

Abraham Makes an Offering

The car keys fell out of Simone's hand for the third time. When she bent over to retrieve them, her heart and head were pounding. Finally, she got the car door open and the keys in the ignition. She revved the engine as she pulled out of the driveway.

Simone felt both suspended in time and as if she were running a four-minute mile. She left her mom at the hospital three hours ago to come home, change clothes, and refresh her overnight bag. Dr. Ackerman had just called, saying her mother had stopped breathing. Her mother had *stopped breathing!*

Dr. Ackerman said she needed to return to the hospital as quickly and safely as possible. As Simone traveled the familiar four-lane, busy road near her house, she looked over at the graveyard as if it were her first time. She heard a voice say, "Your mother is going to die."

As an only child and single woman, Simone considered her relationship with her mother to be one of the most important in her life. She had sought the Lord on how to best care for her mother. Simone had also surrounded herself with a strong Christian network. She was doing what the Lord called her to do: to come back home and take care of her.

With that in mind, she raised her chin as the tears started down her cheeks. "Lord, please heal my mother," Simone said. "But if she dies, I will continue to praise you, Father God!"

1. *When have you had to wonder what God was doing in your life?*

2. *How might the Psalms remind us that it is permissible to ask God direct questions about what He is doing?*

3. *Do you think that God might deliberately withhold details of the future from us? If so, why?*

God Requests a Sacrifice

Genesis 22:1–8 KJV

1 And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.

2 And he said, take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

3 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. 4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. 5 And Abraham said unto his young men, abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

Genesis 22:1–8 NIV

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.”

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.”

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?”

7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, my father: and he said, here am I, my son. And he said, behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

8 And Abraham said, my son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

“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.

God initiated a covenant with Abraham by promising to bless the whole world through many offspring (Gen. 12:2–3; 15:2–4; 17:1–8). Even though Abraham and Sarah were childless, God worked a miracle by giving a biological heir to them, a son named Isaac. But as soon as Abraham receives this assurance of God’s favor, God requests a sacrifice that puts everything at stake.

In verse 1, the two translations—“tempt” (KJV) and “test” (NIV)—seem very different to our ears. In this case, the trial is not a temptation to sin but a test of Abraham’s priorities and obedience. Abraham is to go to Mount Moriah to offer his son as a human sacrifice. The request sounds like it is in direct opposition to the promises God has made and the kind of character that God has shown. Human sacrifice is one of the detestable ways that other people might worship their gods (Deut. 12:31), and nothing in Abraham’s experience would prepare him for this request from Yahweh.

Whether Abraham understands he’s being tested or not, he decides to obey. He gets up the next morning and sets out with Isaac and enough wood for the offering (v. 3). When they arrive, Abraham tells his servants that he and Isaac will go ahead to worship and return (v. 5). Abraham and Isaac are both familiar with sacrificial offerings in the ancient Near Eastern context, so Isaac wonders where the

sacrifice could be, and Abraham assures him of God's provision. His devotion to God is compelling his action, even if he doesn't understand what God is doing.

4. *Why do you think God tests us?*

5. *Why might Abraham appear willing to obey God in this situation?*

6. *Do you think Abraham believed he would actually have to kill Isaac?*

God Provides a Sacrifice

Genesis 22:9–14 KJV

9 And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. 10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. 11 And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, here am I.

12 And he said, lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and

Genesis 22:9–14 NIV

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!"

"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

Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. ¹⁴ And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, in the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

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."

We have to imagine Abraham—climbing a mountain, building an altar stone by stone, hoisting wood onto it—all with the knowledge that it is meant for the sacrifice of his son. Abraham follows God's instructions, even binding Isaac and placing him on the altar (v. 9).

Abraham, who trusts God's provision, takes the knife and prepares to kill his own son (v. 10). And at the last moment, the angel of the Lord calls out to Abraham, and Abraham responds as a humble servant: "Here I am" (v. 11). God tells Abraham not to touch Isaac and affirms Abraham. His "fear" of God is evident, because he was willing to sacrifice his son. Fear in this context does not mean that Abraham was afraid (though that is certainly possible too). It means that Abraham shows devotion to God and places God's will above his own desires.

Abraham had previously believed God (Gen. 15:6), but now he has acted in faith as well. The biblical definition of faith is always a combination of belief and action—they go hand-in-hand (James 2:14–24).

Abraham finds God's provision for sacrifice, a ram that he offers to God in Isaac's place (v. 13). Abraham names the place "Yahweh will provide." This place will be a permanent reminder of God's provision (v. 14).

7. What do we learn about God's character from this situation?

8. When did you go through a time of testing? How did it affect your faith?

9. When did God provide for you?

Jeremy's Sandwich Shop

Jeremy smiled as he turned the sign from closed to open on his shop's first day. Soon customers began entering, and Jeremy got to do what he was good at: making the best hot sandwiches in town. Jeremy's shop did well for many years after that opening day. His little shop didn't make him rich, but neither did he struggle to pay the bills. He hired reliable workers and had many regular customers who grew to be his friends. His business made Jeremy feel like he had a place in the community.

Unfortunately, the economy took a downturn, and it wasn't long before his business faltered. It felt like he was being asked to give up what he loved. He adored his shop, but most of all, he cared for the employees and knew they needed jobs.

But the day came when he planned to lay off half the staff. As he invited the first person to his office to give the news, she knew what was coming and broke down in tears. At that moment, Jeremy decided he would rather lose his home than his employees. He cashed in his retirement, sold the house, and put everything into reviving the shop. Though he didn't know how he was going to make it, the economy turned a corner, and business picked up.

Just as Jeremy remained devoted to his employees, God wants us to be devoted to Him in times of uncertainty. We see this in Abraham's story. He risked what he loved, since he believed that God provides. In that moment, Abraham found that his relationship with God meant more than anything.

10. *Does uncertainty draw you closer to God, or do you feel distant in those times?*

11. *Has God ever revealed the need for you to let go of something that didn't make sense? When?*

12. *What does devotion look like, when we are asked to let go of something that is good?*

Following God in All Circumstances

We serve a heavenly Father who wants to give us good things—everything that we need for our mission in God’s kingdom (Matt. 7:11). At the same time, we face uncertainty and trouble in this world. When the trouble comes, we might let fear of losing something keep us from stepping out in faith. Try to complete each of these sentences as a reminder for yourself. How does God want you to demonstrate unshakable faith?

► *When I face uncertainty with **money**, I need to remember . . .*

► *When I am seeking **affirmation**, I need to remember . . .*

KEY VERSE

And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.

—Genesis 22:14 KJV

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.”

—Genesis 22:14 NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

Week of June 16 through June 22

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* for devotionals on these passages.)

Mon. Leviticus 19:30–37—Love the Foreigner as Yourself.

Tues. Genesis 25:19–28—The Birth of Twins.

Wed. Genesis 26:1–11—Stay in the Land.

Thurs. Philippians 4:10–19—God Will Supply Every Need.

Fri. Genesis 26:12–23—God Blesses and Provides.

Sat. Romans 15:1–13—Live in Harmony; Welcome One Another.

Sun. Genesis 26:24–33—Making Peace with Others.