

**Developing Depth in Ourselves**  
**A Spiritual and Psychological Analysis of Jacob**  
**Part 1**  
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John Sanford, an Episcopalian writer, in his book on Jacob called The Man Who Wrestled with God tells the story of a South African explorer by the name Lars Vanderpost who lived for many months with bushmen of the desert. He had had as one of his main objectives the collecting of stories of primitive people, their folk tales and their ancestral history. Though he lived among these particular people for some period of time every inquiry he made about the folk stories which they had about the origins of life and the origins of their tribe and the like were met with blank looks and denial that any stories existed. Only after he was with them a long time did these shy little people begin to open to him and accept him as a trusted friend and begin to relate to him their stories of how they believed the world originated and their concept of the first man and how the animals were created. And the other folk narratives that made up their own personal history.

He came to realize after a period of time that the bushmen had hesitated for so long to share their stories with him because they believed that somehow the stories contained their very soul as a people. If an enemy should come into possession of their stories he would have the means to destroy them spiritually.

Isn't that fascinating concept? If an enemy should come into possession of their stories he would have the means to destroy them spiritually.

We have some great stories too in the scriptures. The way the enemy would like to destroy those stories for us would be to take them from us or to make us believe that they are irrelevant for us. Thus many times when the subject might be announced that we are going to look at a biblical character it's almost "That happened a long time ago!" But these stories are in God's word not only because they record the past but because they are meant to be mirrors by which we look at life today. They're in a sense what might be called archtypical stories. That is, through these stories we look at our own personal history and see certain motifs or themes, which are so universal and personal in scope that they always have relevancy and application.

I've wanted to call this "Developing Depth in Ourselves" because I believe that in the making of the man Jacob into the person Israel we see a person whom God works within the depths. He becomes a great person in the kingdom of God because he has so much struggle and because there is indeed so much character formation that takes place over the course of his lifetime.

Jacob begins as a man who does not know God in the depths at all. In the course of his lifetime he will be transformed from a selfish, egocentric man. A man who is really unconscious of God's personality, of the whole nature of dreams and visions unconscious of his own spiritual wholeness. He will change that man into being a man of breadth, a man of destiny, a man who makes a mark unparalleled in the world.

In looking at him we might begin to examine therefore how God sets about developing depth in ourselves.

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One of my favorite lines from the psalms is Psalms 42:7. That deep calls unto deep. I think of that when I think of the unseen tides of gravitation upon the moon upon the waters of the earth, how the depth in the moon calls to the depth in the oceans.

I think of the depths of migratory birds that somehow there is a locked-in flight instrument of nature which somehow calls to them at certain times of the year to fly thousands of miles they've never flown before across a path that is uncharted. I think beyond that of the depths in God that call to the depths in us that challenge us to come out of our own personal or spiritual shallowness into the depths of the personhood and being that God would have us to be. To be transformed from being simply a human being with a name to becoming marked out as a person who in the depths of their existence who has known and does know God.

The life of Jacob can rather be easily divided into three stages. That's why there are three messages on him. Tonight I'd simply like to look at Jacob's early and formative years. I want to especially examine first of the influence of Jacob's family upon him and especially his father Isaac. Who we have as parents and how we respond to them has a great deal to tell us about the kind of persons we become.

I'm not by any means suggesting that you must be what your parents made you because the gospels call us to the future and not to the past. But we real an awful lot of depth of relationship about how we have grown up in family, where we are positioned in family. Whether oldest, youngest, or middle child. How we have related to our parents. Whether we have been perhaps closest to our father or our mother. Whether we've grown up in a nuclear family with both parents present or a family with one parent present. Or a family where there was one or more disturbed parent. All of these things may have a baring on our life.

Jacob's parents have a great baring on the formation of his life. When you look at Isaac some people see Isaac as a very positive person. I would see him as sort of a milquetoast kind of individual. A person about whom very little can be said that is negative. On the other hand very little can be said that is positive about him.

I would like to explore him from looking at some of the aspects of his nature that I'm sure had an influence on Jacob that may not have been so wholesome.

