

Genesis 22:1-2 - “1 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!” “Here I am,” he replied. 2 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.”” (NIV)

Genesis 22:6-8 - “6 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, 7 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?” 8 Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together.” (NIV)

Abram was called by God when he was 75 years old. In Genesis 12, he was told to leave what he had always known to live in a land that God would later show him. To let go of all that was familiar to him demonstrated incredible faith. God then promised Abram that the entire world would be blessed through his children. But when time passed, and Sarah was still not pregnant, Abram took things into his own hands and fathered a child by his wife’s servant, Hagar. After 25 years of waiting, the son of promise was born to them, and his name was Isaac.

**THE SACRIFICE**

Genesis 22:2 - “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.”” (NIV)

This response is very confusing to us today. Why would God request Abraham to sacrifice Isaac? And why did Abraham respond the way he did? In the ancient world, when things were going bad, they assumed the “gods” were angry. And if things were going well, the “gods” were pleased. To manipulate the gods into providing rain, growing crops, aiding in pregnancy, and keeping away disasters they would offer sacrifices. The assumption was if you offered a sacrifice and things didn’t go as planned, you didn’t offer a big enough sacrifice. So the sacrifices got bigger and bigger to appease the gods. This eventually led to human sacrifice, often including child sacrifice.

If you’ve ever read the Old Testament you know that sacrifices played a major role in the lives of the nation of Israel. However, there was one major distinction. God forbids human sacrifice. God called it detestable (Deuteronomy 12:31) and anyone who practiced it was to be put to death (Leviticus 20:2-5).

At this point, Abraham must have assumed God was like all the other gods. And when a god demands something, you must oblige. It’s important that we understand this mindset that Abraham would have had. We live in a different culture with different norms. To understand why he did what he did, we need to enter into that culture.

And what’s even more confusing is Abraham’s response. Genesis 22:3 says that early the next morning Abraham loaded his donkey and took his son to do just what God had instructed. He didn’t hesitate. Abraham moved in a calm way from one step to the next. No talk with his wife. No exploration of his feelings. No heart-to-heart talk with his son. He must have been saddened, but he was not shocked by this request.

Abraham trusted God and followed him for 25 years. Think about what it must have taken Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. He is probably thinking, “Whatever you want God, I’m in. I’ve seen you do the impossible.” Abraham’s faith and trust in God were outstanding. So when asked, here’s what Abraham did: Genesis 22:9-11 “9 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. 10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!” (NIV)

No hesitation, no second thoughts, he’s going to do what God asked of him. The knife was just about to be thrust down, when an angel of the Lord appeared. At this moment, God was showing Abraham that he wasn’t like the other gods. He was different. He didn’t demand human sacrifice. What’s unbelievable about this story is that Abraham was willing to do what God was asking of him. He was going to go through with it. God provided a substitute. He provided a ram for Abraham and Isaac. Genesis 22:13 - “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.” (NIV)

**THE OBEDIENCE**

Faith is revealed when we trust and obey. Often, we don’t see the hand of God until we obey and trust God wholeheartedly. God tells Abraham in Genesis 22:12 - “Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son (NIV).” Didn’t God already know that Abraham greatly respected God? Didn’t God already know that Abraham would obey? Sure he did! However, Abraham learned in the process that his faith in God was real and that God was first in his heart through his act of obedience. Like Abraham, we will only learn that our faith is real and that God is first in our hearts when we are tested and as we obey God.

Our times of testing reveal God’s provision. When God puts you through a test, it's not so God can determine whether your faith is real; rather, it's so you can know your faith is real. It's for your understanding, so you can better learn to trust God now and in the future. It's for your assurance that God will supply. It's for you to realize that God sees and will provide for all of your needs. It's for your own knowledge, experience, and belief that God will take care of you. God wants you to experience how it is when God provides. When you have done nothing, and He moved on your behalf.

**THE PROVISION**

At our worst, we think of God’s provision as if he is a waiter: We signal Him to our life, place our orders in “faith,” and receive what we have requested. Too often we stop there, and in doing so, we stop short of the deep reality of what “the Lord shall provide” truly means.

In Matthew 6, Jesus tells his disciples: Matthew 6:25-26, 28-29 - “25 Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 28 Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” (ESV)

In these verses, Jesus shows one end of the spectrum of God’s provision. He cares for the smallest and even the inanimate in His creation. He clothes and feeds them. His eye is on them as treasured created things. So why should we worry about His provision? Are we not God’s image bearers, uniquely made to be God’s children? God provides as a father should – exactly those things that are best for His children without hesitation and always at the right time.

Do you know what is God’s greatest provision for us? God’s greatest provision for us is JESUS CHRIST. As the ram became the substitute for the sacrificial offering of Abraham, Jesus became our substitute for our sins. Jesus is our Provider: Providing redemption and forgiveness, providing eternal life to all, if we believe Him.

The greatest need we all have is SALVATION. He promised it and He has freely provided it. All we need to do is believe. Trials will come but they are never to hurt you; rather they are to build you up. They are to reveal your heart. They are to teach you more about yourself and for you to learn about the God who created and loves you.

Tough times will still come. There will still be times when we cannot pay the bills, we lose our jobs, and our health will deteriorate. God will continue to be faithful when trials come into our lives for His glory and our good. But we can always be certain of this: God will never forget or forsake us. Although at times it may feel as though He is not providing, we can trust that God’s plan is better than ours and remind ourselves of the many times in the scriptures that He has promised to provide. Faith is believing even when you don’t understand or feel that it’s true. It is a choice to believe in what God has promised no matter what. These promises of our Father’s love and provision are true, and we can rest in the knowledge that He is in control and has promised to live up to His name: Jehovah Jireh!

**LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION:**

In what ways do our trials and tests reveal our “idols”? What “idols” tend to threaten your relationship with God the most?

In what ways does the love and sacrifice of Jesus shown on the cross encourage you in your daily struggles?

When has God called you to do something hard or fearful? What did you learn about Him during that situation?