

THE
PILGRIMAGE

**THE WAY OF THE PILGRIM – SESSION FOUR
WEAKNESS / WOUNDING AND NEWNESS**

April 12, 2025

“For Christians hearing the call to go deeper.”

Mission Statement

The Pilgrimage creates a community that provides tools and experiences through which we learn to hear the call of God and respond in faith, journeying together with friends on the path to a Spirit-led and joyful life.

Share With Your Small Group

† Your name and location.

† A time when you realized that the *weakness* or *bewilderment* you were going through was strengthening your relationship with God.



- **Encounter** – discipleship/pilgrimage is about developing our capacity to expect and recognize the encounters we have with God.
- **Struggle** – our encounters with God and our fellow children of God, often lead to struggle. We struggle to understand, and to let go of unhelpful things.
- **Wounding / Weakness / Wilderness** – God encounters us in our wounds too. Sometimes a wound is the way to claim our blessing.
- **New Name / Newness** – Sometimes we discover that our encounter with God has re-defined everything in our life. We have become a new person/creation with a new name. Jacob becomes Israel, Saul becomes Paul, Sarai becomes Sarah.

“Pilgrimage is mysticism as an
outward journey.

Mysticism is an inward Pilgrimage.”

Image & Pilgrimage in Christian Culture by – Victor & Edith Turner

Why is Weakness, Wounding, and Wilderness Part of This?

- Because it is a *Wounded God* we follow.
 - God relates to creation in *willing vulnerability* and in the inevitable emotional pain that is experienced in the life of God that comes from a committed relationship with rebellious creatures.
 - God chooses *the vulnerability of love over the safety of coercive power*.

Let's Look At A Few Texts

- Gen. 6:5 The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. 6 And the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.
- Psa. 78:40 How often they rebelled against him in the wilderness and grieved him in the desert!

A Closer Look At The Word “grieved”

- The word for “grieved” in Hebrew means wounded/pained.
- God is “wounded to the heart.” Heartbroken...
- Interestingly this is also exactly the same word used to describe the greatly increased “pain” which the woman is given in childbirth as a result of the disobedience in the garden. It is a word which derives from “Womb.” (see Gen 3:16)

Love Almost Inevitably Leads to Suffering

- To “love” is to enter into a long-suffering, committed fidelity to another, “in sickness and in health, for richer for poorer . . . *et cetera* . . . as long as we both shall live.”
- Parent dealing with a colic baby.
- Spouse dealing with unfaithful partner.
- Child caring for sick or aging parent.
- To love brings you to these places of wounding.
- It is in the nature of love that you sign-on for suffering.

That God Would Choose to Suffer has seemed Foolish from the Start

1Cor. 1:18 For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. 22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, *23 but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,* 24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

How Jesus Gets to Crucifixion

- He comes in love.
- Offers his love.
- Has to wait and see if we respond by:
 - Following as disciples.
 - Attacking as a fearful mob.

If GOD chooses to be in the world where it is not only possible but likely that God will be wounded . . .

what might that suggest to those of us who are children of God and disciples of Jesus?

Why do I imagine that escaping my wounds would be good for me?

"We are afraid of becoming real, just like the toys in the children's book *The Velveteen Rabbit*. They all want to become real - that is the great dream of toys. But they are afraid, so they ask one of the more experienced toys, 'Does it hurt to become real?' That is the same fear we have. Does it hurt to encounter reality? As the old toy wisely answers 'When you are real, you don't mind that it hurts'."

-Brother David Steindl-Rast in *The Music of Silence*

A Quick Word about Weakness

II Corinthians 12:5 On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. 6 But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me, 7 even considering the exceptional character of the revelations. Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. 8 Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, 9 but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

Our Bewilderment / Wounds, and Weakness Can Redirect Us to God.

- In our hours of desperate wounding when we know in a visceral way that we cannot help ourself — we sometimes turn to God and deepen our experience of God's fidelity.

Belden Lane on Being Bewildered in the Wake of Mother's Long death . . .