One of the interesting things about Isaac is he seems to have a negative point of view. How do I get that? Remember the scene out of the book of Genesis in chapter 27, Isaac calls for his two sons Jacob and Esau. He says to them that he is growing old and he does not know when his death is going to come. It may be at any day. Therefore he tells Isaac to go out and prepare his favorite meal so he may give him a blessing. Meanwhile Jacob hears about this conversation through his mother Rebecca. What is fascinating about his comment here in respect to his approaching death is he does not actually die within a number of months or days after that death-bed blessing. In fact if you turn instead to Genesis 35:28 you will find how old Isaac was when he died. He breathed his last and died and was gathered to his people old and full of years. He lived 180 years.

That's a long time by our reckoning of years. I think it would be helpful in looking at the ages of the patriarchs to remember that they were living in a time when the ozone layer was still in tact.

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When all of the ravages of the ecological devastation of man's sin had not yet been fully implemented. Perhaps when thinking of their life span although we have a chronological age of 180 years we might think instead of dividing that by half in terms of psychological development and suggest that he might equal a 90 year old man when he died in terms of vitality and the like. Not suggesting that he only lived 90 years. The Bible says 180 years. But I'm suggesting perhaps it would be reasonable to think of him as having the vigor of a 90 year old, an active 90 year old.

But dying at 180 means he lived long enough for Jacob to come back from his time with Laban. And Jacob was there for 20 years. In fact by doing some calculations on Isaac's age we can pinpoint the time of life he was when he called Esau in and said I'm going to die. He was 130 years of age. And he lived 50 more years.

That's what I would call a positive confession person. I'm going to die any day now and he proceeds to live 50 more years. I suggest he lived with a death complex for some period of time. Just like some people arrive at an age of life and mentally clue in on the fact that it's all over. It's all finished. What I've done I've done. Therefore they revert to a memory stage. It's all in the past. And all that they ever talk about is in the past. Nothing is yet more to occur in their life. They're simply waiting for the grim reaper. Isaac appears to be this kind of person.

Do you know anyone like that? Or are you like that? Sometimes I come close to being like that at the age of 41.

Some other things though about Isaac that should be known in doing a little detective work on dates which helps us understand Jacob a little bit better. I found as I worked with the dates in Genesis my whole idea and understanding of Jacob considerably revised.

Isaac was 37 years of age when his mother died. We know that she was 127 when she died according to Genesis 23:1 and we know that she was 90 when Isaac was born. Therefore he was 37 when she died.

On the other hand Abraham lived until Isaac was 75 years of age. His father was 175. There was a 100 years difference between the two. Genesis 25:7. Right after Isaac's mother Sarah died Abraham became concerned because Isaac at the age of 37 still didn't have a wife. That is a time of life to begin to be concerned if you have a son who is not yet married. So he sends his servant back to the country from which he himself had come and gets a wife. The beautiful girl Rebecca for Isaac. Their love story is one of the great love stories in all the world. At least the first few years. And at the age of 40 Isaac marries beautiful Rebecca who I would estimate may be 15-20 years his junior although we are never given Rebecca's precise age.

They lived for 20 years in married bliss until two children are born. Esau and Jacob. Isaac at the age of 60 became a father for the first time. Esau we know in Genesis 24:36 married when he was 40 years of age. This would have made Isaac 100 when his son Esau married. When we get done concluding some other dates we come to the astonishing understanding that when Jacob got Isaac's blessing we know that there was a difference of 60 years between the two. Isaac was 60 when Jacob and Esau were born. Therefore by looking later at Genesis we come to the astounding conclusion that when Isaac blessed Jacob instead of Esau he was not blessing a

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teenage kid that was getting ready to run across the wilderness in teenage fright to depend upon God to sustain him. He was blessing a 70-year-old man who still was not married. That is his son Jacob. Does that astound you?

But we know from Genesis 47:9 that Jacob was 130 years of age when he came to Egypt. That would have placed Joseph about the age of 40 years. We know therefore that Jacob had to have been 90 years of age when Joseph was born. And we know that Joseph was born at the end of Jacob's 20 years with Laban. Therefore he was 90 at the end of the time. He had to be 70 going into the time. So it was a 70-year-old man that gets the blessing.

