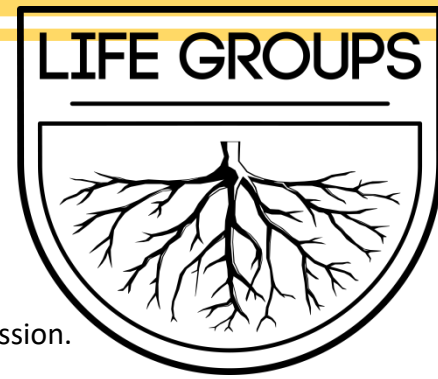


Genesis / The Lord Will Provide / Chapter 22



INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

ICE BREAKER QUESTION: What is the most difficult sacrifice or decision that you've ever had to make?

God in his infinite and mysterious wisdom sometimes leads us to do things that don't make sense to our finite minds. It is only after some time removed from the event or decision that we can see His purpose in it. God does not always act how we expect or prefer that He would. Genesis 22 is a vivid and well-known example of this.

Nevertheless, we should not avoid difficult passages such as these because God is pleased to reveal Himself and His purposes in them. In this specific passage, God's command for Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac seems not only strange but also morally atrocious. Yet, here we are given a glimpse of the gospel itself: blessing and salvation will come to the world through a son of Abraham, one who is offered up as a sacrifice.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. What insight, lesson, or observation from this weekend's message did you find to be the most helpful, eye-opening, or troubling? How was your experience with the Life Tool's this past week?**
- 2. What is most shocking to you about Genesis 22 and God's command for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac? Has God ever shocked you with one of his commands in Scripture and/or with a life situation?**
 - a. Given Abraham and Sarah's experience with barrenness and God's earlier promises to them, why would this command come as a shock?**

Throughout Abraham's life, God challenged him with many open-ended commands and promises: to go to a land that He would show him, but would not tell him where; to promise that his offspring would be as numerous as the stars in the sky, but would not tell him when. And then in our passage today, He gives another open-ended command, one that would put Abraham's trust in the Lord to the test. God wanted Abraham to trust Him unconditionally. And He wants the same from us. Kent Hughes gives a great explanation of this idea with the quotes below:

The announcement in the opening line of chapter 22 that God was testing Abraham serves to cushion the reader from the shock that follows. How painful this story would be to read for the first time without the knowledge that it was a test.¹

God was asking him to act against common sense, his natural affections, and his lifelong hope. The author does not tell us how Abraham felt. The reader will look in vain for an explicit indication of his inner thoughts. Moses leaves us to fill in the lines. The account is artfully minimalist. Also note that Abraham was told to do it with his own hands. Light had fled his life. Laughter was only a memory.²

3. Why would God wait until the last moment to intervene in order to prevent Abraham from killing Isaac?

God tests the hearts of His people not because He doesn't know the state of our being, but because we need to know. Testing helps us build greater trust in the Lord, to become people who are always in a "yes" position. God wants His people to be men and women who are always ready to surrender all to Him, even when it's hard.

God had called Abraham to sacrifice the thing he loved most: Isaac, his beloved son. The child of the promise. But Abraham had extraordinary faith in God. Kent Hughes states this idea of testing well with the quote below:

Also, the understanding that this is a test alerts us to the truth that growth in faith involves testing. As God tests our faith, it is stretched and thereby grows. Here Abraham's faith was going to be stretched to the utter limit, and because he held firm, his faith has become the grand faith-example in history. We see from this that the way to increase faith is to exercise faith. Trust God as you can, and he will give you so much more than you expected—and then you will trust him even more!³

4. What does God's providing a ram as a substitute indicate about His character and grace? Why is God within His rights and justice to require Isaac's life?

God shows us so many things about His character in this passage and the most important is that He is a God who will provide for His children as Abraham responded to Isaac. Kent Hughes provides a great explanation below:

¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 300–301.

² R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 301.

³ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 301.

