



Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Church-wide Initiative

Journey through the Wall: Part 4 — Genesis 22:1-15

Intro: 8 weeks series EHS... Emotional health and contemplative spirituality, when interwoven together, offer nothing short of a spiritual revolution, transforming the hidden places deep beneath the surface of our lives. For this week – Read Chapter 6.

1. The Problem of Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality
2. Know Yourself that You May Know God
3. Going Back in Order to Go Forward
- 4. Journey Through the Wall**
5. Enlarge Your Soul Through Grief and Loss
6. Discover the Rhythms of the Daily Office and Sabbath
7. Grow into an Emotionally Mature Adult
8. Go the Next Step to Develop a “Rule of Life.”
9. “Journey” note the word. -We all use images of looking at life.

Becoming a Christian is an Event — I’m in!

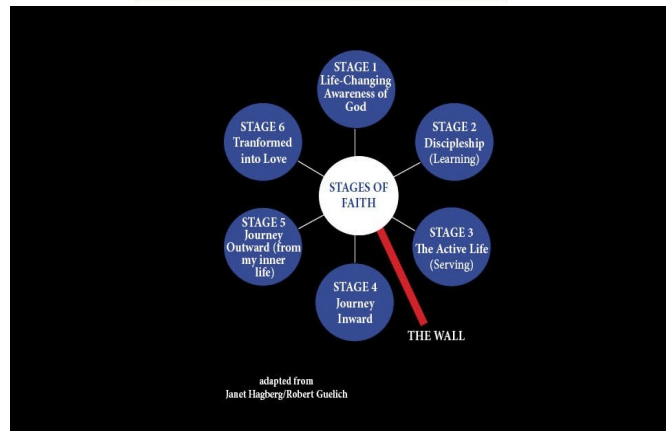
I accept Jesus Christ and his forgiveness for my sins, and his promise of eternal life. Event. Now I am going to walk straight and narrow. Be good. Love people. Learn. 10 steps to spiritual maturity. Then when obstacles come – we get confused. We think, there should not be obstacles in my path. I am trying to do the right thing.

– Life is a battle. Spiritual warfare. You get the enemy or enemy gets you.

Result: feeling of being in constant state of siege. Us vs. Them.

– Our spiritual lives as a journey – Bible saturated w/ image of journey – Israel in desert for 40 yrs Throughout Church History – people have written about stages of faith/broken it down/ all helpful in their own way...

Remember no one framework can totally capture the journey of faith in Christ. This is Pete Scazzero’s adaptation of work done by Janet Hagberg and Robert Guelich.



Key – THERE IS MOVEMENT Detours, stops, unknown, gives long view, time needed
OUR THEME: GETTING UNSTUCK. JOURNEYING THROUGH THE WALL.

- we can get stuck (fearful of moving forward, facing unknown)
- some can drop out along the way.

Stage 1 – Entering into Relationship with God. We realize we are sinners. (having an experience of God)

- thru a sense of awe – Sense of Need. Get involved in small groups, great equipping class, spiritual formation, baptism.

Stage 2 – Discipleship (learning)

- Time of learning/belonging. Time to learn, absorb, learn about God.

Stage 3 – The Active Life (Doing)

Time of doing. We are consciously working for God, in His service.

Productive, goals, building, creating. Taking responsibility. Bringing our unique gifts to bear

BUT Moving to Stage 4 – Very difficult transition

Hagberg/Guelich – their studies. In our tradition as evangelicals, we are stuck at stage 2-3

Stage 5 and 6 Journey Outward, Transformed by Love

- Some of us in transition between stages (seasons), Generally at home at one of them.

WALL – Strikes to core of who we are.

The Wall – Represents the most far-reaching change of any of the stage moves.

- Difficult place to visit, must less live there for period of time.
- The Wall – new territory – unknown!

The Wall is necessary if we are to develop deep, mature people.

For most of us the Wall appears through a crisis that turns our world upside down.



Divorce, failed marriage, betrayal, a job loss, the death of a close friend or family member, a cancer diagnosis, a disillusioning church experience, a deep depression, a shattered dream, a wayward child, a car accident, an inability to get pregnant, a deep desire to marry that remains unfulfilled.

Car accident changes your life forever. Career ends before it began.

A dryness or loss of joy in our relationship with God.

