

Lesson Five: Abraham, The Man Willing to Make The Ultimate Sacrifice

Have you ever thought about what kind of relationship Abraham and Isaac must have had? Abraham had waited years for God to give him a son through Sarah, a son who was the answer to God's promise to Abraham. Can you imagine what it must have felt like to be told to sacrifice that very son? Had I been Abraham, I would have been tempted to think that God was being cruel to me. I probably would have asked, "God, why did you ever give Isaac to me in the first place if you were only going to take him away from me in this way?" But it is not recorded what went through Abraham's mind during this time. We only know that he obeyed step by step. And Isaac must have loved his father so deeply that he trusted him every step of the way to Mount Moriah. He willingly let his father lay him upon the logs for the sacrifice. Can you imagine what must have been going through Isaac's mind as he watched his father raise the knife to kill him? Their relationship was obviously one of love and trust. Abraham withheld nothing from God, not even his most prized possession, his promised son. And Isaac trusted Abraham even when he didn't understand what was happening. We can learn much about our own relationship with God as we look at this chapter of Abraham's life.

"Father, open my heart to hear your Word. Show me if I am withholding anything from you. Help me trust you so deeply that I would be willing to make whatever sacrifice You ask of me, knowing that You love me and want what's best for me."

DAY 1: The Testing

LOOKING TO GOD'S WORD

GENESIS 22:1-2

1. What exactly did God ask Abraham to do in order to test him?

2. Why would this be particularly difficult in light of last week's passages and Genesis 21:1-8, 12?

3. What are some possible reasons why God tested Abraham at this point of his life and in this way? Hadn't he already shown his faith in God by waiting for his promised son to be born?

4. What else was significant about Mount Moriah according to 2 Chronicles 3:1?

LOOKING UPWARD

5. How do you know when God is testing you?

6. What is your most prized "possession"? How would you respond if God asked you to let go of it and give it back to Him?

LOOKING DEEPER

- What do you learn about God from these verses and how do they relate to what God asked of Abraham?

John 3:16

Romans 8:32

- As you read Job 1, why would God allow Satan to test Job?

- How did Job respond and why?
- According to Job 42:5, how had Job changed as a result of the testing?

LOOKING REFLECTIVELY

Isobel Kuhn said it well, “Keep your treasures on the open palm of your hand. If you hold something tight clenched in your fist, God may have to hurt you in order to open your fingers and take it from you. But if it is offered on the open palm of your hand, you will hardly know when it’s gone.”¹

Whatever you are holding onto the tightest is the very thing on which God wants you to loosen your grip.

- What do you have in your hand? Is your palm open, or is your fist tightly clenched?
- Ask God to give you grace to trust Him with all that He has given you. Keep your “possessions” on an open palm. Be honest with Him.

DAY 2: The Journey

LOOKING TO GOD’S WORD

Genesis 22:3-8

1. What observations can you make about how Abraham responded to God’s request?
2. How many days did Abraham have on the journey to Mount Moriah to think about what He would be doing? Why would God send him to Mount Moriah instead of having him sacrifice his son there in Beersheba?

3. How is Abraham's faith evident here?

LOOKING UPWARD

4. What thoughts would have been running through your mind had you been Abraham? Isaac?

5. Is it acceptable to question God in terms of why He is doing something? Explain your answer.

6. How has God tested you and how have you responded to those tests?

LOOKING DEEPER

- How does Genesis 22:8 give a foreshadowing of Christ? What Scripture(s) would you use to support your answer?

LOOKING REFLECTIVELY

"Our faith is not really tested until God asks us to bear what seems unbearable, do what seems unreasonable, and expect what seems impossible."²

"Life is a succession of tests, for character is only possible through discipline."³

- How has God been working on your character?
- In this passage, God's name Yahweh-Jireh was introduced, signifying The Lord will provide. How have you seen the reality of Yahweh-Jireh in your own life recently?

DAY 3: The Obedience

LOOKING TO GOD'S WORD

GENESIS 22:7-19

1. What observations do you make concerning the relationship between Abraham and Isaac?
2. What was God looking for in order for Abraham to "pass" the test?
3. What did God reconfirm in His promise to Abraham?
4. Were the promises reconfirmed because of Abraham's action or because of his faith? Explain your answer.

