Esau’s Descendants

A young man was walkingalong one of Southern California's sandy beaches with his surf board. He suddenly spots this bottle which has recently washed up on the beach. It's obvious it's been tossed around for a long time. He picks up the bottle and notices that it still has the cork intact. So, being curious as to what may be inside, he manages to get the cork out and out pops a Genie.

After expressing profound appreciation for having been let out of the bottle, the Genie grants his benefactor the classic, "one wish" and it will be yours. Being an avid surfer, it doesn't take him long to say,
"I've always wanted to surf Hawaii, but I get seasick on ships and I'm afraid to fly. Would you build me a bridge to Hawaii?"

The Genie replies:
"Do you know what you are asking for? Do you know how long the bridge would have to be? Think of the enormous challenges for that kind of undertaking. The supports required to reach the bottom of the Pacific! The concrete and steel it would take! It will nearly exhaust several natural resources. And the maintenance of that bridge! No, think of another wish."

The man said OK and tried to think of a really good wish. Finally, he said,
"I've been married and divorced four times. My wives always said that I don't care and that I'm insensitive. So, I wish that I could understand women ... know how they feel inside and what they're thinking when they give me the silent treatment ... know why they're crying, know what they really want when they say nothing ... know how to make them truly happy ... I really want to understand women and how they think!"

After a long sigh, the Genie responds:
"Would you like that bridge with two lanes or four?"

Steve’s has been preaching a series of messages based on the Prayer of Jabez. The main takeaway is that our prayer for God to enlarge our territory should not be for financial gain but for spreading the Gospel message. Some believe this prayer is an appeal to God for prosperity. “The Prayer of Jabez, Breaking Through to the Blessed Life”, released in 2000 sold 9 million copies in 2 years. A New York Times article from 2001 by Laurie Goodstein says “The book offers a new view of the prosperity gospel. It preaches that it is perfectly fine to ask God for personal success, as long as that success has a godly purpose.

''Jabez prayed for more property,'' the author, Dr. Wilkinson, said. ''He was a farmer or herdsman, and he was asking for more business. When I talk to business owners or managers, I tell them that if their business is honoring the public and they're treating their employees well, it's right to ask God to bless their business.''

What would non Christians wish for and how would they convey that wish? After all, they would not pray to God in whom they have no belief and jokes aside, few would believe in some supernatural means of granting their wish. Probably health in addition to wealth (I thank God daily for Michele’s and my good health) would be high on the list of wishes. The idea of enlarged territory might suggest greater influence in a variety of areas of interest. Consider the various noble causes such as a clean environment, Mothers Against Drunk Drivers or concern for the homeless. Altruism is not limited to Christians, nonbelievers are capable of supporting worthy ventures. In chapter 36 we read about Esau who did not seem to have a relationship with God but he had been blessed materially. He saw no value in his birthright, giving it away in return for a single meal. Although Jacob also stole Isaac’s blessing from him, God seems to have provided some measure of prosperity and protection to Esau based on promises made to Abraham. When the Israelites were passing through the land of the Edomites who were descended from Esau, God instructed them not to battle with them and told them that he had given Seir as a possession for Esau. The chapter presents a listing of the descendants of Esau similar to that provided for Ishmael’s descendants in chapter 25 but it much greater detail. Despite the meticulous attention given to the names the Bible gives no further information regarding their lives. Matthew Henry noted that Moses preserved the records of those within the church, not without. While Esau’s descendants would have had their contributions to mankind, those contributions were only secular and provided no furtherance of the story of God’s relationship with those who love Him. Henry also wrote that Esau’s descendants were kings while Jacob’s descendants were lowly shepherds for generations before God chose a king from among them. “God’s promise to Jacob began to work late, but the effect of it remained longer, and it had its complete accomplishment in the spiritual Israel.” It would seem that when Esau asked for his father’s blessing (27:38) he did receive wealth but nothing of lasting value.