

God Tests Abraham

Genesis 22:1-18

As we examine this text, we take comfort in knowing that God never intended for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. The whole event was designed to test Abraham, to show how far he would go to obey God. Later, when God gave the law, it strictly prohibited child sacrifice.

Abraham's faith in God and his willingness to obey are truly amazing. Not only was he willing to sacrifice his son, but he maintained faith that somehow his son would be returned to him. He said to his servants, "We will come back to you" (Genesis 22:5). Somehow Abraham was confident that in spite of this command, God would preserve Isaac. Through Isaac, God had promised to make Abraham's descendants as numerous as the sand on the seashore!

It took Abraham and Isaac three days to travel about 50 miles over rough, mountainous terrain. During the trip Abraham had time to think. Certainly questions flooded his mind: "What if God really does let Isaac die? What will I tell Sarah? Might this God I'm serving abandon me now after all these promises?" Abraham could easily have justified disobedience in this case—after all, this was the child God had promised to him and Sarah. He might have thought the voice he had heard wasn't God's after all. But whatever thoughts went through his mind, Abraham never swerved from his steadfast obedience.

The Bible tells us nothing of Isaac's thoughts or feelings during this trip. He must have noticed that his father was behaving strangely. And perhaps Abraham's sadness gave

Isaac a hint of what was to happen. When Isaac asked about the sacrifice, Abraham's response that God would provide a sacrifice probably did little to clarify the situation to Isaac. Remember, Abraham was an old man, probably at least 113 years old. Isaac was likely a young teen and stronger than his aged father. He could certainly have outrun Abraham when he realized what was happening, and possibly he could have overpowered his father. But Isaac, too, showed faith. He submitted to being placed on the altar in obedience to God's command.

We're all relieved to hear the end of the story. Abraham's faith shone brightly, and God averted the death of Isaac. Abraham passed the test. Abraham discovered that God can be trusted even when we can't understand him.

Devotion for Leaders

The One Thing: As we steadily obey God as Abraham did, we grow in our faith and our relationship with his Son, Jesus.

Weaving Faith Into Your Life: Abraham overcame because he trusted God. He didn't know how, but he knew that God would help him fulfill this difficult obedience. Reread Genesis 22:6-8, and reflect on the difficulty of Abraham's obedience. Has God asked you for a sacrifice? Thank him for providing a way to obey.

Teaching This Bible Story to Children

You might be surprised to see that this week's session teaches children about Abraham's test of sacrificing his son. Rest assured that for this age level we have chosen to focus on Abraham's willingness to honor and obey God. Check out the session—we think you'll find God has a lot to teach children through this important Scripture!