All the time he had a dad who believed it was all over. That would have to had some implications on your life. One of the things we must deal with in our own development is if there has been anybody in our life who has deeply imprinted us with negative and pessimistic views of their own life that may have colored our perceptions of life. Certainly that is one of the things that Jacob needed to work through and contend with as he began to develop. His father who was perhaps a hopeless hypochondriac.

A second factor in regard to Isaac is he appears to be spiritually unperceptive to his wife and to his sons. Where did I get that? Look at Genesis 25:22-23 we know that when Rebecca was pregnant she inquires of the Lord as to the contest occurring between these two children in her womb. The Lord very explicitly instructs her that "Two nations are in your womb and two people within you will be separated. One people will be stronger than the other and the older will serve the younger."

There is no doubt in my mind over the course of their married life Rebecca would have communicated that to Isaac. Isaac someday the younger son will serve the older. But it was a message that for one reason or another Isaac chose not to listen to. In fact Esau and Isaac became a source of contention between Rebecca and Isaac. 25:28, "Isaac who had a taste for wild game loved Esau but Rebecca loved Jacob."

If you want to sow some problems in your family do that. Let the father love one child and the mother love another and see what you might get in the process. One can imagine the wrangling. It doesn't take a great imagination to read succeeding chapters in Genesis to see the hurt and the distance that comes between Isaac and Rebecca over their perceptions of their children. Isaac was a husband who had a more spiritually sensitive and perceptive wife as a person than he himself was. For one reason or another he choose to ignore her.

It's a sad sequel to the most marvelous love story chapter in the Bible. In Genesis 24 we have whole long chapter given to the search for a wife for Isaac. In fact there is more material in scripture given to the search for a wife for Isaac than there is given to the whole 7 days of creation and the making of man and woman. That's incredible. Their beautiful love story when Rebecca show up riding a camel and Isaac is in the fields and Rebecca alights from the camel and Isaac sees her and loves her. It lasted that way until they had children.

Isaac goes on to play the favorites. He has a weakness for tasty food. 25:28 tells us his taste for wild game and 27:4 he's telling his son Esau "Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like." Since Esau was a man who hunted wild game and provided him the kind of steaks he liked Isaac

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played the favorite. Didn't like his more contemplative tent dwelling son Jacob. Therefore he blindly favored Esau over Jacob.

Isaac appears to be a man of convention. The oldest son gets it. I don't care what God says. I don't care what Rebecca says. I don't care what the birth oracle was. I don't care if Esau sold his birthright away. And by the way the birthright and the blessing were meant to go together. The birthright was sort of the thing you presented in order to secure the blessing. But even though Esau had the weakness of character to sell away his birthright, which entitled him to inherit all of what Isaac had, Isaac chose to ignore that foolish shortsightedness on the part of his son Esau and go ahead and favor him anyway. And not reward Jacob for his initiative.

I get the feeling from reading the biblical text that Isaac never did give good direction to his son Esau. We know that at the age of forty Esau took two Hittite wives. We don't read of his ever learning that his dad was displeased with that action until thirty years later when Isaac finally gets the courage at the insistence of Rebecca (the one time he listened to Rebecca) who said, Tell Jacob when he goes away not to marry somebody who's not in the faith. So finally Isaac calls Jacob in and tells him he should go to Laban's home and marry a person from Abraham's family. Then Esau overhears it. Then Genesis 28:8 says he realized how displeasing the Canaanite women were to his father Isaac so he goes off and marries some distant cousin to add to his collection. He's never rebuked by Isaac at all.

So here is a man who kind of has a negative orientation of life, who appears to be somewhat spiritually unperceptive to his wife and his sons. We ought to ask ourselves in letting the scripture be a mirror does that apply to me? Do I tend to have this feeling in life that everything is going downhill from here. I have crested. Nothing will be better than now or some years past. Am I really perceptive spiritually to the people that God has placed in my life who sometimes hear God more closely than perhaps I do.

