

Go?! Everybody's Involved

Is the purpose of the church to minister to the outsiders or insiders? The answer is “Yes!”

Jesus

Except for a few places in the New Testament, Jesus is mainly talking to Christians about how they should live and how they should act toward all the people that does not know of the love of God or understand the sacrifice of His Son on the cross. Jesus is talking to people who claim to know the living God but do not live in full obedience to the God they claim to serve.

Jesus' recorded words are essentially cries from His heart to rescue people, who claim to be followers of God, away from traps and destinations that are offered in this life that end up as wasted roads full of despair, disappointment and devastation and unreached potential of what God had planned for them.

When Jesus entered our world, he didn't box himself inside the four walls of the synagogue. He walked into the lives of sinners. He touched the lepers. He associated with prostitutes. He dined with heathen. He scandalized the religious community by penetrating the world. **He was not intimidated by the worlds view of Him because He was completely connected with His unique call on this earth.**

So, if we take His word serious, **His message for us is that He wants to rescue us from all the ways that get in the way of the people He wants us to be.**

Jesus Christ was not hinge between the Old Testament and the New. He was the foundation. The hinge between the Old Testament and the New Testament is us responding to the world as Christ did.

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...”
Matthew 28:18-19a

Esau and Jacob (Gen. 27)

The Bible tells us of two brothers. In this culture there was a tradition that was honored by God called the blessing of sons. In Genesis 27:1-35, Isaac, the younger brother decides that he wants to get blessing of his brother Esau which is also encouraged by his mother. So, he sneaks into his fathers presence, because Jacob is losing his senses, the ability to see, and disguises himself with goatskin because his brother Esau was a hairy man. He also wears some of Esau's clothes.

“He went to his father and said, “My father.” “Yes my son,” he answered. “Who is it?” Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau your firstborn...”
Genesis 27:18-19a

Notice that here we meet Jacob and he is trying to be someone else. He is trying to be Esau because that is where the blessing was.

“Are you really my son Esau?” he asked. “I am,” he replied.”

Genesis 27:24

In this deception, he robs his older brother of his rightful blessing or unique call and blessing of the father. But the reality is that he wishes that he was somebody else. He is pretending and acting to be someone else.

There is this great falling out between Jacob and Esau, to the point that Esau decides that he will kill Jacob the day that their father dies. Jacob flees. He is gone over twenty years, (Gen. 31:38). Then one day God calls Jacob back to the land of his father and to his mother and to his brother and promised that He would be with Jacob. (Gen. 31:3)

Jacob Meets God's Angels

*“Jacob also went on his way, and the angels of God met him. When Jacob saw them, he said, “This is the camp of God!” So he named that place **Mahanaim**.”*

Genesis 32:1-2

- **Mahanaim** means **two camps- my camp and God's angels camp**. Here, Jacob has the supernatural ability to see angelic beings. He was given the privilege to camp at the same place that they were. He was given the opportunity to make all his own decisions and try to decide what to do next to the camp of all a host of God.
- Jacob begins to make plans for entering in **Seir**, the country of **Edom**, (vs.3), to the area where his brother Esau lives. He sends messengers ahead of him to test the waters to see what his brothers reaction will be. But his messengers return saying,

“We went to your brother Esau, and now he is coming to you, and four hundred men are with him.”

Genesis 32:6b

1. He Created A Strategic Plan (Gen. 32:7-8, 13-21)

Now in my observation, this is not a good day! Talk about the stress level going up, Jacob is in the middle of decision. He can't go back because he knows that there is nothing there for him, and he doesn't know how to move forward. So Jacob divides all his servants, family, flocks, herds and camels into two groups. His plan, if the first group is eliminated maybe the second group will be able to survive by running in a different direction.

2. He Prayed Fervently (Gen. 32:9-12)

“⁹Then Jacob prayed, “O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, O LORD, who said to me, ‘Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper,’ ¹⁰I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two groups. ¹¹Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children. ¹²But you have said, ‘I will surely make you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted.’”

Genesis 32:9-12

3. He Wrestled With God (Gen. 32:22-24)

He sent the last portion of his family and possessions across the ford of the stream **Jabbok**. (Vs. 22-23)

“So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak.”

Genesis 32:24

There is a time in our lives where we have to come to the place where we are left alone and define who we are, who we have tried to become and who we are really called to be.

