive advantage to grow their business. Consider all the apps, systems, tools, and tips we have at our disposal to help us become more organized. Reflect on what parents do to give their children every possible advantage in life. We're all looking for "the thing" that will help us become everything God created us to be in every area of our life. *God's favor is that thing.*



Brian Jones is the founding senior pastor of Christ's Church of the Valley, an innovative multisite church of more than two thousand in the suburbs of Philadelphia. He's a graduate of Cincinnati Christian University (BA) and Princeton Theological Seminary (M.Div.). The author of four books, Brian also writes practical articles on following Jesus at happinessable.com and articles on leadership and preaching at SeniorPastorCentral.com.

Follow him on Twitter: @Happinessable.

Moses discovered that with God's favor he could successfully lead a ragtag group of slaves to bring the most powerful army in the world to its knees. *Gideon* knew that with God's favor he could successfully discern which path God wanted him to take in his life. *Nehemiah* asked for God's favor and was granted the opportunity to successfully lead the most significant building project in the nation of Israel's history, despite severe opposition.

An important thing to understand, however, is that God's favor will not keep you from experiencing personal hardship. As much as I'd like to tell you that God's favor will make your life so easy that you'll be able to eat ice cream and go to bed and lose weight (let's admit that would be pretty awesome), it doesn't work like that. *Daniel* was shown God's favor, but spent the rest of his life in exile in Babylon. *Joseph* was shown God's favor, but had a terrible childhood and spent the majority of his adult life away from his family. *Esther* was shown God's favor, but almost got herself killed fulfilling God's call on her life.

Yet, despite the difficult journeys the great men and women in the Bible sometimes endured, they all understood there was *nothing* more important than seeking the favor of the Lord before anything they did. With it, victory was ensured. Without it, the battle was lost before it began.

What could God accomplish through your finances if you had his favor on them? What could happen in your quest to find the right person to marry if God's favor was on that quest? What could happen if you sought and found God's favor for that new business idea of yours?

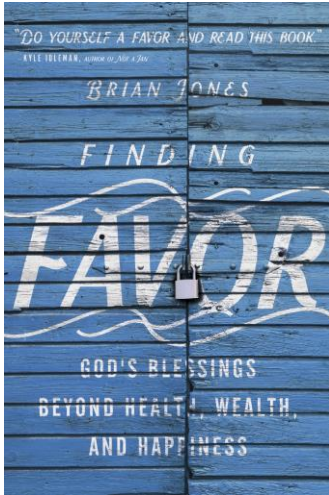
Keep in mind, though, favor is not magic. We don't control God's favor any more than we control God himself. No amount of positive thinking, visualization, or manipulative self-help mind tricks will bring favor to pass. God's favor is his and his alone to disperse.

One more thing: God will withdraw his favor if we deliberately disobey his commands.

The Old Testament king Manasseh sinned greatly against the Lord, and he was led away into captivity by a neighboring army. "In his distress," we're told, "he sought the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors" (2 Chronicles 33:12). The good news, for him, and for us is, "When he prayed to him, the Lord was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea" and delivered him from their hands. Favor can be given, taken away, and then given again. It is God and God's alone to decide. Our task is simply to obey and to ask.

It's clear that there's nothing more important than having God lay his hand on your life and go with you to face your challenges as a man or woman, husband or wife, student, parent, police officer, or CEO. If maximum impact is your aim, then the favor of the Lord is what you must seek.

— Taken from chapter one, "God's Favor."



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"In Finding Favor, Brian Jones uncovers a treasure trove of God's favor for his people. Sometimes we wonder if God really wants to give us his favor – his supernatural intercession bringing blessing into our lives. But Brian makes sure we know that closed doors and sweeping floors – and a host of other things – are all in the realm of God's favor for us."

– Kyle Idleman, author of *Not a Fan* and *Grace Is Greater*

Confessions of the Conquered

Years ago, before moving to Philadelphia to start Christ's Church of the Valley, I planted another church in Dayton, Ohio. This church took off like a rocket and soared from 150 to 153 in four years. I mean it just zoomed at breakneck speed. After just a year, we got kicked out of the middle school where we were meeting and had to quickly renovate an old paint store to meet in.

Now, just so you understand, when I felt called to ministry, I began laying plans to start the single largest, fastest growing church in the history of human civilization. I was going to give credit to God, of course, but kind of like the actors who pretend to be *thoroughly surprised* when they win an Oscar and then pull out three pages of prepared notes when they get up to the podium.

