

...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembly together...but encouraging one another.  
Heb 10:24-25

Share the teaching  
Guard the sharing

# Male Call

## February 26, 2010—The Jesus Way—Abraham

6:00 – 6:05	Coffee & Donuts—Opening Prayer
6:05 – 7:00	<p><b>"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."</b> —Jesus (John 14:6)</p> <p>1) Why is <u>this story</u> at <u>this place</u> in the Bible? This story has absorbed the imagination of the people of God and plunged generation after generation of us into facing and dealing with the fundamental mystery that is God: there is so much here that we cannot comprehend, so much that violates our pious sensibility, so much that refuses to conform to our expectations. How can God command a murder? And not just a murder in general [like in other parts of the Old Testament], but the murder of a beloved son? How can God go back on the miracle-promise fulfilled in the birth of Isaac? How can God, who our parents and pastors have taught us loves us from eternity, command this cold-blooded cruelty? How can God, who Jesus tells us has such a tender heart that he is moved by the death of sparrows, command a father to kill his son, without so much as a hint of explanation? We can't handle this...It is too terrible to admit into our consciousness...We hire theologians and pastors to abstract the story into a principle or dogma or lessons that will insulate us from the offending details. But there is no getting around it: The binding of Isaac on Mount Moriah, the knife poised at Isaac's throat, is not only the defining event in the way of Abraham, but the "midpoint of Genesis...the paradigmatic narrative of the entire book." There it stands: a huge, impassible boulder blocking the way. Why did our ancestors place this story so imperiously on the very threshold of the Way? Didn't they know that many of us coming on this story so early on, offended and outraged, would just shut the book and go shopping for something or someone more benign to guide us in our spiritual quest, like, say, the Buddha?<sup>1</sup></p> <p>2) The Story From God's Perspective</p> <p>a) The quote above represents the horror of the narrative from our limited perspective.</p> <p>b) What might God's perspective be of this narrative?</p> <p>i) Good things:</p> <p>(1) God had promised that Abraham would be the father of a great nation (Genesis 12:1-3)</p>

<sup>1</sup> *The Jesus Way*. 42-43. Quote in second paragraph from Everett Fox.

- (2) God had promised Abraham a son who would be the first offspring of this great nation (Genesis 15:1-21)
- (3) Abraham had Isaac (Genesis 21:1-5)

ii) Why would God test Abraham by asking him to sacrifice Isaac?

(1) Why do we exist?

God was saying to Abraham, "You may have some other idea about the design and purpose of your life, but you are wrong! You were created in My image to worship Me and to glorify Me. If you do not honor this purpose, your life will degenerate into shallow, selfish, humanistic pursuits.

"Abraham, commit your whole life and future into my hands. Let Me as your Creator and God fulfill in you My perfect design. It is My great desire that you become a faithful and delighted worshiper at My throne."<sup>2</sup>

(2) Idols

"You shall have no other gods before me."<sup>3</sup>

The phrase "before me" means "in my presence" and therefore prohibits other gods from being considered to be in the presence of Yahweh. This prohibits several concepts that were a standard part of ancient beliefs. Most religions of that day had a pantheon, a divine assembly that ruled the realm of the gods, the supernatural, and, ultimately, the human world. There would typically be a deity who was designated head of the pantheon, and he, like the other gods, would have at least one consort (female partner). This commandment forbids Israel to think in these terms. Yahweh is not the head of a pantheon, and he does not have a consort—there are no gods in his presence.<sup>4</sup>

(a) Negative idols

(i) Things of the world we put before God

(ii) Perhaps Ishmael was a negative idol God had to remove

1. Genesis 12:9-12

(iii) Examples in your life

(b) Positive idols

(i) Things we believe we are doing for God

(ii) Perhaps Isaac was a positive idol God had to remove

1. Genesis 21:8

(iii) Examples in your life

<sup>2</sup> *Men Who Met God*. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 20:3 ESV.

<sup>4</sup> Matthews, V. H., Chavalas, M. W., & Walton, J. H. (2000). *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (electronic ed.). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.





Further reading:

- *The Bible*
- Au, Walkie and Noreen Cannon Au. (2006). *The Discerning Heart: Exploring the Christian Path*. Paulist Press.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. (1995). *The Cost of Discipleship*. Simon & Schuster.
- Ciardi, John & Williams, Miller. (1975). *How Does a Poem Mean?* Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Haase, Albert. *Coming Home to Your True Self: Leaving the Emptiness of False Attractions*. (2008). IVP Books.
- Martin, James. (2005). *Become Who You Are*. Hidden Spring.
- Nouwen, Henri. (1981). *The Way of the Heart: Connecting with God Through Prayer, Wisdom, and Silence*. Ballantine Books.
- Ortberg, John. (2010). *The Me I Want To Be*. Zondervan.
- Peterson, Eugene H. (2007). *The Jesus Way: A Conversation on the Ways that Jesus is the Way*. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Rohr, Richard. (2002). *Everything Belongs: the Gift of Contemplative Prayer*. Crossroad Publishing Company.
- Shelley, Bruce L. (1995). *Church History in Plain Language*. Thomas Nelson Publishers.
- Tozer, A.W. *Men Who Met God*. (1986). Christian Publications.
- Yancey, Phillip. (2002). *Reaching for the Invisible God*. Zondervan.