

CONFIDENCE IN TIMES OF TESTING

Leader pages on pp. 156-159

THE POINT:
TRUST GOD EVEN
WHEN YOUR FAITH IS
TESTED.

GENESIS 22:1-14

¹ After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he answered. ² "Take your son," he said, "your only son Isaac, whom you love, go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

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³ So Abraham got up early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took with him two of his young men and his son Isaac. He split wood for a burnt offering and set out to go to the place God had told him about. ⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go over there to worship; then we'll come back to you." ⁶ Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac. In his hand he took the fire and the knife, and the two of them walked on together. ⁷ Then Isaac spoke to his father Abraham and said, "My father." And he replied, "Here I am, my son." Isaac said, "The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" ⁸ **Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." Then the two of them walked on together.** ⁹ When they arrived at the place that God had told him about, Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood. He bound his son Isaac and placed him on the altar on top of the wood. ¹⁰

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Then Abraham reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" He replied, "Here I am." ¹² Then he said, "Do not lay a hand on the boy or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your only son from me." ¹³ Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught in the thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it as a burnt offering in place of his son. ¹⁴ And Abraham named that place The Lord Will Provide, so today it is said, "It will be provided on the Lord's mountain."

MEMORY VERSE

KEYWORDS

Burnt offering (22:2)—A burnt offering was a sacrifice to God in worship that was entirely consumed on the altar. It symbolized the transfer of the worshiper's sin to the offering.

The Lord will provide (22:14)—Refers to the place where God provided a sacrifice for Abraham. The general principle/promise is the Lord will provide what His people need when they need it.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN WHEN OUR FAITH IS TESTED?

Every summer, many people travel to the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore in Michigan to hike. Every step forward up the steep dunes actually seems like a half step backward in the sand. This strenuous hike will test the limits of your physical agility and your determination to get to the top. However, it's worth every grueling step when you get to the top and look out over the great, crystal blue waters of Lake Michigan.

In much the same way, we can feel tested to our limits in many different ways: parenting a child, balancing a budget, navigating a new position at work, or reconciling tension with a friend or a spouse, just to name a few. In the past year, racial tensions have tested our country. Life will always test us; we can't escape it.

This testing in our lives also includes the testing of our faith. In order for your faith to be stretched and strengthened, God will allow it to be tested. How do you maintain trust and confidence in God when those times of testing come? How do you stay the course when

spiritual tests seem to surpass your limits? Let's learn how Abraham was able to pass his faith test.

Pop Quizzes Will Come

// Genesis 22:1-2

To be honest, God's instructions to Abraham seem incredibly outlandish—even unimaginable. God asked Abraham, who was well over 100 years old, to sacrifice the very son the Lord had promised him for twenty-five years. This was the long-awaited heir promised by God. Now, God told Abraham to sacrifice him like a lamb on an altar.

WHAT'S YOUR INITIAL REACTION TO GOD'S COMMAND HERE?

God will often put our faith to the test by making a request that might seem extreme to us. God may direct us to forgive someone who has hurt us, use a gift for His service, give sacrificially, move to a new location, or even travel to an unknown part of the world to share the gospel.



THE POINT: TRUST GOD EVEN WHEN YOUR FAITH IS TESTED.

God may ask us to do things that seem beyond our limits. It is normal to wrestle with such questions, but it is how we respond to those requests that matter.

Testing strengthens our trusting. No difficult test Gods brings our way is intended to demean us, but to produce more trust in us. In working with athletes or clients in a gym, a personal trainer increases the intensity of a workout over time. Those workouts are put in place to help the one in training achieve physical abilities they never imagined possible. They're pushed to go a little farther or faster each time. God loves us so much that He tests us to bring the best out of us. He does this so that we can reach spiritual depths only made possible through Him.

God's Word does not say God tempted Abraham. God will test us, but He will never tempt us. James pointed out, "No one undergoing a trial should say, 'I am being tempted by God,' since God is not tempted by evil, and he himself doesn't tempt anyone" (v. 13). Satan tempts us to sin in order to break us down and pull us away from God, but God tests us to build us up and pull us toward Himself. When we feel drawn to do something, we should ask: Is this a test or a temptation? Will this strengthen my faith and bring me closer to God or will it pull me away from Him? Like Abraham, the longer we walk in fellowship with God, the more we'll recognize His voice.

WHEN HAVE YOU ENDURED A TEST OF YOUR FAITH?

Follow the Instructions // Genesis 22:3-10

Regardless of any questions Abraham may have had, he still responded with prompt obedience. Even though he didn't have all the answers and didn't know how the story would end, he still proceeded. Abraham chose to trust in a perfect God who does not make mistakes.

