

Abe and Isaac

Introduction

We just finished a series looking at the Protege Timothy. This summer, I thought it would be instructive to focus on our mentors and what they are teaching us. The writer of Hebrews said that we are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. Those who have traveled this faith path with Jesus ahead of us.

The Bible is full of writings to us from our mentors. Men like Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Daniel and David. All men of God who learned great lessons in their walk with God and have written to us in order to mentor us.

When we pick up our Bibles we are holding an ancient manuscript. Pages guarded protected and passed from one generation to another.

The Scriptures are different from every other writings because they self proclaim to be Holy...to have been written by God Himself. Men of God literally wrote what God through His Spirit instructed them to write.

Tell Wayne Cordero Story.

This is going to be a very practical series. What can we learn from those written about in Scriptures and more importantly how can we apply their lessons to our lives today We will be looking at the lives of Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Daniel and David

Abraham Background

We first learn of him....named Abram in Genesis 12.He was living in the land of Ur---MAP

Genesis 12:1-3 (ESV) — 1 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Crazy right? Imagine if you were just walking along....minding your own business....and God said....Go from here to a promised land (probably Texas) I will make you a great nation, bless you, make your name great, bless your offspring and blast anyone who dishonors you. Everyone on earth will be blessed because of you

Early God interacted with Moses but we are told that Moses walked with God when no one else did We don't see anything that tells us why God chose Abram.

Then God made an incredible promise Abram and His wife Sara would have offspring that outnumber the stars in the sky. They were almost 100 years old!

Seemed pretty impossible to them So they tried to make God's promise happen themselves Abraham took Hagar and had a son named Ishmael But God said Ishmael was not the offspring of blessing

Eventually God did the impossible....Sara had a child....they named Isaac. Isaac would be the one that would bring the blessed lineage. Abraham and Sarah loved Issac desperately. All of their hopes and dreams of the future would flow through him. God had made some great promises.....through Isaac.

Genesis 22:1–2 (ESV) — 1 After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” 2 He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

God Tested Abraham Test vs. Tempting

James 1:12–13 (ESV) — 13 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.

Tests don't produce faith- they reveal faith that is already there. God built Abraham slowly piece by piece over years- and He does the same to us.

Take your only son Isaac Odd...Abraham had another son Ismael. But Ishmael was put away from Abraham's family. As far as God was concerned, Abraham had only one son. Whom you love

This is the first time love is ever mentioned in the Bible. It is mentioned in the context of a Father's love for His son and the sacrifice of the Son.

Land of Moriah is the current location of Jerusalem Mao of Judea

God will pick the mountain.. Every detail of this encounter is very specific. Offer Him as a BURNT OFFERING! This is not to burn someone alive. They are to be sacrificed first and then burned.

Abraham had to be wondering if God was like the god of the Canaanites. These pagan gods often were said to demand human sacrifice. In fact in their faith there was nothing unusual about sacrificing humans but there was also no mention of love....

Love changes everything doesn't it?

To sacrifice something or someone that you have no love for....no attachment to...no feelings for....really isn't sacrificing anything. What makes human sacrifice so horrible is how much we love each other and value human life.

What about the promise? What about God promising Abraham that Isaac would have many offspring.

Genesis 21:12–13 (ESV) — 12 But God said to Abraham, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named. 13 And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring.”

Isaac had not yet fathered anyone. God had made a promise a covenant. It seemed as if God was asking Abraham to kill the very promise that God made to him. Burnt offering....Not only kill him but set him on fire!

Key point. Abraham had to learn the difference between trusting the promise and trusting the promiser.

Sometimes we put our trust in the promise. Then we try to make it happen ourselves. That is exactly what Abraham did the first time around. God said I would have offspring, my wife is barren and old, I will make it happen through Hagar. Yet God rejected Ishmael.

We do this too....we take a promise from God and try to make it happen. We feel like it is our responsibility to make it happen. Even if we have to disobey God to do it. But this time around....Abraham has learned. If God promises it- He will do it.

Trust the Promiser and the promise will be taken care of.

We often gloss over this.....but this should bother us a bit. God asked Abraham to sacrifice his Son! God is not supposed to do things like that. In fact, later on God would teach us

Deuteronomy 18:10–12 (ESV) — 10 There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer 11 or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, 12 for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD.

Leviticus 18:21 (ESV) — 21 You shall not give any of your children to offer them to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.

So How could a God who hates children sacrifice ask Abraham to do so?

You can say that God wasn't going to let him do it anyway....but the point is.....He asked. He shouldn't have asked....unless something deeper is going on here. Hold that thought....we will come back to it

Ok think about how crazy this is. We always look at this story from Abraham's perspective..... But what about Isaac? Can I tell you something you probably didn't know?

