



READ: Genesis 22:1-14, (NIV)

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you." Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded 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. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you." Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac 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?" Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together. When 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. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. "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." 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. 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."

ENTER THE STORY:

Abraham's story takes an unexpected turn here, doesn't it? Take your son, your only son, whom you love, and offer him as a burnt offering. 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.*

After all, Isaac was Abraham's *ONLY* son, and the first phase 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 is the *BEST* teacher, and he knows how to help Abraham understand just how far a Father must go if they really want to save their children.

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, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you."

- There were only two options: either he would have to kill his only son, and God would bring him back to life, or God
- would provide a substitute that he could offer up instead. Either way, Abraham knew God would keep his word, and he
- trusted God. So, he saddled the donkey and set out on yet another journey, not knowing the whole story. 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 another story. In that story, we have another Father who had a Son that he loved
- very much, and he was also willing to take his only Son and offer him up as a sacrifice on that very same mountain. That
- Son would also carry his own wood up a long hill, but instead of God providing a substitute, he would BE the LAMB, and
- instead of getting caught in a thorn bush, 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 hold him, and after three
- days, he would come back again and be restored to his Father. Praise God!

• *Do you know who the Father is? Do you know who his only Son is? It's God and his Son, Jesus!*

- It's always been about Jesus! Every story either whispers his name or shouts it from the mountain tops, so we can
- understand that God has been teaching us about his Son all along the way.

- Don't miss him this Christmas season because while we celebrate his birth as the babe in a manger, he is also the lamb
- of God who takes away the sins of the world!

■ **PRAY:** *God, we are continuously amazed at how you weave together all of the stories in the Old Testament so that they reflect the beautiful sacrifice of your Son. 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.*