● “Only at the periphery of our lives, where we and our understanding of God alike are undone, can we understand bewilderment as occasioning another way of knowing.”

Our Bewilderment / Wounds, and Weakness Help Us Love Others.

- When we are broken/wounded and we know it . . . we become more patient not only with our own wounded nature . . . but also with the wounded nature of others.
- From the Desert: A brother committed a fault and a council was convened to which Abba Moses was invited, but he refused to go to it. Then the priest sent someone up to say to him, “Come, for everyone is waiting for you.” So he got up, taking with him a leaking jug filled with water. When the brothers came out to meet him they asked him, “What is this Father?” The old man said to them, “My sins run out behind me, and so - I do not see them, and today I am coming to judge the error of another.” When they heard what Moses had said they criticized the brother no more, but forgave him.

Small Group Breakout – Weakness , Wounding, Wilderness

Discuss:

† Having considered *Wounding / Weakness / Wilderness* more closely can you think of ways to make peace with these elements of discipleship instead of fleeing from them?

New Name - Newness

*The Jabbok river
in Jordan . . .
where Jacob
become Israel!*



- The “heel grabber” becomes the “one who strives with God.”
- Defined less now in relationship to those around him & defined more in relationship with the God he encountered.
- This movement to be defined and justified by God rather than by our peers is an essential movement toward freedom, health, and peace.

Solitude - Where Our New Name Emerges

- If our new name is going to be one given to us by God — we must allow time and space for God to speak it to us.
- While it is true that sometimes a companion along the way will hear our new name before we do and guide us to it . . . we want to be careful to *let God be the name-giver*.
- Many of us will spend and life-time trying to escape the names the world gives us and we want to be mindful of that when listening for the new name uttered by our loving Lord.

“New Name” as metaphor for new life

- “New name” is metaphor for new possibilities - new future with hope.
- Jeremiah 29:11 “For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.”

Think about how a name defines you

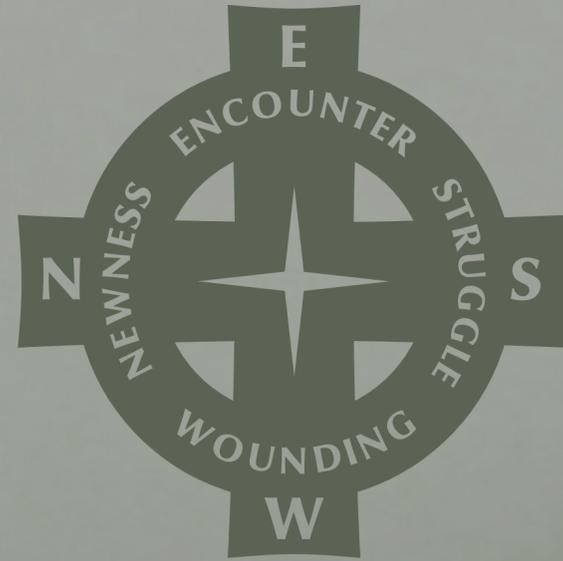
- As you ponder your life in relationship to the Pilgrim's compass - consider how a name defines you.
- Paul Hollingworth Lang
- Your new name(s) may also suggest "title" as Jacob's new "Israel" does.
- Reverend Doctor Paul H. Lang
- Or better yet . . . Paul Hollingworth Lang - child of the covenant.

Discuss:

† Where is a place in your life where you perceive newness occurring? How might God be a part of that?

What We Will Explore in 2025

Jan. 11	SESSION ONE	Session One — Introduction
Feb. 8	SESSION TWO	The Pilgrim's Compass- Chapter 3- Tools for the Journey
Mar. 8	SESSION THREE	The Pilgrim's Compass- Encounter & Struggle
Apr. 12	SESSION FOUR	The Pilgrim's Compass- Wilderness & Newness: New Name
May 10	SESSION FIVE	Charisms of the Way of the Pilgrim
Sept. 13	SESSION SIX	Compass Group and Contemplative Disciplines
Oct. 11	SESSION SEVEN	Christian Prayer Toolbox
Nov. 15	SESSION EIGHT	Discernment



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