Isaac was likely between the ages of 17 and 26. This isn't some little child that he is going to manipulate onto an altar by playing a game. Isaac was going to have to agree to this too. He was likely big enough to fight pretty hard to stay off of the altar.

How do we know Isaac's age? The word used here in Hebrew suggests young man not yet married. He was old enough to travel three days without his mother. He was big enough to carry wood up a steep mountain.

Ishmael at age 13 was removed from the house when Isaac was weaned at around age 5. Sara was 99 when Ishmael was born. Thus Sara was 112 when Isaac was 5 and she died soon after this event at age 127. So Isaac was probably around age 20.

Many think she died because of this event. Josephus a Jewish Historian tells us in (Antiquities (History) of the Jews, Book 1, Chapter 13)

"NOW ISAAC WAS TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OLD. And as he was building the altar, he asked his father what he was about to offer, since there was no animal there for an oblation . . ."

Wait a minute.....that changes everything doesn't it?

Let me tell you a story....A 100+ year old man plans to climb a tall mountain, subdue a 20-25 year old healthy man, tie him up, sacrifice him, and then burn him. What are the chances that is going to happen? 100% if the young man is willing.

Genesis 22:3-4 (ESV) — 3 So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. 4 On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar.

No mention of a debate with God....just obedience. I am guessing that Abraham rose early because he couldn't sleep anyway. Probably a lot of praying while chopping wood.

Key Point Number 2. Abraham trusted God even when He didn't understand God.

We tend to do the opposite. Ok God explain to me how it is going to happen and then I will decide if I am going to trust you or not. This approach tries to make us equal with God.

The faith God rewards is the faith that trusts Him when we don't understand the how.

Note that Abraham had heard from God. This was a unique direction given by God one time in Human history. It is not a directive today and actually would contradict scripture today.

Because Abraham had heard directly from God, he didn't seek outside counsel or debate. He employed no stalling tactics...He just obeyed.

Third Key Point- Abraham trusted God even when He didn't feel like it. Abraham walked by faith, not by feelings.

Saddled a donkey (note the parallel with Jesus) Carried the Wood.....Just like Jesus Three day journey Note on the third day....we will come back to that To the place the Father directed Him to Go

2 Chronicles 3:1 (ESV) — 1 Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to David his father, at the place that David had appointed, on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

Genesis 22:4–6 (ESV) — 5 Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.” 6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together.

Note that Abraham says that they will both to up an worship and that they will both come back again to them. Also note that this is the first time the word "worship" is used in the bible. Worship simply means to "bow to" These men did not go up to the mountain to sing praise songs.....but they did go up the mountain to bow down to God and His desires.

We...WE will come back to you. Abraham did not know that God would stop the sacrifice of his son and provide a substitute. He didn't know the rest of the story. But here is what he knew. God had made a promise that Isaac would father a great nation.

He didn't understand what God was doing He probably didn't agree with what God was doing He probably could have come up with some better alternatives on his own. Here is what he knew.....He knew the promiser.

God promises and it happens. Angels say he will have a son as a 100 year old man and it happens. Abraham's faith was in the promiser.

Key point #4. He knew that anything was possible, but the one thing that was impossible was that God would break His promise.

God was not a Liar. Somehow Abraham knew that someday, somehow, God was going to bring both of them back from this mountain.

The Wood of the burnt offering was heavy. No child could carry it up a mountain. Isaac carried the wood for his sacrifice up the mountain. He took the fire and the knife- no bic lighters in those days. And they went together to the place of sacrifice.

This is huge. They went together. The Hebrew word here is powerfully significant. This word brings the meaning of " they went together in agreement" In fact this is so important...God repeats it again in a few verses.

Isaac was not some young child tricked into playing some kind of "lay on the wood and look at the clouds" game Too many miss the point of this story because they don't understand that Isaac,, the son....who carried his own wood...up the mountain....the same mountain that Jesus would climb with His cross. The son went willingly in obedience to the Father and by putting his faith in the promiser- God

Genesis 22:7–8 (ESV) — 7 And Isaac said to his father Abraham, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” He said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?”

Note the parallel to the first verse....Abraham? Here I am Lord Where is the lamb? Great question....where is the sacrifice?

That is the question Jews would ask for thousands of years. Where is the sacrificial lamb of God.? Who is going to take my place? Who is going to take our place? There must be a substitute right?

Years later in this same place.....John the Baptist would answer the question. Where is the lamb?

John 1:29 (ESV) — 29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

Genesis 22:8 (ESV) — 8 Abraham said, “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So they went both of them together.

Note that God will provide for HIMSELF the lamb for burnt offering.