We question ourselves, God, the church. We discover for the first time that our faith does not appear to “work.” We have more questions than answers as the very foundation of our faith feels like it is on the line. We don’t know where God is, what he is doing, where he is going, how he is getting us there, or when this will be over.

Reason this is so important – only 85% of Christians make it thru the Wall.

Some you at Wall today (confused), others been there but did not receive what God had, others want to take notes and file it away.

We move among these stages and repeat them in an ever widening spiral – as we experience the breath and depth of our life with God. –

Abraham at the Wall (Genesis 22:15)

Not his first wall – Gen. 12 (leaving all known), famine, infertility (unable to have children), tension with Lot Gen. 13, marital tension with child born out of wedlock

Gen. 18 Sending Ishmael away. NOW THIS.

He has been promised by God the Promised Land and children/descendants like stars and to be universal blessing to the world. He has 1 son, lives in tent –110-113 yrs old!!

Abraham asks, HAVEN’T I BEEN THROUGH ENOUGH??

God tests him again by name “Abraham” and commands a burnt offering – Lev. 1!

Cut his only son into pieces. Read Lev. 1!!

“to one of mountains I will tell you about” – “Which one? Why? Explain?”

Lonely – no record of conversation with Sarah! 3-day journey.

We would have been passive aggressive! E.g. Going with attitude

Isaac asks “Where is offering?” Our response “I have no idea! Your mother and I are so mad at God!”

Abraham – (vv.9-18) Builds altar, arranges wood, ties up Isaac, lays him on altar
Takes knife to cut throat of his son. Incredible – not first wall!

2 Parts:

1. Primary Issue of the Wall – My Will vs. God’s Will

2. Our Work at the Wall

**Abraham no argument, delay, resistance! Not angry, bitter, disappointed, does not shrink back



He is asked to let go of something he is clinging to – It's holding him back from greater intimacy with God – “your son, your only son.”

Fundamental issue – my will vs. God's will.

God Loves You – Goal of God –

1. You would rest and trust in the torrent/flood of love of God.
2. Pure union with God. In this state a person's will is so completely transformed into God's will that it excludes everything contrary to God's will. Two wills become one will – God's will.
3. You would be restored to image and likeness of God – God's presence dwelling in you like fire of burning bush! Taking you over so you might become your true self – the way God originally intended.

God loves you enough to strip you of that which keeps you from him – Some not bad in themselves –only they keep us from God!

At the wall I relinquish what I cling to for identity! – that which holds me back from intimacy with God.

– work – religion – intellect – control – addiction – gifts/talents – family – pride – recognition of other people – doing “good” – expectations of God – dreams and illusions

Truman Capote – he became famous writing “In Cold Blood.” A quotation he wrote for his last, unfinished work, “More tears are shed over answered prayer than unanswered ones. “

He received what he asked for, but it cost his soul! Alcoholic, died miserable. Famous quote “Those whom the gods destroy they first make famous.”

What we think is best for us is really the worst. What we think is really the worst is actually the best!

e.g. Janet Hagberg, national company, successful work, bad for her soul. Marriage disintegrating. Needed to know failure, shame.

Dark Night of the Soul – St. John of Cross. Certain things get rooted out of us at the Wall and I SEE IT NOW!!

The ordinary way we grow as Christians are through dark nights of the soul. Our wires/affections/DNA reworked.

Preparing you for a higher degree of love for him, to be able to commune with God more abundantly, so you can walk on your own 2 feet.

Purging your palate, your taste buds so it may feel/taste love of God

Stripping us, making us into new men and women we are really meant to be!

e.g. DAVID – Know Yourself You May Know God (JOSEPH, ABRAHAM)

Not simply correcting/restraining – but purging you of what is deeply rooted.



1. Pride – condemn others (Luke 18 – Pharisee), look for approval of others, impatient with other people when they mess up. If they make little progress spiritually – we get prouder still!

2. Greed – are discontent with the spirituality God gives them. Comparing.

Learning, listening, but not perfecting poverty of spirit! Matthew 5:3

3. Luxury – pleasure in spiritual blessings more than God Himself. Really about
Fleshly, earthly pleasure only it is around God.

4. Wrath – easily irritated, lack of sweetness, no patience to wait on God.

Make grand resolutions to change but have no patience to wait for it.