The third thing about Isaac that does not attract me to him is that his relationship to God was without struggle. His father Abraham had great struggle. His father Abraham was called to leave his safe place in civilization and wander as a nomad throughout Palestine. And his father Abraham was called himself to offer the boy Isaac upon an altar of sacrifice. And Isaac's son Jacob and grandson Joseph went through great trauma and struggle in the molding of their personalities. But Isaac himself never appears to struggle. Maybe he was so frightened to death when he was fifteen years old and his dad roped him down to an altar and was getting ready to strike him with a knife and set him on fire that he never cared to struggle with God. That could have affected him. He might have just said, "God, I don't ever want to struggle again. Just make things go nice for me." Whenever you read Isaac praying he sort of treats God as a real estate transaction or a banker. "God, here's what I want you to do next. I need more wells or I need my herdsmen protected or Rebecca hasn't had any children in the last twenty years. Can you do something about it?" So that he goes on for his whole lifetime without any struggle. And we learn nothing more about God through Isaac than we knew about God through Abraham. We do learn an awful lot more about God by watching Jacob. But Isaac absolutely adds no new knowledge and information about God. Furthermore he committed the sins of his father by trying to pass off his wife like his father did as his sister when he got into a hot spot with another political ruler. So while he did not make any advances on his father's faith he did on the negative side emulate his father's sins.

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To his credit he can be called a wealthy person respected by outsiders. Genesis 26 certainly indicates that. Here is kind of a bottom line on Isaac. You may think I'm a little hard on him. I'm probably no harder than what the scriptures do indicate. Some persons' most important contribution in life is while they do not have a fervent relationship to God at least they don't go into rebellion. Something could be said for that. They do pass the heritage on of a grandfather to his son. Isaac's most important contribution when it's all said and done is that he does have a son, a son who he doesn't even like all that well but he does have a son. And he does preserve the family. And he does keep things in tact. Hebrews 11:20 it says by faith Isaac evoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau and that makes him important.

He would have had significant impact upon Jacob's life. His whole struggle for identity, his whole insecurity complex is it not the many times of reaching out to seek his father's approval. How many children are still reaching out to have a parent say, "I approve you. I like what you do. I support what you do."

Jacob's mother Rebecca is an opposite to Isaac. She is my idea of, at least in the early years, of a really wonderful person. She no doubt is the molding and shaping influence upon Jacob's life. It might be well for you to ask yourself this question, Who in my childhood years had the most significant impact upon my life for the good and why? Then turn around and ask yourself that, knowing that is a question ask yourself, How will my children someday respond in answering that? Who will they say made the deepest and most profound spiritual impact upon them?

Jacob's mother Rebecca is quite a gal! We first read of her in Genesis 24 where the servant of Abraham has come and he is finally at the place where Abraham's relatives are. He has all of his servants with him and a lot of camels. There are a number of girls that come to the well. This servant of Abraham prays, Genesis 24:13-14, that the right girl will come. He says, "If it is the right girl let her not only offer at the well to give me water but to give water to all the camels as well." Any of you who have ever watched camels drink after a long trip know that they are guzzlers. They will beat a 15-year-old in the refrigerator any day of the week. That's a lot of work to keep going down to the well, drawing up all this water and putting it in troughs so that all these camels in this caravan can be watered. But she does that. It's a mark of gracious hospitality.

Obviously Abraham's servant is impressed and he knows that this is the girl that God has marked out. So he does a beautiful thing. He gives her two gold bracelets, and gives her a gold ring for her nose. That was the style in those days – not the ear but the nose.

We also learn from Genesis 24:16 that she was a beautiful girl and a pure girl. She was attractive and she was a virgin. We also know that as a young woman she was adventurous and intuitive. The servant of Abraham asks Rebecca's father, Bethuel, if it would be all right for Rebecca to go back with him and to marry Isaac. They had this big pow wow and Abraham's servant in verse 52 was giving all this gold and silver jewelry and articles of clothing to Rebecca and costly gifts to her brother and mother. All this kind of extravagant horse-trading is going on which was part of that culture. That was the way they meant. The next day Abraham's servant wants to get back on the road. Bethuel and his mother and brother replies, "Let the girl remain with us for ten days or so and you may go." Abraham's servant says, I want to go today. Rebecca's

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adventuresomeness and intuitive side is seen by the fact that Abraham's servant requests that the girl herself give an answer whether she wants to wait ten days or go and she immediately responded, "I'll go today." That suggests either her homelife was bad or that she really did have a sense of destiny and a built in God-calling.

