

SERMON OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

Abraham is called “the Father of our faith.” Sometimes he wavered, but he never lost faith in God. When he was tested, he came through. Today in our final lesson, Abraham faces his most severe test. Would you be willing to do anything God asked you to do, even if it meant your own child had to suffer?

I. GENESIS 21

A. ISAAC IS BORN

1 Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. 2 Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him.

B. HAGAR AND ISHMAEL ARE SENT AWAY

At Isaac’s weaning party, Ishmael mocks Isaac. Sarah is furious and tells Abraham to get rid of Hagar and Ishmael. It distresses Abraham, but God says, “Listen to Sarah; send Hagar away.”

NOTE: Remember this is the second time Hagar has left.

This time God does not send her back.

Hagar and Ishmael make their way toward Egypt, her home country. God again visits Hagar in the desert and assures her he will take care of them. God tells Hagar that he will make Ishmael into a great nation.

The end of this chapter tell us that Ishmael grew up there in the desert. He became an archer and took an Egyptian wife. Still today his descendants are often connected to the desert region of Arabia, the “Arabic” people.

II. GENESIS 22

A. GOD’S STRANGE COMMAND

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."

Nobody saw this coming! God told Abraham to go to a special place: Mt. Moriah. Centuries later this would be the very place where the temple was built. Mt. Morian is the place of sacrifice. God tells Abraham to slaughter his son as if his son is the sacrificial lamb. What dad could do that? And why would God ask this of Abraham?

The test is not for God’s sake. God already knows Abraham’s heart.

(1) It is for Abraham’s sake, to further train and develop his faith.

(2) It may also be for Isaac’s sake, to teach him to trust his father & trust God.

(3) This test is also for our sake. This story teaches us to this day.

But at this point, Abraham only knows that God has commanded him to take the life of his only son, the son of the promise.

B. ABRAHAM'S OBEDIENCE

3 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.

4 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. 5 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."

NOTE: "WE will come back"! Abraham believed they were both coming back. The New Testament tells us in Hebrews 11 that Abraham reasoned God could raise him from dead. He'd seen God do miracles and he'd seen God keep his promises. So he reasoned: if I take his life, God will somehow give it back.

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.

Notice Abraham had apparently taught his son what it means to worship. They had evidently sacrificed a lamb before. Isaac knew that was the pattern. That's the purpose of the wood and fire.

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.

NOTE: Did Isaac try to fight? The Scripture doesn't say, but here are some reasons to conclude Isaac didn't put up a fight:

- (1) Isaac is the younger, stronger one, yet Abraham is able to bind him.
- (2) There's no indication of any resistance or cries of anger or despair.
- (3) We will read later that Isaac is a type of Christ. Jesus didn't resist the cross.

10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

C. GOD'S INTERVENTION

11 But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.

12 "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."

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. 14 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."

"The Lord will provide." This is "YHWH Yireh," or "Jehovah Jireh."

D. CONCLUSION OF CHAPTER 22

15 The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time 16 and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, 18 and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

E. SUMMARY OF ABRAHAM'S FINAL YEARS

Abraham lived to be a very old man. He outlived Sarah by many years. He even married again and had more kids.

He helped Isaac find a wife, a wonderful woman named Rebekkah. Abraham lived long enough to see Isaac and Rebekkah have twins named Jacob and Esau.

The New Testament says he's the father of us all. If you're a Jew, he's biologically your father. If you're a Christian, he's spiritually your father, the father of our faith.

III. APPLICATION

A. TWO PURPOSES

Whenever we study these Old Testament stories, keep in mind two purposes.

- 1) Primary purpose = historical: God wants us to know these historical facts and how he orchestrated all these events to bring about the Messiah.
- 2) Secondary purpose = practical: These heroes teach us how to live for God. Sometimes we learn from their bad example, but often from their good example.

Today's story is in the "Hall of Faith" chapter of the New Testament, clearly indicating we are to learn from Abraham's positive example of faith.

[Heb 11:17-19 NIV] 17 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, 18 even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." 19 Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.

God tested Abraham to see if his loyalty to God was greater than his love for his son Isaac. Abraham passed the test.

