



The Epistle

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Wrestling God

²⁴And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. ²⁵When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. ²⁶Then he said, "Let me go, for the day has broken." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." ²⁷And he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." ²⁸Then he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." ²⁹Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. ³⁰So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered." — Genesis 32:24-30



Debbie, Ross, Gail, Kathleen and I took our shoes off and went into the mosque. The room was buzzing with activity. In one corner, prayers were being finished as little children ran in a circle. We introduced ourselves to those who were already seated and waiting for my presentation about Christianity. A lady, originally from Egypt, greeted me with an embrace and a kiss. An older gentleman nodded respectfully while looking circumspect. A little boy grinned from ear to ear and ran away. Two teenage girls giggled shyly when I asked them each to repeat their names and worked at pronouncing them. My new friend, Abbas, the President of the mosque, beamed and took my hand in both of his before introducing me formally to his community.

As promised, I spoke for an hour about everything from the Trinity, to Jesus' words about love and judgment. The half hour that followed felt like a press conference. Questions and comments were flying from every side. One man spoke enthusiastically about similarities in the Quran and the Gospels regarding the treatment of outsiders. Some questions bespoke deep skepticism about Christian doctrine, or my presentation of it. At the end, one person turned to Abbas in frustration and said, on behalf of all gathered, "This was not enough time!"

As Abbas walked us to the door, a group of people gathered for evening prayers in Arabic. Abbas smiled, "The Surah they are reciting is very beautiful. It is about Mary's friends confronting her for having a baby

