

Week of May 27, 2012
A Legacy of Faith

Passage Outline:

1. **Faith Tested** - Genesis 22:1-3,7-10
2. **Faith Proven** - Genesis 22:11-14
3. **Faith Multiplied** - Genesis 26:2-5

What This Lesson Is About?

Our study will be about the faith and obedience of Abraham, a faith that not only affected his son, but the nation of Israel, and that of the entire world.

How This Lesson Can Impact Your Life:

Our study will help you identify ways your faithfulness to God can impact others.

1. Faith Tested - Genesis 22:1-3,7-10

Genesis 22:1-3, 7-10

¹Sometime later God tested Abraham. He said to ²Abraham, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." ³Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about... ⁷Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" ⁸Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together. ⁹When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

- A. God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac is one of the most powerful and puzzling stories in the Bible.
- B. The story highlights one central point—faith. It is a story about faith and how God's greatest concern is to make our faith stronger. Be careful not to go in other directions like:
 - i. It is not a commentary on child sacrifice;
 - ii. It is not a commentary on God's tempting someone with evil, which He cannot do;
- C. The story begins with "God tested Abraham." There is a huge difference between "testing" and "tempting."
 - i. Tempting always has as its goal sin and the destruction of our faith. Satan tempts us to every kind of evil and lays snares for us and inducements to solicit us to sin. God does not tempt anyone (James 1:13).
 - ii. Testing always has as its goal trust and the strengthening of our faith. God seeks to strengthen that which is weak in us so that we become "mature and complete" (James. 1:4). Peter used imagery of the refining metal to describe what trials can do for our faith (1 Peter 1:6-7).
- D. God does not author evil or chaos, but He can transform both into something to potentially strengthen us. We and not to ask why God allows tests or wonder why He does not protect us from challenges.

They are simply part of life. The only variable is how we will respond when tested.

Please read the articles “Moriah: Its Biblical and Historical Significance” and “Isaac” contain in your preparation packet you picked up last Sunday. If you missed it, additional copies are on the back table.

- E. God does not dabble in the minor issues of our lives. His main concern is NOT to make us better time managers, help us lose weight, or even attend church more regularly. No, His main concern is to transform us deeply from inside out so our whole lives honor Him.
- F. God accomplishes this soul transformation by realigning our most cherished priorities. His tests target not only our weaknesses but even, or perhaps especially, our strengths.
- G. The very nature of God’s test of Abraham highlights a very importance of faith, for God made clear what the test would be, “Take your son ... and offer him as a burnt offering,” but gave no clue as to how He would provide.
- H. Isaac asked the obvious: “Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” Instead of responding “you are,” Abraham’s reply, “God Himself will provide,” underscored his trust but lack of detail as to how God would provide.
- I. Abraham arrived at that critical juncture where trust must translate into obedience. It is so easy to say “just trust God” but would he obey when the solution was not apparent?

Trust and Obedience

One author said, "Real faith often requires us to walk the brink of trust, and then take another step of obedience. Obedience requires us to go beyond our limits of trust into the arena of uncertainty where we do not know the specifics and cannot guess God's ultimate provision." Using this explanation, think of a specific time when your faith was tested.

- ✓ Did your test involve something (or someone) who was very precious to you? YES NO
- ✓ Did your test require you to take a step of faith and obedience when you were not sure of the future outcome? YES NO
- ✓ Did you come to learn from the test that "God" is your ultimate treasure? YES NO
- ✓ Would you be willing to share your experience as an example to others in their Christian walk and life? YES NO

2. Faith Proven - Genesis 22:11-14

Genesis 22:11-14

¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. ¹² "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." ¹³ Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

- A. The Angel spoke directly for God, “I know that you fear God” and “since you have not withheld your only son from Me.” Are we to understand here that God *learned* anything?
 - i. God did not learn anything about Abraham that He did not know previously;
 - ii. Abraham learned a tremendous lesson about his need to trust God completely and experienced God’s trustworthiness to provide in every situation.
- B. The main point of application: God came through for Abraham in a crisis and in a way Abraham did not anticipate.
 - i. God is not really all that interested in our happiness. Why? Happiness is only a surface level event.
 - ii. God’s major concern is with our eternal joy, and that joy can only be developed through a faith that is both tested and proven.
 - iii. Deeper faith is proven only during times of trouble. We cannot know the depth of God’s provision without wading into the deep waters.
 - iv. Since most tests are unavoidable, the only real variable becomes how we respond to the tests?
- C. When Abraham looked up he saw a ram God provided, a ram caught in the thicket. This detail of the story gives rise to the idea of substitutionary atonement, as in Jesus becoming sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21), bearing our sins (1 Peter 2:24), or Jesus the righteous dying for the unrighteous (1 Peter 3:18).
- D. Abraham named the place of testing “The LORD Will Provide.” God has never failed us, and He never will.

How Has God Come Through for You?

Using the example of Abraham, how has God come through for you? How can you use these stories of trust and obedience to encourage you the next time you face a situation with no help in sight?

1. How did God act on your behalf (or are you still waiting)?
2. Was the provision “right there all the time”? Explain.
3. Were you able to recognize at the time that it was God at work in your situation? Explain.

3. Faith Multiplied - Genesis 26:2-6

Genesis 26:2-6

²The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. ³Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. ⁴I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, ⁵because Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws." ⁶So Isaac stayed in Gerar.

- A. This chapter introduces us to a new generation; Abraham had already died (Gen. 25:8). A famine in Canaan forced Isaac to go to the Philistine city of Gerar for food. With Abraham gone would the spiritual fervor remain? The fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham would depend on the faithful reception of future generations.
- B. Isaac was the next generation. What response would he give? Of course, we know Isaac maintained that faith and, with his father and son Jacob, would become a kind of trinity of faith, for people still pray to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Isaac's faith meant God's promises extended to him.
- C. Isaac was a participant in Abraham's greatest test. Though frightened at the time, he carried with him a greater conviction about his father's faith and God's willingness to provide. Abraham's faith had a lasting impact on Isaac.
- D. As Christian parents, we deeply desire our children to grow into men and women of faith. Three key commitments or insights are necessary for this growth to be more likely:
 - i. Parents are primarily responsible for their children's spiritual development. The home is the first and best place for a child to see faith in practice. Isaac certainly saw that in his parents, Abraham and Sarah.
 - ii. Parents must allow for their children to own their own faith. Children do not inherit faith; they must embrace faith through personal interaction with the Lord.
 - iii. Parents and children must accept that the legacy of faith is not perfect. In other words, all parents stumble and fall. None of us have lived perfect lives of faith. Neither did Abraham.
- E. God's promise to Isaac has a world-wide breadth - "all the nations of the earth will be blessed by your offspring."
- F. We are among the people who have been blessed through a legacy of faith that began with Abraham, was passed on to Isaac, then to Jacob, then down through the centuries to your parent(s) who passed it along to you.
- G. Our faith has been multiplied, and will continue to be multiplied through you in your family, class, and circles of friends and influences.

Building a Legacy of Faith

Think about your experiences in a parent/child relationship (either as a parent or as a child in your home of origin). Rate the three aspects of multiplying faith in your own personal experience:

1. Primary responsibility for the child's spiritual commitments was the.....

----- 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 -----

Church's
Job

Half and half

Responsibility of parents
with church's help

2. Allowing the child to make the faith his or her own.....

----- 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 -----

Wasn't talked
about

Refused to give
child responsibility

Prayerfully
accepted

3. Accepting that "the legacy of faith is not perfect".....

----- 1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 -----

Parents denied
any wrongdoing

Wasn't talked
about

Parents humbly
admitted their mistakes