I don't know what happened, but God didn't understand what I was trying to accomplish for me . . . I mean him. The church didn't grow. We attracted our own "rabble," a small group of people with the spiritual gift of complaining, just like the ones in Moses' congregation. Nothing I tried worked. I became depressed. Two years into this new church, I began praying for God to release me from this assignment.

The funny thing is once I started praying I started getting job offers. One was to plant a new church in West Palm Beach, Florida, with an effort funded by a billionaire celebrity CEO. (I'd tell you his name but that would be bragging. I'm not above bragging, but I am above getting sued, which I've been told could happen if I mention his name.) I was told he was friends with other celebrities who would join our new church. I was told that he thought I'd be perfect for the job, that I would make three times what I was making, and could use his yacht on the weekends.

I got a call from another organization that was planting a new church outside of Boulder, Colorado, arguably the prettiest city I've ever visited. The mountains were stunning. The air was crisp. The field was ripe. The job was mine if I wanted it.

What happened with the job in Colorado? I blew the final interview. I mean I became argumentative over some obscure doctrine and melted down in front of everyone. It was embarrassing. My friends in the room were like, "What happened?" My wife said on the plane ride home, "What was that all about?" Looking back, I'm convinced I self-sabotaged the last twenty minutes of the interview. Deep down I knew I wasn't supposed to leave the church in Dayton.

The job in West Palm? I came to my senses halfway through the interview and told them that I couldn't be bought and that they'd better look elsewhere.

I flew home from the Colorado interview and walked through the doors of the ugly, dilapidated paint store we could afford to only partially renovate.

I sat down in my makeshift office/electrical closet/storage closet/entryway to the restroom

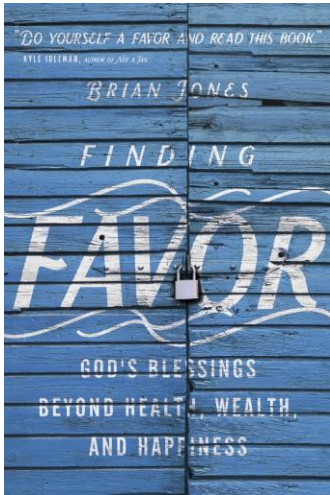
FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO SCHEDULE AN INTERVIEW CONTACT THE INTERVARSITY PRESS PUBLICITY TEAM:

Alisse Wissman, print publicity, at 800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or awissman@ivpress.com
Krista Clayton, broadcast and online publicity, at 800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com

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BOOK EXCERPT



"In thirty years of ministry, I've been enthralled by the glorious, unmerited favor of God that I've seen on display in the lives of countless saints. In those same thirty years, I've also been undone by the sorrows and sufferings of the beloved. Can the people of God face trouble in the world and still know themselves to be highly favored? Brian Jones's Finding Favor convincingly, winsomely cries, yes! In Jones's inspirational new work, readers discover themselves highly favored in Christ whether on the mountaintop or in the valley."

— Alan D. Wright, senior pastor of Reynolda Church, Winston-Salem, NC, and author of *Free Yourself, Be Yourself*

area, buried my face in my hands, and said, "You're not going to let me quit, are you?"

The hum of the fluorescent light bulbs hung in the air as I sat in the emptiness of the moment.

"I have nothing left," I prayed.

Silence.

"I don't want to be here. You do understand that there's no part of me that wants to stay at this church, right?"

Silence.

"I mean the people hate me. Nobody thinks I'm very good at this. I've already proved that when it comes to" — then I cut myself off mid-sentence.

I couldn't stand to listen to the self-indulgent pity of my own voice any longer.

Oswald Chambers wrote, "When God gets us alone through suffering, heartbreak, temptation, disappointment, sickness, or by thwarted desires, a broken friendship, or a new friendship — when He gets us absolutely alone, and we are totally speechless, unable to ask even one question, then He begins to teach us."

I don't know how you're stuck right now, or where you're stuck, or what you'd like to get out of but can't, but I want you to know that God taught me more about myself, about true character, about loving people, and relying on him over the next three years in that church than all of my years in ministry combined.

Not coincidentally, just when I had grown content with the idea of spending the rest of my life at that church, serving the wonderful people I had grown to deeply love, God called us to move to the suburbs of Philadelphia.

God's favor is funny like that.

Sometimes the most insanely great thing God will ever do in our lives will be the change he makes in us, not what he accomplishes through us.

— Taken from chapter two, "Involuntary Perseverance."