Genesis 22:9 (ESV) — 9 When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

How old was Abraham? How old was Isaac? Isaac had to go willingly. We speak of Abraham's faith in God....but I think Isaac's faith is incredible

Note the pattern here....The son willingly laying himself on wood to be the sacrifice because He loves and honors the Father. He goes willingly in obedience. The greatest demonstration of love.

Genesis 22:10–11 (ESV) — 10 Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. 11 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”

Abraham was not playing a game here or play acting waiting for God to say stop. Abraham fully intended to kill Isaac. He had total faith that if he killed Isaac God would somehow raise him again. He had the faith to do this because he knew the Promiser.

Believers often wonder how they will know the will of God. Barnhouse says that 99% of knowing the will of God is being willing to do it before you know what it is.

God is always examining our hearts. He is more focused on our will than our deeds. Often when God finds his children being fully willing to make the sacrifice He demands, He often does not require it.

We are martyrs right now because we are willing to die for Him- even if He never demands it.

Genesis 22:12 (ESV) — 12 He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.”

God shouting here. I am not like the pagan gods. I do not want human sacrifice. You have not withheld your son...your only son....and I will not withhold mine for you.

God asked Abraham for the ultimate demonstration of his love and commitment. He asked for Abraham's son. When God wanted to show us the ultimate demonstration of His love and commitment to us, He gave us His Son.

We could requite this verse....God I know that you love me, seeing that you have not withheld your Son, your only Son, from me. John 3 16

Genesis 22:13 (ESV) — 13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.

Ram caught in the thicket.... Notice something here. God did not change his requirement. He did not waive the sacrifice. The sacrifice was still necessary. God didn't call off the sacrifice.... Instead, God required a substitute and then that substitute-the ram- was provided by God Himself.

When they killed the ram....and burned it on the altar What do you think Abraham and Isaac were thinking? As the blood....the squealing of the animal....the smell of burnt flesh filled their senses.... As they looked at the charred remains of what once was living.....do you think they had a better understanding of sacrifice

Think about Isaac....do you think He knows what substitutional death is all about. Do you think he understands what it means to have something take your place?

Think about how relieved Abraham the Father was.....Surely Isaac must have prayed....Father there must be another way. I suspect...though Scripture doesn't tell us...that Isaac had a garden moment of his own....surely God let this cup pass.

You know this story is the story of our lives...Right?

We are Isaac. We are deeply loved by the Father. We deeply love our Heavenly father. At one point in our lives we were in sin. We had chosen our way rather than God's way. God demanded that a payment be made for our sins. It is the only thing that brings justice and a right standing with God.

At the end of our lives...God is going to demand justice and a payment for what we have done.

But God loves us and knows that we can't pay the price. We have too much sin to please a God that must require justice. The only thing that brings that kind of justice is for something perfect, something beautiful, something

Genesis 22:14 (ESV) — 14 So Abraham called the name of that place, “The LORD will provide”; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.”

Notice that Abraham didn't name the place after what he had experienced. He didn't name it Mount Trial....or Mount Agony....or Mount Obedience. He named it based on what God did....Mount Provision.

And on that same mountain....generations later....the ultimate Lamb of God Jesus would make the ultimate provision for us. He would be our sacrifice so that we can live.

Mount Moriah is current day Jerusalem. The mountain is the temple mount. For generations God has always provided for His people at the Temple in Jerusalem.

Genesis 22:15–19 (ESV) — 15 And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven 16 and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore.

And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, 18 and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.” 19 So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba. And Abraham lived at Beersheba.

Note this time God swears by Himself. This is an unconditional covenant and promise by God. God essentially saying...no matter what you do....no matter what your offspring does....I am going to bless you and your descendants.

I am going to multiply them, I am going to lead them over their enemies and one day..... One of your offspring shall bless all of the nations of the world- foreshadowing Jesus. The writer of Hebrews would later confirm these things. The writer of Hebrews listed Abraham and Isaac as heroes of the faith.

Hebrews 11:17–20 (ESV) — 17 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, 18 of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.”

19 He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. 20 By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau.

So why would God ask Abraham to do something crazy like sacrifice his son?

The whole idea is crazy right? Who gives up their son.....their beloved son.....for someone else? How can you truly love someone and then offer them as a sacrifice? I mean in order to do something like that....you would have to love someone else much more....

It makes no sense to us....who allows their son to die for someone else? Who can possibly love someone else more than their own son. We don't see that kind of love here on earth.....that kind of love would have to come from a higher place than here.

Perhaps God wanted us to see how crazy his request of Abraham really was... Maybe He wanted to show us how much Abraham really trusted God. and love Him Those things are all true...

But the reason God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac was because God wanted us to see and fully understand what He was going to do for each of us.

God wanted us to see Jesus in this story....so we could understand the sacrifice that He was going to make for us. The Promise He has given us.