Another example of her perception is her pregnancy. Anchor Bible which is perhaps the best translation because it works closely with the meaning of the words read in verses 21-22 "But the chidden clashed inside her so much that she exclaimed, 'If this is how it's to be why do I go on living?'" She despaired with such a fight going on in her womb. Finally she inquired of Yahweh or the Lord. She took her problems to the Lord. Isaac perhaps not being the spiritually perceptive husband, she then went to the Lord and asked him about it. The Lord responded to her and gives her a word of knowledge on these children that no one else had. Perhaps it's that word of knowledge from God about the children's destiny which then bring out the one negative point in her character. That in order to fulfill God's word she becomes manipulative and deceptive. Ultimately she does violence to her marriage relationship with Isaac. She never forgot what God told her but she did everything in her power to help Jacob. She knew in a patriarchy the oldest son inherited the rights and became a kind of miniture king. But she chose to rebel against that tradition because it didn't make sense. In that sense she was a modern woman who rebelled against convention when it's only for the sake of convention. And went with that intuitive call of God. She and Isaac had therefore throughout the life of these children tremendous disagreements. She finally winds up terribly deceiving Isaac by foisting upon him Jacob clad in sheepskins, deceiving his father.

This brings us to look at Jacob's early years. A mother that was spiritually perceptive but manipulative and overpowering. And a father who at best was keeping the family tradition going and at worse was out of touch with the needs of his own family and with God.

We see what kind of a person Jacob might be from his birth. His name literally means, "heal grabber." One who grasps. Because as he's coming out of the womb he is latching onto Esau's heal like he wanted to pull him back and go first himself. That's the stigma that Jacob lived with. Jacob shows from the first moment of his life he is reaching for something. He doesn't know for a long, long time what he's reaching for but he's reaching.

There seems to be a spark in some people that causes them to reach and attain. And other people for one reason or another seem not to have it or have never developed it. Jacob is a person who from the word go is a reaching person. We know that he identified most closely with his mother. He became a man who focused on the inner, the intuitive. Rather than the outer and the worldly as did his brother Esau. We know from psychological studies that a mother complex leads to strong egocentricity. A child who has been warmly loved by its mother is a child who at the center at his mother's world may fancy himself to be at the center of the universe. Therefore he may become somewhat stuck on himself.

But on the other hand a child who has been deeply loved has built into his system a core, a reserve of emotional strength that stands him in good stead in the years when he may run thin on that love. Children ought to be richly loved because it can give them a frame of reference and a reserve to run on in life.

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Our negative impact analysis of Jacob is he obviously exploited his brother something terribly when he got the birthright. Archeological records dug up in Palestine that come from that period of time indicate that among the Near Eastern people of that period, birthrights could be bought or sold. Therefore Jacob is certainly operating within the custom to want to somehow acquire his brother's birthright which would give him title to the family name and property. But he does exploit a weakness in Esau's character. He is a shrewd reader of character perhaps like his mother. When Esau stumbles in one day from the fields and he is hungry he exploits Esau's hunger and gets Esau to give into his weakness.

Esau by the way, realizes he's doing wrong and he rationalizes. He says basically in Genesis 25 that if he doesn't eat he's going to die. That's again like a teenager coming in saying, I'm famished and if I don't have a Big Mac pretty soon I'm going to die. There's no way you can die for at least 7-10 or maybe 15-20 days or 40 days without food. Esau could have waited and properly prepared a meal. But Jacob knowing Esau's impetuous nature uses that as an opportunity to exploit him real good. It's always possible that Esau secretly did not want the birthright because with the privilege came responsibility. Esau is exploited by Jacob and Jacob comes into possession of the birthright.

Esau had no sense of history. No sense of destiny, of divine calling. Evidenced by the fact that he married two foreign women. But Jacob somehow was reaching. Reaching out for his grandfather's promise. Although he may not have known at the time but the right to his father Isaac's property carried with it the right to claim the promise that God made to Isaac. And Isaac never seems all that concerned about the promise. But in Jacob's life he will become concerned about the promise and he is a person who reaches out to sense destiny.