5. Spiritual Gluttony – Don't want the cross but spiritual pleasures. Childishness.

6. Spiritual envy – unhappy when others do well spiritually

7. Sloth – Run from that which is hard. Do not like the cross

He is seeking to get you to lose your love for things of the world.

But only few go on (can last years) Described as “violent”.

Called “The Dark Night of Loving Fire.”

God chooses certain people for greater intensity, greater cleansing. That may be some of you, just like Abraham and his journey!

Consider this prayer “*Bring me closer to You God – no matter what the consequences*”

Says lot about our image of God. “Not if it will cost me my child!” Says lot!

If you can't say it – I'm afraid of him. He may hurt me. Maybe he isn't loving.

“Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has?...Stretch out your hand and strike everything he has and he will surely curse you to your face.” Job 1:9-11

Fundamental Issue – MY WILL vs. GOD'S WILL – Abraham v.8

2. Our Work at the Wall (3 words: Awareness, Forgiveness and Acceptance)

Awareness

This is a profoundly inward journey. I go back to go forward.

See my wounds, brokenness, need for healing.

At the Wall – I begin to name my issues, admit them.

Realize what is going on in my life – not evil but a gift!! (say “get behind me Satan!”)

Instead of looking it as an evil – angry, defensive – BEFRIEND THE DARKNESS

not bad or to be feared, something trying to crush us

The devil is after me... Even the darkness, demonic – God allowed it!



Our prayers don't become ways of avoiding dark nights – save me/protect me (yes pray them) but God may need to bring things into my life to strip me of illusions.

It is the hand of a loving God leading us to the ground of our being...

God even allows evil to get us to “come to our senses.”

Forgiveness

This is not pretty. I don't beat myself up, but finally relinquish. Receiving God's love. I forgive myself. I can't cover up and hide anymore my stuff.

For me to love you I have to love me

To forgive you, I have to forgive myself.

If I accept my own anger, imperfections, then I can accept it in others.

If I accept my own anger – first...

The great distinctive of love of God of Christianity – is that there are no strings attached. God simply loves humans. Nothing we can do or not do changes his love for us. This love is meant to envelop and fill us and transform us.

God not about using you as a tool.

Many of us know –God is love – in belief/head, but not in experience.

Personal knowing – based on experience. It is grounded in the deep center of our being.

THEN I CAN GIVE IT OUT COMPASSION ON OTHERS.

Acceptance

I embrace and accept myself for who I am. My limits, my brokenness.

Recognize –I will never be totally healed in this life.

I will always be in recovery.

I embrace my wounds now for what they teach me (2 Corinthians 12)

There are rich treasures in the WALL.

You will not recognize yourself on the other side (that alone is worth the work)

– Result of this work (1 brick at a time) –is healthy love for ourselves

– True love for others.

–True love of God and Trust.

– We find out our deepest heart desires (didn't know they were there)

Culture, family expectations different than God's

– We end up in places we never dreamed with people we never imagined!

– You become the Extraordinary Human Being God Intends

To be tested by God is a complement and a privilege. Abraham – father of many



Blessing to the nations!!! YOUR LIFE A GIFT!!

God tests people who have a great calling, future,
Abraham could never have known what a gift his life would be.

v.16 God is aware of the details. You were giving me your only son.

I will surely bless you and make your descendents..

All nations blessed – Christ came thru this!!

Where there is great sacrifice – death – great fruit – resurrection.

LOOK AT JESUS.

Some of you stuck- feels like cage.

– Scared. The Wall shakes your faith!

– Overwhelmed by size of Wall!

What we thought was the Wall was only 1 brick

– dealing with our marriage, anger, unresolved grief, lack of personal relationship with Jesus, addiction, alcoholic father.

What do I do?

Persevere in Patience. Keep still, be quiet and listen for his voice

– GOD IS INVADING YOU!!! EMPTYING TO FILL

– Persevere in spiritual exercises when there is no pleasure.

Promise —You will be filled!! Christ — “my joy will be in you!”

I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory.

Because your love is better than life,

My lips will praise glorify you

And I will praise you as long as I live. Psalm 63

Can you imagine the joy of Jesus being in you?

Silence with God

Conclusion – Jesus is the perfect, blameless victim, willingly submissive to God to be a burnt offering.

Are you moving or stuck?

Can you pray that prayer, “Lord, bring me closer to you, not matter what the cost!