Both were deeply loved by their father Both offered themselves willingly Both were sacrificed on the same mountain Both carried wood up the hill of their sacrifice Both were delivered from death on the third day Both chose to lay down on the wood of sacrifice

Both allowed themselves to be bound Isaac was to be a burnt offering....with Jesus the fire would come with the Holy Spirit A Ram was Issac's Substitute...but Jesus was lamb substituted for us. In both cases the Father demanded the sacrifice, planned it, and carried it out In both cases, the idea seemed to make no sense at the time

This story.....is not about Abraham and Issac....It is about God and each of us.

So where are you today...in this story?

Maybe you are like to two men who stayed at the bottom of the mountain with the donkey You don't really understand what is going on. Maybe you don't know God at all. Maybe this doesn't make any sense to you. You aren't really emotionally connected to this yet

You are just watching what God is doing around you and trying to figure it out. You hear people talk about a relationship with God and their love for Jesus, but right now for you....you aren't there.

Can I just encourage you to keep watching. Keep inquiring. Keep pursuing. Abraham and Isaac returned from that mountain with an incredible story of what God had done

Those two men got to share that experience through the testimony of others. I want to encourage you to do the same.

Maybe you are like Isaacs Mother Sara. Someone you love is going through a very tough time. They are being led by the Father through a tough time. The road is uphill....they seem to be burdened and carry the weight of their circumstances.

They are with their Father, but what is happening makes no sense and their future...their very survival seems uncertain. The burden is not yours....but it may as well be because your love for them binds you to both the trial and the outcome.

All it seems that you can do is to trust that God will provide. That He has a plan. That you can trust the promise because you know and trust the One who promises.

Maybe you are Isaac. You have willingly promised God that you will go wherever He leads you and do what ever He asks you to do.

But now you find yourself exhausted, breathless, and climbing a mountain that seems to have no summit in sight. The burden has been placed upon your back and your future seems very uncertain.

Yes God is with you.....He is leading you....but each step seems to take you closer to your ultimate sacrifice. You like Issac, must trust that God has a plan even if you don't understand it. That God will provide all that is needed. That Jesus was your sacrifice and because of that you can trust the promise because you know the One who promises.

Can I encourage you...that you too....Like Isaac cannot be killed. God has promised us that we will live forever. That nothing can happen to us that He will not fix.

That while our physical bodies are dying...Our Spirit is eternal. Because of that we can lay our lives down knowing the promise, but more importantly knowing the One who promises.

Maybe you are like Abraham God is asking you do something that takes enormous faith. You don't really understand what He is doing, but you know if you follow His directions, He will reveal what He is doing at the right moment.

God is not asking you to sacrifice someone, but rather something Perhaps there is something in your life that you have been worshiping instead of Him...something that you love more than Him.....

Maybe it is your control issue. Perhaps it is that drink that never seems to stop. Could it be that anger issue that keeps erupting and hurting those you love. Maybe it is that woman who is not your wife or that man your husband doesn't know about. Maybe it is the guilt of something you did years ago that only you, God and a few people even know about.

It didn't seem to be such a big deal when it started, but now the road is uphill, the burden is heavy and your future is uncertain. This false god you have been worshiping....bowing down to....is eventually going to kill you.

And the Father is leading you to a place....to a place where He provides what you need....A place where you can lay that burden down on an altar and give it to God Trusting that He will provide for you.

Can I just encourage you to trust Him.? To chase Him with your heart and allow your head to understand later?

Maybe you see yourself in all of these roles.

Regardless of where you find yourself today, remember these Key Points from Abraham and Issac Learn the difference between trusting the promise and trusting the One who promises

Learn to trust God even when it doesn't make sense. Most God things don't make sense to humans. Learn to trust God when you don't feel like it. Walk in faith....not feelings Learn that the only thing that impossible for God is for Him to break His promises to us.

Can you imagine what life would be like if we lived it like Abraham and Isaac

If we really had complete faith in the One who promises?

If we understood that sometimes the journey is uphill, the burden is heavy, the circumstances make no sense, and the future is uncertain. That no matter what God asks us to do in this life, He has already secured our future in another.

What if we really lived....I mean really lived....trusting the One who made all these promises.

That our substitute has already taken our place. That Jesus was our lamb caught in the thicket That nothing happens to us that God doesn't allow for His purposes and our benefit

That we are eternal spiritual beings who can never die? That we are called to lay down our lives each day to live for Him That some are watching us from the bottom of the hill to see if we will keep climbing and keep trusting God in tough circumstances.

That those who love us are praying for us and asking God to provide whatever we need to finish the journey and bring honor to Him But that above all else....what we do pleases the Father and blesses those who follow us. Let's pray.