Here, the man wrestling with Jacob is Jesus. It is one of a handful of times Christ shows up before his walking upon this earth. Here is Jacob, completely aware of God's camp next to his. He knows that there are ghosts to settle, that he must resolve because he is about to face past decisions, and they were shameful, they were destructive and God was calling him home.

“When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, “Let me go, for it is daybreak.” But Jacob replied, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.”

Genesis 32:24-26

Jacob was thinking, I know **I have a plan**, I know **I prayed**, but **I need something more, I need the blessing of God...even if it kills me!** There is a plan that we have in life and there is a religious form that we can go through, but there is this place that you come with God and you accept the reality of your position and you grab hold of Jesus and you say, “I will not let you go no matter what it costs me.”

“The man asked him, “What is your name?” “Jacob,” he answered.”

Genesis 32:27

What kind of journey was he on? He is trying to find out who he was. When we met Jacob in Genesis 27 he wanted to be somebody else. But in his pain and in his separation and his suffering, he finally is at peace with who he is. It took over twenty years for Jacob to come to the conclusion that Jacob was “his” name. He had resolved the fact that he was Jacob. But the challenge of Jesus, the wrestling of God with us is, “Who are you?” “What is your name?”

“Then the man said, “Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel...”

Genesis 32:28a

Here, after twenty years of wondering, Jacob finally ends up who he was in the first place and then his name is changed. We have a tendency to live in extremes of who we were and who we want to be. That is the trap of the years after our freedom from high school and possibly get capped off for a while and put in a box somewhere when we get married. But we have this discovery plan that cries out of our heart, “**The great adventures of me!**”, that cries out to find out who we are, all for the fact that we know who we are and don't like it. **What is the significance of this?**

“...because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome.”

Genesis 32:28b

Maybe what happens with you and I is that we are not OK with the way God made us. We wish we were:

- Taller, stronger, skinnier, different hair, better nose, better vocabulary.
- We wish we had come from a different family, lived in a different city and drove a different car.

Maybe the story of Jacob was placed in the Bible for us to have a real picture of what it means to be human. Deep down inside, we are not alright with our own skin and the mirror or house you live in is a constant reminder of how you feel that God has treated you less or how He could have given you more.

- God, why did you let this happen?
- God, why do I have to go through this?
- God, why does everyone else get the breaks?

One of the main central arguments as human beings is, “We are not OK with who God made us to be.” So we have a struggle with God and that manifests in all sorts of ways in relationship with people. How can you get along with others if you are constantly struggling with God.

- If only I had...
- If I was born with...
- If I had that particular gift...
- If I could only...

Maybe this is Jacobs resolve. He has come to the fact that he is not Esau and will never be. It was obvious that his dad did not love him like he loved Esau. The lack of a fathers approval was huge and he had an overwhelming approval of his mother to the point that she would manipulate the future for Jacob, thinking that it would replace all the rejection and lack of acceptance from his father. All it did was delayed his journey of finding out who he really was.

The Three Biggies: Abraham, Issac and Jacob

All through the Old Testament you will read over and over about Abraham, Issac and Jacob. Over and over these three men are mentioned as a foundation of our faith. They are the key players whom God chose to use in establishing all of Israel and his law. How does Jacob become Jacob?

- **Jacob resolves who he is. God can never give you the name of who he wants you to be if you are still in contention of who he has made you to be.**

This is not only true of individuals, but it is also true of groups and of churches. If you are always contending with God for who He has made us:

- If only we had those facilities...
- If only we had that staff...
- If only we had their money...
- If only we had a different people in our church...
- If only we could be them, then we would be so much better.

"So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have."

I Samuel 8:4-5

God's plan was that He would rule the nation of Israel. God had intended this nation to be different than the other nations because God would be their King. But that was not good enough for them. "If only we could have a king, oh, that would make it work." "If only we had someone to tax us and oppress us, then we would be happy."

"But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the Lord."

I Samuel 8:6

"And the Lord told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you."

I Samuel 8:7-8

"Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do."

I Samuel 8:9

"This is what the king who will reign over you will do: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots."

I Samuel 8:11-12

"But the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We want a king over us."

I Samuel 8:10

They were not alright with the unique calling on their life. God was saying, "Alright, if you want this, it will eventually be your downfall because you refuse to accept the uniqueness of your personal calling. You want to have what those around you have and become entrapped in it. You want what all of those around you want but it will be your down falling.

