

In this last of three lessons on Abraham, we find him near the end of his faith journey. Scripture has given us his real story, showing us his moments of great authentic faith, his persisting areas of struggle and failure, and the unchanging faithfulness of his God.

Review your memory verses: Hebrews 11:1 and Genesis 15:1 KJV--"After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, 'Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.' "

1. Memorize Hebrews 11:6. Write it out here.

Read Genesis 22:1-19. As you read, you may be interested to note all the times and ways this passage refers to Isaac.

Re-read verses 1-2. Verse one says "after these things", referring back to chapter 21, where (1) Isaac is miraculously born; (2) God promises to take care of Ishmael, Abraham's son by Hagar; and (3) Abraham enters into a secure peace treaty with the strong warriors in the land.

2. As chapter 21 ends, how might Abraham be feeling?

What happens next, according to Genesis 22:1-2?

What reality about the life of faith (this side of heaven) is demonstrated here?

Think back over Abraham's circumstances-- his age, the fact that Isaac is a young only child, and Isaac's crucial connection with God's promise. (Genesis 17:15-19)

3. Why do you think Abraham's loving God is probing his relationship with Isaac at this time--what fears, struggles or pitfalls might Abraham be facing?

Note: God tests us in keeping with His character, always seeking to bless, strengthen and free us, drawing us closer to Him. We have a spiritual enemy, Satan, who will do all he can in that same circumstance to draw us into unbelief and its resulting damage. Our heart's response makes the difference.

4. What could have been some natural responses to God's command?

Read Genesis 22:3-4

5. What sort of everyday actions is Abraham performing in verse 3?

Why are his actions not ordinary, but extraordinary -- what do they demonstrate?

6. Personal: In what present situation do you find it difficult to follow Abraham's example, where you know the Lord has shown you a specific truth that calls for action, but you are hesitating to take concrete steps to obey? (In a relationship, your daily work, your family, your leisure time, your church involvement, etc.)

Is your reluctance to respond to God in this area having an effect in your life? Explain.

7. What do you think God is asking you to purpose to do, leaning on His mercy, forgiveness and strength? (Also remember that Abraham's great victory began with a bite-sized chunk -- he got up early the next day and packed! Those first small steps were necessary to start him on the way to his great victory.)

Read Genesis 22:5-10

8. Each action, description and quote in this section is full of meaning. From verses 5-9, take specific phrases that strike you particularly and tell what they communicate -- about the relationship Abraham has with his son, with his God, etc.

9. In verse 10, Abraham reaches the final step. What does he do?

10. Read Hebrews 11:17-19, and remember Genesis 22:5. What was the firm conviction behind Abraham's actions?

Read Genesis 22:11-19. Look at God's response to Abraham's actions -- and note that the word "fear" in verse 12 means faith -- a trust that has deep reverence and respect.

11. From verses 11 and 13, was God able to take care of Isaac and keep His promise safe? Did God use the method Abraham was counting upon? What happened?

Is there a timely lesson here for you today?

12. Why did Abraham's actions, culminating in verse 10, particularly reveal his heart to his God and to us?

13. Some people would expect Abraham to name this place "God Sure Can Be Mean." But what name actually sums up Abraham's feelings? (verse 14)

14. God knows all things. He knew what Abraham's choice would be. But because of this experience (verses 1-14) what do you think Abraham knows now like he's never known before?

15. What effect do you think this day could have on the years Abraham has left in this life? (Not only in his relationship with Isaac, but just in his day-to-day living.)

16. What are some further results of Abraham's obedience to God? (verses 15-18)
17. God not only led Abraham to a new level of trust and peace, He also gave him a special privilege. Abraham's action would picture something earth-shaking that God Himself would do centuries later on another nearby hill -- Golgotha, or Calvary. What would happen there? See John 3:16 and Mark 15:22-27. (To dig deeper, see Isaiah 53.)

God isn't being manipulative or self-seeking when He asks you to love and obey Him. He knows that He alone is your source for real love, security, worth -- life! Anything else put in His place will disappoint and destroy you. Remember, though, that walking by faith with Him does not guarantee sudden comfort or release from pain and struggle. He does promise to be all that we need through those times, like a well of refreshing water within us (this can begin to flow out to others, too). And He promises to ultimately make all things right beyond any joy we can imagine. Finally, when heartbreaking circumstances in this fallen world might lead you to question His love and faithfulness, remember Calvary. No one stepped in to stop the sacrifice of His Son. He loved us to the very end. And the cross on that hill, the worst that life could throw at Him, led to eternal life for us and eternal glory for Jesus at the Father's right hand.

18. Perhaps God is probing you today as He did Abraham and for the same purpose: to relieve, enrich and overwhelm you with His love. Open your heart before Him and consider: Is there something you have been reluctant to place in His care--some fear, challenge, dream, hurt, memory, plan, person, etc.? Please explain.

Why do you think this happens--and what do you do instead?

19. Think back through your study. What truths has God used to encourage you to put all that concerns you into His hands--and leave it there?
20. Please write out your response to Him.

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