I've found it very helpful in my own life to treasure my own Christian roots and to dwell upon my own family history and the story line that comes out of that family history from my parents and my grandparents and all the way back to the Revolutionary War. There are story lines, which many of you have because you are children of Christian parents. There are people in your family line who have had a rich experience with Christ who it would be well for you to pass that experience on and continually emphasize it to your children and remind your children that they have a heritage. If you do not have a Christian background, if you are a first generation Christian then you are an Abraham like person who now is building a tradition that if Jesus tarries can be passed on. But Jacob has a sense of the story line of the family where God has been taking people in his family and although at first he sees it dimly, not fully by any means, he is reaching for it.

Jacob winds up deceiving his father. We know that it takes lies to cover lies when his mother dresses him up with the furry skin of a goat on his hands and on the back of his neck. In that kind of fashion he appears before Isaac. Isaac appears to be a person somewhat easy to be duped. Never was very perceptive. He should have gone with his earliest inclination that a fraud was being perpetuated but he was so hungry he saw his chance to get a meal so he didn't apply all the tests that could have been applied. Jacob winds up lying a number of times in order to get the blessing.

We know again from archeological resources that the paternal blessing carried important weight. And of all the things a father could do for his son what he said on his deathbed had the greatest

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weight of all. That blessing conveyed a tangible power that could never be taken back. Words that could not be retracted. That was the demand of the culture. That's why Isaac when he gave it couldn't give it to Esau later when Esau showed up. It would have been offensive the way things were done.

Jacob deceives his father. His early years of formation therefore is shown as a mother dominated, intuitive minded, egocentric father deceiving, brother hating person. Real possibilities for him.

Why does God choose him? There are two ways of answering that question. One is on God's level where he doesn't have to explain his actions. Romans 9:10-11 comments on God's choice of Jacob and says not only that but Rebecca's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. Yet before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad in order for God's purpose in election might stand not by works but by him who calls she was told the older will serve the younger."

So one way in answering the question, why did God choose Jacob to carry on the family name and inherit the promise which will ultimately produce the Messiah is it is inscrutable. It is the election and the choice of God. We who live in democratic America resent that. We think everything should be up for a vote. We fail to realize that we live in what might be properly called in the kingdom of God a theocracy. God governs as the absolute potentate and he doesn't put all of his decisions up for election. Some things he decides because he is the ruler, because he decides. Isn't that incredible?

It just so happens as we read the scripture we come to realize again and again that God's decision will be confirmed by human choice. But the fact is God does elect and God does decide.

This raises the question, If God elects and I elected for anything in life? My response to that is simply if there are dreams and visions in your heart of what God wants in your life, if you feel strings in the depths, go with that as an indication of God's call and God's election upon your life. I would further say that those who have accomplished things in the kingdom of God are people who have had a deep sense of mission. They have a sense in some moment in their experience that God has called me to do such and such. This is what he has ordered for my life. Sure they have had a hand in deciding it. God has worked circumstances about to place them in a position of being the right person at the right time. There is their own election and ratification. But show me any person who has accomplished something in the kingdom of God and done something with their life and I'll show you a person who had a sense of mission, who somewhere from the depths of their being had a sense that God's call is upon their life.

If you don't have that sense of call it doesn't mean that the call isn't there. It simply may mean that you need to start opening your life in deeper depths to God and say, God, do you have a call? Have you elected me for some purpose? Is there some way I can fit in your plan? The scripture shows us this marvelous thing that when people open up their inner life to ask God something, God always responds. The people who are non-elect never ask God questions. Esau never asked God questions – what do you want with my life? He's too busy with his own plans. Pharaoh never asked, "God, what do you want with my life? I'll do anything you want." Never does he ask God that. He is not one of God's elect.

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The people whom God uses and who God calls are people who at one time or another have opened their lives up and asked, "Is there a call?" I must confess that in regard to God's election I am as confused about that as I am confused about the creation of which came first, the chicken or the egg. I don't know if God calls and I decide or if I decide and God calls. In Jacob's situation we know that God called and then later Jacob decided. But I would seek to stir up the depths within your heart that if you want to serve God with your whole life and your whole heart and be used by him that you open yourself to know what God is calling you to and have a sense of mission about that. What is God's will? What is God calling you to?