Solomon

²² But Solomon did not make slaves of any of the Israelites; they were his fighting men, his government officials, his officers, his captains, and the commanders of his chariots and charioteers."

I Kings 9:22

The King does exactly as the Prophet said. From this point there is more and more taxation and oppression until the kingdom splits and what God had intended as one nation becomes a scattered people who eventually ended up in exile and became slaves, marched to other countries and the whole idea of Israel collapse. Why?

It's roots begin when these appointed people of God were unwilling to step into their unique calling of God. They were obsessed with looking like their neighbors. Because of their unwillingness of accepting their own unique calling, they get what they want which eventually leads to their own destruction. You can trace their whole destruction to the point where they said, "Give us a king." "We want to be like everybody else."

The Ten Commandments- Exodus 20

The first nine of the Ten Commandments are outwardly observable:

- If someone murders anyone, there is obvious evidence that murder occurred
- If someone steals from anyone, there is obvious evidence that this occurred
- If someone bows down to a god or builds a statue, you can see that.
- If someone does not honor their parents, you can observe that externally.

The first nine commandments are outwardly observable. But the ten commandment is totally of a different nature.

"You shall not murder. "You shall not commit adultery. "You shall not steal. "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor."

Exodus 20:12-16

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Exodus 20:17

How do you know if I am coveting? This is something that I do internally. Why is this so different from the other nine commandments? There is an ancient commentary and it addresses this thought. The commentary is this: The tenth command is a reward from God and you will receive from God when you apply in your life to obey God and you learn of God how you should live.

When you get the benefits of living your unique life in God, you will get the fruit of that and you will not want anyone else's life! When you find your place in God and you live true to the God who made you, then you will not want someone else's life. Because you will be content with your own.

- **We read the tenth command as, "DO NOT COVET," in a firm statement, but the thought is possibly, "If you will follow the first nine commandments, you will not covet!" "When you find your place with God, and live accordingly, you will not need to trade your life off for anything else." You will not have any need to. You will not want anyone else's life because you are content with your own.**

This insight brings out a greater light two other scriptures I want us to read:

²⁸"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What

shall we wear?' ³²For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them."

Matthew 6:28-32

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

Matthew 6:33

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

Matthew 4:19

There is a natural process of flow around your uniqueness that is no longer limited because you have found your identity in Jesus Christ.

Building On The Right Foundation

Sometimes you can struggle with your identity even in a group of people like the church. What you do is that you will try to rally behind someone who has more confidence than you. Paul writes the church at Corinth who was having an identity crises. They were struggling over who was number #1 in the church because they were not comfortable with the skin God had given them.

*³You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like **mere men**? ⁴For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you **not mere men**?"*

I Corinthians 3:3-4

- Hey Dog!
- Say Dude!
- Hey You!
- There is nothing distinguishable about you. You are like everybody else and I can't tell you apart. Who are you? And their response is "I'm with him?"

Rivalry takes away from reality, it is a distraction of a greater problem, a failure to accept who you are in Christ. Once we lose our identity as a unique person what follows closely behind is a lose of unique purpose. Our insecurities cause us to chose sides rather than to choose God. Our insecurities causes us forfeit the name we have been given for the purpose of taking on the name of someone else. We lose our uniqueness that God has made us to be. When Jesus is the foundation, you receive the liberty to become the person God has made you to be.

Paul steers the Corinthian church back to the real issue:

¹²If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, ¹³his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work.

I Corinthians 3:12-15

¹⁴If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. ¹⁵If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames."

I Corinthians 3:12-15

¹⁶Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in

you? ¹⁷If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple."

1 Corinthians 3:16-17

Think of all the subtle, petty ways we get caught up in comparing ourselves with one another or comparing others with others and not living as the person God has created us to be. We get our eyes off of ourselves because Satan loves for us to feel insignificant, unworthy and a failure as a "Temple of God." He wants us to become a groupie for the next "Man of God" or "Wave of the Spirit."

The question you should be asking yourself is, "Am I willing to become who God wants me to be?" You might have resentment, covetousness, comparison and something petty like:

- Who looks the best today
- Who is bringing the best food
- Who is making the most money
- Who is making the best choices with their life
- Who will be a real servant today
- Who will pay attention to me
- The question is, "What is that to me?"

These things might be taking your attention from the real call on your life.

