



READ: Genesis 22:1-19; Hebrews 11:8-10 (ESV)

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you." And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together. When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided." And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice." So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba. By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. (Hebrews 11:17-19)

ENTER THE STORY:

Take your son, your only son, whom you love, and offer him as a burnt offering. Abraham's relationship with God takes an unexpected turn here, doesn't it? I mean, child sacrifice? Isn't that a grotesque sin in the eyes of the LORD? Is this really what God is asking Abraham to do? And why? *These are all valid questions in response to a text like this.* After all, Isaac was Abraham's *ONLY* son – Phase One of God's promise to give Abraham a family as numerous as the stars. Without him, the plan doesn't work because at this point in time, Isaac has no children. If he dies, God's Word fails and he will break the covenant he made with Abraham. This doesn't seem like a very good idea...*UNLESS*...there is a much greater purpose to what God is asking Abraham to do. God really is the BEST teacher and he knows how to help Abraham understand just how far a Father must go to save their children.

- And how does Abraham respond? *With unquestioning obedience and unwavering faith.*
- *Do you think you could respond to such a monumental request with that same kind of attitude? What is the ONE thing in your life that would hurt the most to lose? The ONE thing you really, really don't want God to ask you to give up?*
- *Would you give it up if God asked you to... for him?*
- Abraham was willing, because he KNEW God would be faithful to his word. He knew, one way or another, BOTH he and Isaac were coming down off of that mountain. He told his servants so, *"Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you."* Whether that meant he had to plunge the knife into his son's bound body lying on that altar and God brought him back to life or God provided a substitute that he could offer up instead.
- Either way, Abraham trusted God, so he saddled the donkey and set out on yet another journey not knowing the whole story. And after all is said and done, that mountain carries a new name... *Yahweh Yireh - the LORD will provide.*
- *But of course we know how this story ends, don't we?*
- This story is a shadow – a reflection of a similar story. One where another Father had a Son he loved very much, and he was also willing to take that Son and offer him up as a sacrifice on that very same mountain. And that Son would also carry his own wood up a long hill, but instead of God providing an animal to be sacrificed in his place, he would BE the LAMB, and he would wear a crown of thorns and lay down his life as a substitute for others.
- In this story, the Father would endure the death of his only Son, but death would not be able to hold him long, and after three days he would come back again and be restored to his Father. Praise God!
- It's always been about Jesus! Every story either whispers his name or shouts it from the mountain tops so that we can understand what God has been teaching us about his Son all along the way.
- Don't miss him this Christmas season because he is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!
-  **PRAY:** *God, we continue to be amazed at how you weave together such intricate and mysterious stories so that they reflect the beautiful sacrifice of your Son. Lord, we long to know you and trust you as Abraham did, and we long to have the type of unquestioning obedience and unwavering trust that he had. Through the power of your Holy Spirit, God, will you develop those qualities in us? Amen.*
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