What vocation is God laying upon your heart? What dreams of contribution to the kingdom of God? What experiences has God put within your life that are treasures by which he is meaning to direct you? What hurts have you come through that now can be channeled into a source of blessing and inspiration to others. What sameness and ordinariness may God be calling you out of to let your life be a contribution and a blessing? A sense of election. A sense of God put this upon my heart.

So God certainly chose Jacob out of God's own freedom. But on the human level we can see reasons why God would choose Jacob rather than Esau. Esau was a man who didn't think or care much about spiritual things. He was a man who lived by his senses. That was what he wanted out of life. Jacob appears right from day one to be reaching for a brass ring. To be reaching for something although it would be years before he finds out what he's really reaching for. He is reaching for it nevertheless.

On the human level Jacob appears to be a person who wanted to make the most out of his life. He thinks when he gets the birthright he's making the most out of his life. That he's coming into all the ability of his father to have herds and servants and tents and territories and the family name and power over his brother and over all his extended family. He thinks he's getting the power and status of the family patriarch. But as his story unfolds we realize that painfully and gradually he perceives that he is coming into the spiritual legacy of the family. In fact he has been marked out by God. Whenever a man or a woman is marked out by God changes are going to be forced upon their personality. And changes are forced upon Jacob's personality, which will dramatically alter him. God took that ambition and channeled it and directed it.

In reflecting upon this first phase of Jacob's life look at the influences within your life. Who is it in your life that is teaching you or has taught you to be spiritually perceptive? Are you moving with the spiritually perceptive people in your life or are you moving in the direction of the unspiritually perceptive persons in your life? What kind of models have you sought to treasure? Have you sought God's will and God's calling upon your life? Are you reaching for something? Are you reaching for the highest and the best that God has for you?

These are the initial questions that arise as we begin looking at developing depth in ourselves.

Our father, we come to you this evening and again we have seen ourselves as we have seen your word. There's such a wide range among us in this auditorium tonight. Persons who are older and many young people and in between. You're calling us all at different stages. There are grandparents here who need to make a decision about their relationships with their

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grandchildren as to whether they're simply going to dote on their grandchildren or whether they're going to communicate spiritual life to them and attempt to find ways of entrance into developing spiritual depth in their grandchildren. Help them Lord to reach out as an Abraham to their children and to their children's children and communicate to another generation your marvelous love, character and life. There are those of us in middle age of life who have lived the first half and if you tarry are now in the second half. Keep us Lord evaluating everything we are doing. Fix us Lord with enough responsibility that we can be faithful at our post of present responsibility. But fill us with enough faith that we will abandon everything like Abraham and go to wherever you would have us to go. Help us to live firmly by being pillars of reliability and responsibility. But loose enough that we can pull up our tent cords and be responsive to your call wherever that call would lead us. Let us not settle down as Isaac did in middle age to wait for death. Let us instead plan for life. Help us with our own children, that we may communicate to them a heritage that is in you. For the young people Lord who see before them in tonight's scripture the model of a young man Esau who was concerned only for this life. And the model of another man Jacob who had all of his problems as a young man even up to the time he was 70. We're grateful that your call may be upon our life even when we're working through a lot of things. Even when we don't have relationships with mom and dad all on the perfect level. You nevertheless may be working things out in us and it's you that gave us the mother and he father we have. It's through them that our own lives are being shaped and molded and perfected. And we thank you for that. Even perhaps the negative models we may thank you for in them we see a picture of what your standard on the true level might be. Give us respect for our parents and help us Lord too to be unlike Jacob in that if you put something upon our life we do not have to manipulate and pull strings to get it. But we can rely upon you to bring your word for us to pass. Lord, what an encouragement Jacob is to realize that although he did not have everything together and although he did wrong yet you are able to turn it around in such a way that he would become something other than his name. Some of our friends know us by a name. They've got us typed. Meaningless all the titles people give us. Our real meaning is never defined by what anybody calls us. Good or bad. Our real meaning is defined by what you think of us. All through our life just like in Jacob's life you're seeking to change us and give us a new name and call us blessed. May each one of us feel that your approval is the most important thing we could ever have upon our lives. Not somebody else. Bring your purpose to pass. Create in us a hunger that we might know your will in our life. We ask this in your name. Amen.