

Getting a Stronger Grip on Our Faith

Message 5 of 5 in the series: "Stronger"

A. We still have 11 out of 12 months left in 2023 to get a stronger grip on our faith.

"So take a **new grip** with your tired hands and **strengthen** your weak knees. Mark out a straight path for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong." Hebrews 12:12-13 (NLT)

"Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation... And **it is impossible to please God without faith.** Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him." Hebrews 11:1-2,6 (NLT)

B. Abraham gave us a great example of what a stronger grip on our faith looks like.

"Some time later, God tested Abraham's faith. 'Abraham!' God called. 'Yes,' he replied. 'Here I am.' 'Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you.' The next morning Abraham got up early. He saddled his donkey and took two of his servants with him, along with his son, Isaac. Then he chopped wood for a fire for a burnt offering and set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day of their journey, Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. 'Stay here with the donkey,' Abraham told the servants. 'The boy and I will travel a little farther. We will worship there, and then we will come right back.' So Abraham placed the wood for the burnt offering on Isaac's shoulders, while he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them walked on together, Isaac turned to Abraham and said, 'Father?' 'Yes, my son?' Abraham replied. 'We have the fire and the wood,' the boy said, 'but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?' 'God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son,' Abraham answered. And they both walked on together. When they arrived at the place where God had told him to go, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. Then he tied his son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. And Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice. At that moment the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, 'Abraham! Abraham!' 'Yes,' Abraham replied. 'Here I am!' 'Don't lay a hand on the boy!' the angel said. 'Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son.' Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in place of his son."

Genesis 22:1-13 (NLT)

1. God tests our faith to mature us, refine us, and reveal where we are.

"Test" = prove by trial.

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that **the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete**, not lacking anything." James 1:2-4 (NIV)

"There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. **These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold**—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world." 1 Peter 1:6-7 (NLT)

2. Abraham had a strong grip on His faith because he had learned to trust God's promises.

"It was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him. Abraham, who had received God's promises, was ready to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, even though God had told him, 'Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted.' Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again. And in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead." Hebrews 11:17-19 (NLT)

"Then God said to Abraham, 'Regarding Sarai, your wife—her name will no longer be Sarai. From now on her name will be Sarah. And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings of nations will be among her descendants.' Then Abraham bowed down to the ground, but he laughed to himself in disbelief. 'How could I become a father at the age of 100?' he thought. 'And how can Sarah have a baby when she is ninety years old?' So Abraham said to God, 'May Ishmael live under your special blessing!' But God replied, 'No—

Sarah, your wife, will give birth to a son for you. You will name him Isaac, and I will confirm my covenant with him and his descendants as an everlasting covenant.” Genesis 17:15-19 (NLT)

3. Abraham had a strong grip on His faith because he had learned to trust God’s character.

“**Abraham named the place Yahweh-Yireh** (which means ‘the Lord will provide’). To this day, people still use that name as a proverb: ‘On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.’ Then the angel of the Lord called again to Abraham from heaven. ‘This is what the Lord says: Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, **I swear by my own name** that I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies. And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me.” Genesis 22:14-18 (NLT)

“For the Lord, the God of heaven, who took me from my father’s house and my native land, solemnly promised to give this land to my descendants. He will send his angel ahead of you, and **he will see to it** that you find a wife there for my son.” Genesis 24:7 (NLT)

4. Abraham had a strong grip on his faith because he obeyed God even when he didn’t understand what God was up to.

“It was by faith that Abraham obeyed when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going.”

Hebrews 11:8 (NLT)

“For we walk by faith, not by sight.” 2 Corinthians 5:7 (NKJV)

Note: Walking by faith means acting on what God has told us to do, NOT our feelings.

“When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish.’ ‘Master,’ Simon replied, ‘we worked hard all last night and didn’t catch a thing. **But if you say so, I’ll let the nets down again.**’ And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear!” Luke 5:4-6 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions:

Read Genesis 22:1-18 & then answer the following questions.

1. How do you define faith? Using your own definition, how well do you “walk by faith”? (Hebrews 11:1-6, 2 Corinthians 5:7)
2. Why do you think Abraham was willing to offer Isaac as a sacrifice? (Hebrews 11:17-19)
3. God spoke to Abraham out loud. How do we know what God wants us to do? (2 Timothy 3:16-17, Ephesians 4:11-16)
4. What’s the difference between trusting what God tells us to do and trusting our feelings? (Luke 5:4-6, James 1:6-8) Why do you think it’s often more difficult to trust God than to trust our feelings when it comes to money, forgiveness, sexuality, etc.
5. How important is obedience to God? (John 14:21, 1 Samuel 15:22)
6. Discuss the following list describing God’s character. If we actually believed all these things about God, how might our lives change?
 - all-powerful. (Job 42:2, Jeremiah 32:27, Luke 1:37, Revelation 19:6)
 - all-knowing. (Psalm 139:1-3, 147:5, Isaiah 46:9-10)
 - everywhere. (Proverbs 15:3, Psalm 139:5-10, Isaiah 66:1)
 - eternal and unchanging. (Psalm 90:1-4, 106:1, Hebrews 13:8, James 1:17, Revelation 1:8, 22:13)
 - the creator of everything and the source of life. (Genesis 1:1, John 11:23-27, Colossians 1:15-17)
 - holy, perfect and sinless (Isaiah 6:1-3, Revelation 4:4-11, Psalm 18:30-31, 1 Peter 3:18)
 - love. (Psalm 103:11, Psalm 136, John 3:16, 1 John 4:7-10)
 - great and greatly to be praised. (Deuteronomy 10:17, Psalm 95:3, 145:3, 147:5)
 - good. (1 Chronicles 16:34, Psalm 100:5, 145:9, Nahum 1:7)
 - working all things for my good. (Romans 5:3-5, 8:28, James 1:2-4)

- patient and kind. (Exodus 34:6, Numbers 14:18, Romans 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9)
- forgiving. (Isaiah 1:18, Psalm 103:8-14, 2Corinthians 5:17, 1 John 1:9)
- always with us. (Joshua 1:5-9, Psalm 23:4, Matthew 28:20)
- our provider. (Psalm 103:5, Matthew 6:25-34, Philippians 4:19, James 1:17)
- our refuge. (Psalm 18:1-3, 46:1-3, Psalm 91, 2 Corinthians 1:8-10)
- our guide. (Proverbs 3:5-6, Psalm 23:1-3, 32:8-9, 37:23-24, Isaiah 30:21)