We see that the God who tests is also the God who provides—the Tester is the Provider. Both truths are actual fact, but they must be appropriated by faith. When God tests you, he will provide for you.⁴

5. **In light of these New Testament passages, what does the Abraham-Isaac story tell us about the nature of the gospel and salvation?**
- a. **According to Hebrews 11:17-19, how does the Abraham-Isaac story point not only to Jesus' sacrifice but also to His resurrection?**

God wants us to be people who are always in a “yes” position—He wants us to trust Him, to lay everything down, even when it doesn't make sense. This is why Abraham's story is still told today. When we see the faith of Abraham, that he was not willing to withhold his son when God commanded, we're reminded of how God has also done the same. He has not spared His own Son for us. He gave Jesus to die for us, so we could be saved. And if God is not willing to withhold the One He loves most, there is nothing that we, as people who are loved and saved by Him, can hold back when He commands.

What amazes us is that Abraham was totally sincere and convinced that after offering Isaac as a burnt offering they would return together.

We know this because the writer of Hebrews comments, “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, ‘Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.’ He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back” (Hebrews 11:17–19). Abraham⁵

6. **When has God provided for you in a “last moment” sort of way? What did this reveal to you about your level of confidence and trust in God? How is Christ's sacrifice the ultimate display of “last moment” provision?**

Encourage the group to share if they are comfortable sharing. Also maybe allow them the opportunity to ponder those moments in their life for a bit before moving on. Kent Hughes provided a good illustration to this idea with the quotes below:

“God will provide for himself” states Abraham's absolute trust in God but also allows for God to be God. Abraham cannot tell Isaac all that he would like to know because Abraham truly does not know what God will do.⁶

John Calvin wisely observes: “This example is for our imitation.... In such straits, the only remedy ... is to leave the event to God, in order that he may open a way for us

⁴ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 304.

⁵ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 302.

⁶ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 303.

when there is none.” Calvin concludes, “We pay Him the highest honour, when, in affairs of perplexity, we nevertheless entirely acquiesce to his providence.”⁷

7. How does Abraham’s trust in God—even to the point of nearly sacrificing his son—challenge you? What sort of things might God be calling you to sacrifice in order to demonstrate your trust in Him?

Everyone’s walk is different and God will challenge each of us in a unique way to how God is testing and growing our faith. Give the group a few moments to think through what God might be challenging them to sacrifice as a test of their faith. Kent Hughes provides a good encouragement on this idea:

So when we are called to give our “Isaacs”—those things that are most precious to us—we need to understand when we do it that God is *Jehovah Jireh*—God provides.⁸

Never was there a more joyous and eager sacrifice. As the flames consumed the ram, Abraham and Isaac were offering their hearts to God. The burnt offering declared to God, “All we have and all we are, God, is upon the altar. Consume our lives to your glory.”⁹

8. After hearing this passage, tools for today, and questions, what is one next step you need to take today?

Conclusion

Just as God provided the sacrifice to take Isaac’s place, so He has provided Christ, the Lamb of God, to take our place. The death of Christ initially seemed to be an insurmountable obstacle to God’s keeping His promises. But the Lord raised Jesus from the dead, guaranteeing His final victory over all His and our enemies. At times, we may think God’s promises have a real chance of not being fulfilled. The Creator’s resurrection power shows us we should never believe that. If the Lord can defeat even death, nothing can prevent Him from keeping His covenant with us. Kent Hughes provides us a good conclusion with the quote below:

The process is this: God comes to us with his word, and we are challenged to believe. When we believe his word, he tests us by stretching our faith so it can grow to greater dimensions

⁷ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 303.

⁸ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 304.

⁹ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 304.

than before. There are always valleys next to the hilltops of faith. There are ups and downs. But God grows our faith incrementally, so that we are enabled to give our “Isaacs” to God.¹⁰

PRAYER

Pray by acknowledging God’s trustworthy character and asking for His help in trusting Him even during difficult times. Thank Him for His gracious provision of His only Son, Jesus, through whom blessing and salvation comes to the world.

Pray for the discussions during the group, the next steps, and for God to continue to work in your group’s life. Pray for the group to work through the tools for today that apply to them and for the prayer requests that are lifted up from the group.



FURTHER STUDY



Devotionals-

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/the-resurrection-of-isaac>

Articles –

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/jesus-christ-lamb-god>

Sermon-

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/series/classic-collection/the-sacrifice-of-faith>

¹⁰ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 305.