In times of testing, it is important for us to respond promptly in faith even when we don't have all the answers. Trusting God because of what He has done in the past helps us have confidence in times of testing.

At any given point, Abraham could have quit. Whether it was while he was cutting the wood, saddling his donkey, journeying to Moriah, or building the altar, Abraham could have



DIGGING DEEPER OFFERINGS

In the Old Testament, there were five primary sacrifices. The Holman Bible Dictionary explains "the burnt, grain, peace, sin, and guilt offerings composed the basic sacrificial system of Israel. These sacrifices were commonly used in conjunction with each others and were carried out on both an individual and a corporate basis. The sacrificial system taught the necessity of dealing with sin and, at the same time, demonstrated that God had provided a way for dealing with sin." The burnt offering (*olah* in Hebrew) animal was dependent on the financial ability of the offerer. The person offering the sacrifice would first put their hand on the animal then slit its throat to signify the animal taking the person's sin. Then the entire animal was burnt on an altar before God.

Why do you think God required an offering or sacrifice to pay for sin?



stopped anytime. However, he mentally stayed the course and kept moving in his actions. I wonder how strong the voice of the enemy was on Abraham during this test. Surely Satan was hard at work planting seeds of doubt in Abraham.

WHAT HELPS YOU REMAIN OBEDIENT TO GOD DURING A TIME OF TESTING?

When we undergo seasons of testing, we must cancel out the noise of negativity. We need to recognize that we will experience real spiritual attacks along the way to tempt us into disobedience. As the apostle Paul wrote, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, . . . and spiritual forces in the heavens” (Eph. 6:12). Keep pressing forward in obedience to Christ.

Isaac must have undergone his own testing during this. Scholars vary, but they place the age of Isaac anywhere from his adolescence to a young man in his 20s. He assisted his aged father on every part of the journey. Isaac carried the firewood. Isaac even asked about the sacrificial lamb, but all he received from his father was an ambiguous answer—which turned out to be deeply insightful and trusting. Perhaps Isaac assisted his father in building the altar, but

there came a point when Isaac realized he was the sacrifice!

Isaac could have resisted. As a teen or young adult, he easily could have fought against his elderly father’s attempt to bind him. Isaac was not some small, helpless child being bound; he was a strong young man who willingly allowed his father to bind him and place him on the altar. As Isaac trusted his earthly father, he surely also trusted his heavenly Father. The sacrifice of Isaac is often cited as a picture of God’s sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ. It’s a beautiful picture of sacrificial love. But it’s not just a picture of the Father’s love for us; it is also a picture of Jesus’ love, who willingly laid down His life for us.

WHAT IMPRESSES YOU ABOUT ABRAHAM’S AND ISAAC’S RESPONSE IN THIS STORY?

God Supplies What We Need

// Genesis 22:11-14

At this point, no one can question Abraham’s faith. With his knife raised over Isaac, he was prepared to do what no parent would dream of doing. But right at the last gut-wrenching moment, God intervened! The angel of the Lord revealed that this was a test. Abraham’s fear of God was not a fear of terror, afraid of what God might do to him if he didn’t obey; rather, to fear God meant Abraham lived with a worshipful respect and love of God that played out in absolute obedience and trust.

As soon as the angel of the Lord told Abraham to stop, he surely must have dropped the knife instantly. I picture Abraham so overwhelmed with emotion that he fell to the ground in worship. This had to be a worshipful moment for Isaac as well; one that solidified his own faith in God. Both Abraham and Isaac experienced that day the truth that God will provide.

THE POINT: TRUST GOD EVEN WHEN YOUR FAITH IS TESTED.

WHAT DO YOU LEARN ABOUT GOD'S PROVISION IN THESE VERSES?

Abraham fittingly named the place "The Lord Will Provide." As we saw earlier, Abraham's test and his willingness to give up his son Isaac point to God's willingness to give His own Son for our benefit. But unlike Abraham who was stopped from carrying out the sacrifice, God the Father allowed His Son to be sacrificed. The perfect Son of God became the ultimate sacrifice to cancel our sin problem once and for all. God allowed this so that we could be brought into a relationship with Him through faith in His Son.

God will always provide. He may not always provide exactly what we want or provide on our timetable, but He will provide—and He provides what we truly need when we need it. In those moments when God doesn't provide what we think we need when we need it, trust Him. Trust that He has something even better planned down the road for us.

WHAT ARE SOME KEYS WAYS GOD IS PROVIDING FOR YOU RIGHT NOW?

DID YOU KNOW?