We could apply this to any situation where we're tempted to idolize something. If God were to command you to give up something you idolized, what would it be?

B. FACING A COMMON TEMPTATION

Since this is about Abraham possibly idolizing his child, and since that's a common temptation, let's focus on this specific application. Is your love for God stronger than your love for your kids?

Experts point out some common signs you're "idolizing" your child:

- (1) Scheduling life around the child's preferences.
- (2) Narrating a child's mediocrity as exceptional.
- (3) Shielding your child from all disappointment or discomfort.
- (4) Deferring adult decisions to the child.
- (5) Identity fusion. The parents' sense of self-worth is bound up in the child's achievements.
- (6) Documenting the child's life or broadcasting the child on social media constantly.

Sociologists used to refer to "helicopter" parents. Now they call it _____ or _____ parenting.

Most parents believe this child-centered, time-intensive approach is the best way to parent! Yet the results are predictably negative.

It's natural in the flesh to be tempted to "over parent." But for your child's sake, and for your own sake, resist the temptation to idolize your child. Decide today: I will love my kids but won't idolize them.

C. THREE TESTS FROM THE STORY OF ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

- (1) Is obeying God's commands more important than your child's comfort?
- (2) Is worshipping God together more important than your child's activities?
- (3) Are you trusting God's provision more than your child's sacrifice?

CONCLUSION

A personal example of giving up your child to God.

When we give up our kids to God, he does something amazing in us. You'll have a healthier relationship with your child, and God himself will fill the God-shaped hole in your heart.

INVITATION

God loves you. He commands you to worship him alone. But we have all worshiped the things of this world and sinned against him. We've worshiped health, money, status, pleasure, and often even our own kids. Our idols never satisfy; they leave us feeling empty and alone.

But God loved us so much he provided. He sent his son, Jesus. Consider the parallels to our story. On that same Mt. Moriah...

But when the soldier raised the hammer to nail Jesus to the cross, there was no _____ from heaven to stop him. There was no _____ in the thicket.

Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of man.

Today turn from your idols, trust in him alone as Lord, be baptized into him, and be saved.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Trusting God's Promises in Seasons of Delay

- Scripture: Genesis 21:1–2 — *"Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him."*
- Question: God fulfilled His promise to Sarah and Abraham in His perfect timing, despite their old age. Have you ever had to wait on God to fulfill a promise or prayer in your life? How did that waiting period impact your faith, and what helped you stay trusting?

2. Walking in Immediate and Complete Obedience

- Scripture: Genesis 22:2–3 — *"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."*
- Question: Abraham responded immediately the next morning to a very difficult command without hesitating or arguing. When God prompts you to do something that feels uncomfortable, challenging, or costly, what is usually your initial reaction, and how can we practice responding with prompt obedience?

3. Recognizing God as Our Ultimate Provider

- Scripture: Genesis 22:7–8, 13–14 — *"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... 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.'"*
- Question: Abraham trusted that God would provide even when the circumstance looked impossible. In what area of your life right now (finances, relationships, future plans, health) are you struggling to trust that God (*Jehovah Jireh*) will provide? What would taking a step of faith look like in that situation?

4. Surrendering Our "Isaacs" and Guarding Against Idolatry

- Scripture: Genesis 22:12 — *"'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.'"*

- Question: God tested Abraham to ensure that his loyalty to God was greater than his love for his son or the gifts God had given him. An "Isaac" can be a child, a career, a relationship, or a personal goal. Is there a good gift in your life that you might be holding onto too tightly or placing above your relationship with God?

5. Processing Reasonable Faith During Hard Tests

- Scripture: Hebrews 11:17–19 — *"By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, 'It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.' Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death."*
- Question: The writer of Hebrews points out that Abraham "reasoned" based on God's past faithfulness that God could do the impossible. How does reflecting on God's past faithfulness in your life help you navigate current anxieties or unknown situations?

6. Prioritizing God in Everyday Family Life

- Scripture: Genesis 22:5 — *"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.'"*
- Question: Abraham made worshiping God a clear priority for his household and set an example for Isaac. In a fast-paced world filled with competing activities, sports, and busy schedules, what practical boundaries can we put in place to ensure worship and spiritual growth remain the centerpiece of our personal lives and families?