

## WHO AM I?

As we move from boy to young adult the questions surface: “**Who am I and What do I want to do in life?**” In former generations the family was structured better, life was simpler and there was more relationship between parents and children. And there was more respect for God, spiritual matters and Bible morality. We now live in an age of fractured homes, and high technology—most of which we can hold in our hands—smart phones and tablets with multiple applications to communicate, solve problems, play games, watch sports and news events and movies of choice. In many families doing things of mutual interest is limited or non-existent. Learning life principles and work skills is also limited, if not absent, so many boys approach manhood with a resonating question: “**Who am I?**” and many enter adulthood with few skills and no direction.

The Bible has many young adults to be our examples. Consider the sons of Isaac and Rebekah. Esau was the first born and loved the outdoors. Hunting was a specialty, and no doubt provided alternate meat for the family in addition to home-raised mutton. He also learned how to care for sheep, camels and donkeys; and the rudiments of farming—food for the table and hay for the animals. To this end he entered manhood, lived his life and launched his family tree. His brother Jacob lived in the same culture and learned the same skills, but he appears to be more spiritual, because upon leaving home to escape Esau's hatred and wrath, he sought the Lord and had a vision of a stairway leading into the heavens. This trip resulted in his meeting the woman he loved, and the beginning of his family of twelve sons who eventually became the foundation for the twelve tribes of Israel and the Jewish nation. Betrayed in many ways by his father-in-law, Jacob had God's favor, obtained his own herds and herdsmen, and returned to his homeland to face his brother in peace.

The **Book of Genesis** records Jacob's trials and heartbreaks which identify his personal character—mistakes and successes included. He was an imperfect man, but knew the importance of repentance and the pursuit of God's will and favor. When things were against him he relied upon the Lord and kept the faith that God would help him overcome. On his way back home he feared the meeting with Esau, but he knew God's will, and in a night of prayer and intercession God met with him. With tenacity Jacob would not let go of God without the divine answer he needed—and God touched Jacob's hip, inflicting an injury he carried to his death.

My life parallels Jacob's in some ways. I was the second son and third child of twelve. Raised in the poverty of the great depression (1929 til after the 2nd World War) I knew hard work for a boy—spading, hoeing, planting and weeding— raising food to carry us through cold, harsh winters. Walking to and from school, a mile away, come rain, snow or sunshine. I loved sports and was a good student; in time a prominent Boy Scout and while in grade school marched in the Portland, OR Rose Parade playing a french horn. But the years were hard on my dad with unemployment in the 30 to 40% range, and I knew he could not help me with college expenses.

At the age of 15 & 16 I was thinking about what to do after high school. I was a hard worker in the woods, and doing orchard work and harvesting jobs, both in the field and in the canneries; but I didn't want a low-paying job for life. So I applied myself to study and sports. I went to Sunday School all my life, and while not saved, I believed in God and the Bible. The summer between my junior and senior High School years I worked in the woods, and unknown to me, God had been working to prepare my life's pathway.

On a rainy day the logging crew went home early and that afternoon I had a date with destiny. I learned the Navy was taking enlistments for flight training. A few days later I went to Seattle, WA where I passed the written and physical tests and was sworn in as an aviation cadet. At the age of 17 God had opened the first of several doors that enabled me to earn a College degree. It led to meeting my wife-to-be and being recommended for a high school coaching job. In the next three years two other doors opened which took me out of public education into Christian education, and then to a life-long career with a world-wide radio and missionary ministry.

I ask you to read the story in **Genesis** and note how Jacob faced life, trusted God, was led by divine guidance, endured disappointments, encountered challenging situations and ultimately could look back on his life and see how the Lord had been with him. Note also that before his death, God inspired Jacob to give his

sons a prophetic blessing. You might then think about how the Lord has intervened in your life, kept His hand upon you, brought you to this stage in growth and development to fulfill the destiny He has planned for you. Seek the will of God for your life and trust Him to help you find the answer to the questions “**Who am I**” and “**What is my divine purpose in life?**”

God saw your parts and wrote them in a book before you were born (**Ps. 139:13—17**); and He has promised to teach and guide you (**Ps. 32:8**). Keep in mind that this vital question of “**Who am I**” will confront us until we hear from God and dedicate our lives to bringing pleasure to His heart. We need a daily Bible reading plan, and reserved time each day for prayer and meditation—these are the building blocks for discovering our divine mission in life—indeed: “**Who we really are**” in God’s thoughts and plans.

Has my life been a bed of roses? Far from it. Like Jacob and all of the great people of the Bible, there have been ups and downs, and trials and tribulations in my life; but God has been faithful. When I was twenty years old and in college two different classmates tried to induce me into gay relationships, so I dropped out of college for a quarter. Was it a **good move** or a **bad** one? It was **good** in that I got away from a **bad** influence and made a little extra money (**good**) for the next Fall’s session. It was **bad** because I had a logging accident that would have taken my life except for a miraculous intervention by the Lord. I had a lot of muscle pains for over a year, which was **bad**; except my best friend changed colleges and I changed with him, which was **good**. The college change led to what my major would be (H.S. Education and coaching), and that led to my meeting the girl of my dreams and marriage—**very good**, my first teaching and coaching job and my first successful deer hunt—**both good!**

Through the years I have experienced the **good and bad** in a number of character and faith-building ways. When interviewing for a teaching job in Oregon I passed the church, whose radio pastor had prayed for my dying mother and she was healed. God impressed me to stop, but I drove on until the “stop” impression was so strong I was literally afraid not to stop. That was a **good** experience because it led to missionary training and a 53 year ministry that took me to the major cities of America and nearly 50 nations of the world. But the first day of missionary training was preceded by sleeping in our car with my wife and son Gregory—which was **bad**, at the time I was down to my last ten dollars. The next day was **good** because the only newspaper add for places to stay in exchange for some house and yard work was in an exclusive neighborhood. That night we moved into a one bedroom apartment with a fifteen mile view of a beautiful valley. **Very good indeed!**

The following day I received a letter from my brother Dave at Annapolis, with a twenty dollar bill to give to mom for phone calls he had made when visiting home. I wouldn’t be seeing mom some 80 miles away until I had a job and gas money, so God had provided me with food money until I had that job. These, and other such experiences throughout my life-time, reflect how God lets us experience the **bad** so we can see the **good** when He supplies our need—and know that God is always in control.

When we study the Scriptures we see how God allows **bad** things to happen so we can learn to trust Him. Abraham’s wife was taken into Pharaoh’s harem (**bad**) and then God gave Pharaoh a dream and Sarah was released and Abraham left Egypt enriched (**good**). Two generations later Joseph had the dream foretelling his future (**good**); but he suffered (**bad**) from his brothers, a wanton woman and her deceived husband on the way from the pit (**bad**), to the prison (**bad**), to the palace (**good**). He learned to trust God because God was his only hope; he kept a goodly spirit and worked faithfully; he was promoted on each job and finally became Pharaoh’s highest official. These Bible stories— as well as mine, and millions of other believers—are examples of biblical principles that never change. They are teachable experiences for every generation, and you can experience them too if you will let the Lord lead and guide you through the valleys and over the mountains from victory to victory. Amen! So, to answer the question: “**Who Am I?**” You are in training to be a **Mighty Man!**

BarnabasAD

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*“The steps of a good man are ordered (directed) by the Lord, and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholds him with His hand. I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread.”*