Louis Zamperini is a name that is probably not familiar to most of us. He was born to Italian parents in New York in 1917. As a teenager, he qualified to represent the U.S. in the 1936 Berlin Olympics as a distance runner. Zamperini set a new lap record for the 5,000 meter race, even though he finished 8th. In 1941 he enlisted into U.S. Air Force and was commissioned as a lieutenant. While flying a B-24 bomber in World War II, Zamperini crashed into the ocean where he and two other men spent 47 days adrift. After finally reaching Japanese occupied Marshall Island, Zamperini was held in captivity, severely beaten, and mistreated until the end of the war in 1945. Zamperini said he prayed while lost at sea and while he was imprisoned. But his life fell apart when he finally got home due to PTSD. He was finally able to move forward when he gave his heart to Christ at a Billy Graham Crusade. The movie *Unbroken* depicts his experiences.³

How do we know if we have passed or failed God's testing in our lives?

LIVE IT

In what ways can you strengthen your trust in God for times of testing?

It's one thing for someone to tell you, "Just trust God and have faith," but it's quite another to put that faith into action. In order for our faith to be stretched and strengthened, God will allow that faith to be tested. How do we stay the course when spiritual tests seem to surpass our limits? Like Abraham, the longer we walk in fellowship with God, the more we'll recognize His voice.

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- **Study up.** Review the Scripture passages from this session. Journal some bullet points from each passage that you can turn to and reflect on during a future test.
- **Encourage others.** Think of one or two people in your life who are going through a time of testing right now, and write them personal notes of encouragement.
- **Gather a support team.** Get together with a few Christian friends this week to talk about how you can be stronger together when times of testing come.

DAILY READINGS

1. A GREAT SACRIFICE // GENESIS 22:1-2

God asked Abraham to sacrifice his promised son, the first of his descendants who would outnumber the stars. At this point, Abraham would have been well over 100 years old. He had waited and waited for God's promise to be fulfilled ... and now, this? Sometimes, we can be plugging along doing all we know to do to live a life of faithfulness to God, and then something completely out of left field hits hard. Learning to trust in God can be difficult when life is hard. That's one of the reasons we have stories in the Word of God, like the story of Abraham, to motivate us to stay the course. God brought Abraham through; He will do the same for us.

Trust in God can provide confidence when your faith is tested.

2. GOD WILL PROVIDE // GENESIS 22:8

God will never call you to do something for which He will not provide all that you need. He will equip you and He will go with you. Your responsibility is to trust Him and remain faithful and obedient. The conversation between Abraham and Isaac is amazing. The words Abraham spoke were a statement of faith in God. He said God would provide what they needed. After many years of learning trust and faith in God through his experiences, Abraham was now ready for the test. And his words were a witness and teaching moment for his son.

Faith, trust, and obedience all work together in the life of a believer.

3. THE NATURE OF GOD // GENESIS 22:13-14

In the Old Testament, especially, we see numerous Hebrew names for God. Each name reflected something about the character and nature of God that different people experienced at different times. The Hebrew name for God in verse 14 is Yahweh Yireh which we know as Jehovah Jireh. Abraham

experienced a miraculous provision from God—the ram to be used as a sacrifice to God. In response, Abraham called the place The Lord Will Provide. God never changes, the same character trait of God that Abraham experienced is the same character trait of God today. He is your Provider. Trust Him.

Praise Jehovah Jireh today for His provision in your life.

4. CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD // JEREMIAH 17:7-8

The word “confidence” is defined as the feeling or belief you can rely on someone or something. It is a firm trust—in this case, a trust in God. The focus on these Bible study sessions has been that you can have confidence in life as a result of your trust in God. We all know that life can be super challenging, and there are so many things that can rock our personal lives. The constant source of strength through all of life's ups and downs is your trust in God and His care for you. Let that sink down deep in your heart like an anchor—trust in God—so that when you need it, you can easily activate it.

Confess your trust in God today.

5. WALKING IN CONFIDENCE // PSALM 27:1-3

As you've learned in these Bible study sessions, believers can walk in confident trust in God. Biblical characters such as Abraham, David, Paul, and others demonstrated their trust in God through their faithfulness to God. The same type of confidence they had in God is the same type of confidence you can have in God. Like this psalmist, you can confidently trust God no matter what might happen in your life. He saw God as light, salvation, and a stronghold in the face of anything that would try to harm him, including an army. Try rewriting these verses with some of the things you've experienced recently. Allow the Spirit of God to encamp around you and give you confident peace.

Walking in confidence comes from trusting God.



My Notes

Name

Email

Session Number

Answer 4 Questions

What did You learn?

What Is God saying to you?

What are you gonna do about it?

**Do you have any questions
about the reading?**





My Notes

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