

...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

April 2, 2010—The Jesus Way—Jacob

6:00 – 6:05	Coffee & Donuts—Opening Prayer
6:05 – 7:00	<p>“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” —Jesus (John 14:6)</p> <p>1) Ways of Jesus</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Abraham—A faith life b) Jacob—A man who wrestled with God <p>2) Careful what You Ask For—The Next Chapter of Jacob’s Story Jacob secured for himself the spiritual legacy of the family, but he does not realize what he has done...From this time on Jacob is a marked man in God’s eyes, as a result of this he will be forced to undergo great changes in his character.¹</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Jacob’s four strikes:² <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i) Unfortunate home life: dad and mom at odds ii) Tied to mom’s apron strings iii) Major character flaws iv) Jacob doesn’t know God <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) “Your God”—Genesis 27:20 b) A great mystery <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i) God continued to pursue Jacob c) How does that make you feel as you view your life? <p>3) Jacob’s Transformation from Egocentricity³ There are three basic experiences through which our egocentricity can be changed: through suffering, through the recognition of a power greater than our own will at work in our lives, and by coming to care for someone other than oneself. All three of these experiences came to Jacob in quick succession...⁴</p>

¹ *The Man Who Wrestled With God.* 19.

² First three strikes from *Men Who Met God.* 50.

³ *The Man Who Wrestled With God.* See ch 2.

⁴ *Ibid.* 22.

a) Suffering

i) Recall Jacob's nature: he grew up living in the tents and cooking.

(1) He is threatened by Esau—Genesis 27:41

(2) He undertakes a dangerous journey into the wilderness and he is afraid—
(Genesis 28)

Egocentricity dies hard in most of us. Often only the pain of a wilderness journey can bring about the desired new attitude...But an egocentric person can cheat even at suffering. Caught in our wilderness experience, with its pain and confusion, many of us try to turn our pain into self-pity, use our suffering to play the martyr and manipulate others, or perhaps just give up in the face of pain and want to die. Suffering by itself is no cure; it only cures us when we have the right attitude toward it.⁵

Some questions:

- In what ways has God used the “wilderness of suffering” in other biblical stories?
- In what ways has God used this wilderness in your life?
- How have you responded or are currently responding?

b) An encounter with a greater Will

i) The famous dream and the renewed promise—28:12-15

(1) God is not “out there,” but right here

ii) Two responses:

(1) Reverence: alter building—28:19

(2) Practical: seeks a deal out of his fear—28:20-21

Jacob has found himself compelled to take into account this God whom he has not known before. For Jacob, this bargain is religious progress. Another Will than his own has been acknowledged, and so a small but significant dent has been made in his egocentric attitude.⁶

We are wired for transcendence and greatness, it seems...[Young people] are wanting and expecting and looking for greatness, significance, a compelling vision for life, a challenge, holiness, even God...Anything loud, large, or socially admired becomes a substitute for the cosmic and the transcendent that they [and we!] are really longing for. Someone needs to tell them that, even if they only half believe.

If there is no contact with greatness, there is an almost cosmic disappointment inside of us, a deep sadness, a capacity for cynical dismissal and sullen coldness, exactly as we see in so many of our young [and us?] today.⁷

⁵ Ibid. 24.

⁶ Ibid. 26, 27.

⁷ *Adam's Return*. 20.

⁸ *The Man Who Wrestled With God*. 30.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ *Adam's Return*. 12, 13.

¹¹ Ibid. 16, 17.

¹² *The Man Who Wrestled With God*. 35, 36.

Some questions:

- In what way did Jacob exhibit this behavior in his earlier life?
- In what ways did other biblical characters encounter this higher Will?
- In what ways have you encountered the Higher Will?
- How are you compelled to take God into account?
- Do you know you are part of something bigger than you are?

c) Caring for someone else

i) Jacob meets the girl of his dreams—29:1-11, 17-18

ii) This is the first time we read of Jacob doing something for anyone else without an ulterior motive—29:10, 18, 27

(1) Works seven years for Rachel...and then seven more

As long as a man remains in a state of psychological development in which his mother is the most important woman to him, he cannot mature as a man. A man's eros, his capacity for love and relatedness, must be freed from attachment to the mother, and able to reach out to a woman who is his contemporary; otherwise he remains a demanding, dependent, childish person.⁸

4) Jacob's Rite of Passage

The transition from the world of the mother to being a man who is relating to the world in a mature way, and able to love a woman as his soul, is so important that primitive societies have initiation rituals to help the boy make the bridge from childhood to manhood. These rites of passage vary from place to place but always involve exposing the young man to hardship, suffering, and privation, throwing him, so to speak, on his own resources.⁹

We are not a healthy culture for boys or men. Not the only reason but surely one reason is that we are no longer a culture of elders who know how to pass on wisdom, identity, and boundaries to the next generation. Most men are over-mothered and under-fathered—now even more in the age of single parents...the effects of this are lifelong for both genders, creating boys who never grow up and want to marry their mothers instead of wives, and girls who want securing and affirming daddies instead of risk-taking partners. Neither gender is ready for work and adventure of a full life.

The current older generation of men in the United States has, to a great extent, not been mentored by their own fathers...We are starting at zero now...You can lead your sons and daughters only as far as you yourself have gone...¹⁰

a) Rites of initiation expose young men to the proper way to handle power and not abuse it

The general assumption underlying all initiatory rites is that unless a young male is shown real power through a community of wise elders, *he will always seek false power and likely will spend much of his life seeking prestige, perks, and possessions.*

One is hard pressed to find many great heads of government or even great statesman in any of our Western democracies in recent decades...Too often those who rise to the top are men who have not been initiated into manhood through trial community, or any public service and were simply given their stone axes of power and prestige because they had money, ambition, white skin, or a dad with a big stone axe of

	<p>his own.¹¹</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>Some questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did this rite of initiation transform Jacob? • What kinds of initiation rites has God used in biblical stories? • What kinds of initiation rites have you endured (perhaps not formally)? • How has the experience or lack of experience of an initiation rite shaped you? </div> <p>5) Jacob's Jesus Way</p> <p>Had Jacob lived today, he would not have been a priest or a minister, but a business man, a banker, a cattle rancher, or the executive of a large corporation. Jacob did not live in a constant relationship with God, as Joseph did, for instance, who followed the word of God in his dreams, or Moses, who walked and talked with God each day. These men were prophets. But Jacob was a man who went about the worldly business of making a living, until from time to time God crossed his path and spoke to him in unmistakable ways.</p> <p>[In his dealings with Laban]...he had found a good way to put his former shadowy cleverness to work, and this time there was no reproach.¹²</p>
7:00	Closing Prayer
7:00 – ??	If you would like prayer, please come up front and one or more of us will remain to pray with you.

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.
- Ginzberg, Louis. (2003). *Legends of the Jews*. V1 & 2. The Jewish Publication Society.
- Haase, Albert. (2008). *Coming Home to Your True Self: Leaving the Emptiness of False Attractions*. 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. (2004). *Adam's Return: the Five Promises of Male Initiation*. The Crossroad Publishing Company.
- _____. (2002). *Everything Belongs: the Gift of Contemplative Prayer*. The Crossroad Publishing Company.
- Sanford, John A. 1987). *The Man Who Wrestled With God*. Paulist Press.
- Shelley, Bruce L. (1995). *Church History in Plain Language*. Thomas Nelson Publishers.
- Tozer, A.W. (1986). *Men Who Met God*. Christian Publications.
- Yancey, Phillip. (2002). *Reaching for the Invisible God*. Zondervan.