LOOKING UPWARD

5. How does one develop complete trust in a relationship?

6. How does your life reflect that you “fear God” and would not withhold anything from Him?

LOOKING DEEPER

JAMES 1:2-4

- What are the results of the testing of our faith?
- How is that true?

James 1:12-13

- What additional insight does James 1:12-13 give concerning trials and temptation?
- What is the difference between being tested and being tempted?

LOOKING REFLECTIVELY

God may not want to take away what is in your hand. He may just want to see if you're willing to let Him have it.

God did not want Isaac's life; He wanted Abraham's heart. Isaac was dear to Abraham, and God wanted to be sure that Isaac was not an idol standing between Him and Abraham. It was possible that Abraham was trusting Isaac to fulfill the promises and not trusting God.⁴

- Are there any idols in your life standing between you and God? If so, confess it and give it to the Lord.

DAY 4: The Faith

LOOKING TO GOD'S WORD

HEBREWS 11:17-19

1. What insight does this passage give concerning the reasoning behind Abraham's decision to obey by sacrificing Isaac?
2. What does verse 19 indicate about Abraham's view of God? How does this relate to his comment in Genesis 22:5?
3. What does the last part of verse 19 mean? The NASB reads, "...from which he also received him back as a type."

LOOKING UPWARD

4. What do you learn about God from this passage and the Genesis narrative?
5. Why are relationships an area that God often uses to "test" us?

6. Is every difficult experience in life a test from God? Support your answer.

LOOKING DEEPER

DEUTERONOMY 8:1-20

- Moses spoke to the sons of Israel concerning the purpose of God's testing them. How and why did God test them in the wilderness?
- What was God's desire for the sons of Israel? In other words, what did He want them to do?
- What lessons for life concerning testing can you derive from this chapter?

LOOKING REFLECTIVELY

"Faith does not demand explanations; faith rests on promises."⁵

- Have you ever demanded an explanation from God as to why something happened?
- What are some promises of God that you have rested on in difficult times?

In order to make the ultimate sacrifice in our lives, we must have complete trust in God's sovereignty and His love for us.

- In what areas does your faith waver? In what areas do you struggle with completely trusting God's sovereignty in your life?

DAY 5: Faith and Works

LOOKING TO GOD'S WORD

JAMES 2:14-26

1. What is the relationship between faith and works?
2. What does James mean when he says that Abraham was justified by works when he offered up Isaac, and a man is “justified by works and not by faith alone”?
3. Is he contradicting what Paul is saying in Romans 3:28 and Ephesians 2:8-9? Why or why not?

LOOKING UPWARD

4. How would you define the term “justification”?
5. What is our justification based on?

LOOKING DEEPER

ROMANS 4:1-8

- What is Paul saying about justification?

- What does the phrase, “his faith is credited as righteousness” mean?

LOOKING REFLECTIVELY

The testing of our faith reveals what is in our hearts; obedience or disobedience; pride or humility; self-reliance or God-dependence.

- What has the testing of your faith revealed in you?

I will be the first to admit that I don't like being tested. I'm not even sure I have a passing record on the tests that God has given me. However, I know that what He places before me in terms of testing is for my good. I will grow in my faith. I will come to depend more on Him. I will see His love for me more clearly. I want the results, but I hate the process. Abraham was a great example of a man who passed the test with flying colors. He trusted God and God's intentions for him so deeply that he was willing to make the ultimate sacrifice in his life. "Lord, give me that kind of faith. Help me trust You so deeply that I would be willing to make whatever sacrifice you ask of me, knowing that you love me and want what's best for me."

1 Isobel Kuhn, *In the Arena* (Robeson, PA: Overseas Missionary Fellowship, 1984), 97.

2 Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: Pentateuch* (Colorado Springs: Cook, 2001), 104.

3 W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1946), 195.

4 Wiersbe, Warren W., *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament*. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1993), Ge 21:1

5 Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 104.