

Formation and Identity Retreat

Session Two-Wednesday Evening

Invocation

I am not my own but thine. Put me to what you will. Rank me with whom you will. Put me to doing or put me to suffering. Let me be employed by you or laid aside for you. Let me be exalted for you or brought low for you. Let me be full or let me be empty. Let me have all things or let me have nothing. I freely and heartily yield all things to thy power and disposal. And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. So be it. And this covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen

1755 Prayer that John Wesley taught his preachers to pray daily.

Scripture Reading—Jacob’s Dream at Bethel- Genesis 28:10-42

If there was a school for patriarchs, one has to wonder about the criteria for acceptance. A family of tent dwellers was comprised of parents who played favorites with their twin boys, pitting them against one another. Their impetuous older son, Esau, bedded the local beauties, while their quiet younger son, Jacob, plotted betrayal and deception against his brother and father. The story turned dark in Genesis 27 forcing Jacob to flee for his life. But as the reader and Jacob soon discover, the Lord does some of his best work in the darkest moments of life. Read the passage and reflect on the questions below.



Jacob’s Dream by Marc Chagall

Questions for Reflection

1. Jacob deceived his father, betrayed his brother, and lost his mother in a short span of time. What might he have been feeling as he began his journey?
2. Dreams are important in the book of Genesis. When we dream, our conscious mind is not in control, our unconscious mind is. What role have dreams had in your own life as you relate to the Lord? What helps you remember a dream?
3. In his dream, Jacob saw angels going up and down a stairway between earth and heaven. Sit with that image for a while. What are the implications for your life now?
4. Jacob said of God, “You were in this place and I was not aware of it. What is the number one thing that prevents you from being attentive to God’s activity? What are you going to do about that?”
5. The Lord appears and promises Jacob land, descendants, blessing for all the families of the earth because of his descendants, protection and presence all the days of his life. Which of those promises apply to you today?
6. Jacob took the stone and created a memorial pillar. He gave the place a special name. What could you create that would help you remember key moments of God’s activity in your life?
7. Jacob’s response to God’s overwhelming graciousness was to make a vow. What vow’s have you made or would like to make as a result of God’s goodness to you?

Reading for Reflection

Try reading the following quotes slowly. If any thought catches your attention journal your reflection.

We live lives of tortured complexity. Inside each of us there is both a saint and a sinner and enough complexity to write our own book on abnormal psychology. Our hearts are a murky caldron of grace and sin, angels and demons. Always, it seems, we are torn in a way that leaves us feeling unsure, guilty, and tense. It is no simple task being a human being.

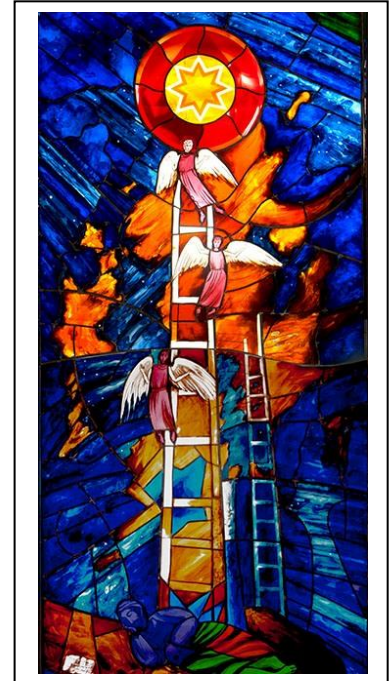
From Prayer, Our Deepest Longing by Ronald Rolheiser

Jesus' resurrection is the beginning of God's new project not to snatch people away from earth to heaven but to colonize earth with the life of heaven.

NT Wright in The Resurrection of the Son of God

There is no way for a human being to come to God that does not involve surrender. Surrender is not the same thing as passivity. God's will for your life involves exercising creativity, making choices, and taking initiative. Surrender does not mean being a doormat. It does not mean accepting circumstances fatalistically. Often it means you will have to fight to challenge the status quo. It doesn't mean you stop using your mind, stop asking questions, or stop thinking critically. Surrender is not a crutch for weak people who cannot handle life. Instead surrender is the glad and voluntary acknowledgement that there is a God and it is not me. His purposes are often wiser and better than our desires. Jesus does not come to rearrange the outside of our life the way we want. He comes to rearrange the inside of our life the way God wants.

From the Me I Want to Be, by John Ortberg, page 62



Jacob's Ladder by Pawel Przyrowski. Stained glass window in London Restaurant

The more I dig deeply into the dark regions of my own heart and into the hidden depths of others, the more I'm persuaded of two convictions: (1) something is terribly wrong in our hearts that only passionate relational truth from God as delivered in the Bible can expose as lethal and dislodge as controlling; (2) something is alive with transformational power in the exact center of God's people that can only be liberated by hearing counterintuitive truth from God as delivered in His Word and revealed through His Spirit.

Larry Crabb in Conversations 8.1 page 41

Success is a very dubious enterprise. In a way, the children of God are always meant to be in the opposition. They're outsiders. When they become successful, that's when the problems begin...I think Moses can be described as clinically depressed at the end. "I've done all this, God and you do this to me!" There's a sense of not being rewarded. And yet, you bargain for that. You don't know God's will. You really don't. If there is any lesson to be learned, it is a certain modesty in the face of great opportunity. The biblical mandate is not success, it's humility. You're not God. You're not supposed to be fat and happy... But that is not the lesson most Americans take from the Bible. No, they take American exceptionalism. But it seems to me that an exceptional people has to be willing to subordinate their own ambitions to God's ultimate design. And no one ever accused Americans of doing that. What we have done is take God's design and make it conform to our ambition.

Bruce Feiler in America's Prophet- How the Story of Moses Shaped America, page 32

Prayer of Thanks Before You Sleep

Before you fall asleep tonight, take some time to thank the Lord for the ways he has met and spoken to you, given you a sense of meaning and purpose, or given you hope to live another day.