God Recruits People Who:

- Have Tried and Failed
- Have Run Out of Ideas
- Who Think That There Is No Way Out
- Who Feels Like They Are No Better Than The Problem
- **It's possible that you have given up on you when God has not give up.**

**"... baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."**

Matthew 28:19b-20

Research shows that over time, most churches plateau and then eventually decline. Typically, they start strong and experience periods of growth, then stagnate and lose members. Since 1991, the North American population has increased by 15 percent while the number of "unchurched" people has increased by 92 percent. Large church houses that were filled in the 1950s and '60s now hold a fraction of their capacity. (Comeback Churches, [Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson](#))

Unchurched (Breaking the Missional Code , [Ed Stetzer & David Putman](#) , B&H Publishing Group)

Is there evidence that the culture has changed? Some churches are exploding, but most are not. For example, *the percentage of Christians in the U.S. population dropped 9 percent from 1990 to 2001.* The American Religious Identification Survey 2001, released by the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY) showed that the percentage proportion of Christians in the U.S. has declined-from 86 percent in 1990 to 77 percent in 2001.⁴ Now, this refers to those people who claim to

be Christians, from Howard Dean to George Bush. While it is fair to say that many who claim to be Christians do not know what it means to be one, still fewer people overall identify themselves as Christians.

George Barna tends to have a charitable definition for the unchurched. They are adults who have “not attended a Christian church service within the past six months, not including a holiday service (such as Easter or Christmas) or a special event at a church (such as a wedding or funeral).” Of course, a high percentage of people tend to indicate that they do attend church at least occasionally.

Even with Barna's charitable numbers, *the number of unchurched has almost doubled from 1991 to 2004*. A Barna Group study explained, “Since 1991, the adult population in the United States has grown by 15%. During that same period, the number of adults who do not attend church has nearly doubled, rising from 39 million to 75 million—a 92% increase!”⁵

Moreover, the number of “churched” people is much different from looking specifically at the number of evangelicals. In addition, evangelicals have obtained political power but exercise little moral influence. For many, evangelicals have become a voting block rather than a spiritual force.

Among evangelicals, true spiritual commitment seems to be lagging. For example, born-again church members divorce at a higher rate than the unchurched.⁶ This lack of commitment may also be reflected in the fact that many so-called evangelicals decide to remain unchurched. According to Christianity Today, “The Barna Research Group reports that in the United States about 10 million self-proclaimed, born-again Christians have not been to church in the last six months, apart from Christmas or Easter.”⁷

Gallup provides further insight in a January 2002 poll—50 percent of Americans described themselves as “religious,” while another 33 percent said that they are “spiritual but not religious” (11 percent said neither and 4 percent said both).⁸ A recent book, *Spiritual but Not Religious*, chronicles this growing trend.⁹ Both the media and academia have firmly embraced and clearly promote the idea that spirituality is good and religion is bad.

This trend may explain why more students identify themselves as “no religion” rather than “Protestant” on college campuses.

Results from the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA show that an equal number of incoming freshman in the fall of 2004 checked “None” as claimed “Protestant” on the question of religious identity. In total 28% identify themselves as Catholic, 17% say Protestant, 17% say “none,” 11% say “other Christian,” 4% Mormon, 4% Seventh Day Adventist, 4% Unitarian, 3% Church of Christ, 3% “other religions,” 2% Jewish, 1% each for Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic and Eastern Orthodox. (Spirituality Report, as reported in e-update #76)¹⁰

People Groups

As more and more North Americans identify themselves with ethnic or national backgrounds, the story is about more than just the broader culture. Ethnic America does a tremendous job at revealing some telling trends. They correctly assert that this will be the “Ethnic Millennium.” For example:

- In the 90s, while the general U.S. population grew by 6 percent, Asians grew by 107 percent, Hispanics grew by 53 percent, Native Americans grew by 38 percent.
- Twenty-five of the largest U.S. cities are now majority ethnic. Ethnicity makes up 61 percent of Chicago, 73 percent of New York, and 78 percent of Los Angeles.

- There are more Filipinos and Armenians in Los Angeles than in any city in the world. There are more Cubans in Miami than in Havana.¹³

Russell Begaye, cofounder of Ethnic America, explained: “We need to research the demographics, lifestyles and interests of the groups we want to reach. We need to go among the people, to make our message culturally relevant.”¹⁴ In other words, there is not just one white, young, emerging cultural code to be broken. The gospel needs to penetrate every culture . . . and every culture needs to be exegeted for the gospel.