

Study 7

THE ULTIMATE TEST OF FAITH!

Genesis 22

Bible Talk Discussion

What insights or observations from Sunday's talk did you find helpful, interesting or confusing? Note down any questions and see if you can answer them along the way.

Growth Group Discussion



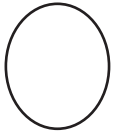
In the last study, we finally saw the birth of Isaac, the long-awaited son of Abraham and Sarah. This is clearly an important part of the threefold promises that God gave them in Genesis 12. Abraham's other son, Ishmael, has been cast out of the household by Sarah along with his mother, Hagar. All hope now rests on this miracle child, Isaac. With that in mind, we now come to the very famous story where God commands Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.

Read Genesis 22.

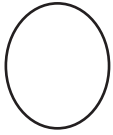
Option: To help you feel the tension in the story, allocate these roles to a different person to read: Narrator, Abraham, Isaac, God/Angel of the LORD.

This is a story that is full of tension, suspense and anxiety. You can tell by all the details and emotions added in by the author. We are right there feeling what Abraham and Isaac must be feeling.

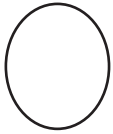
For a bit of fun, fill out these faces with what you imagine Abraham must have been feeling at each point in the story.



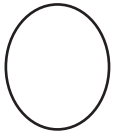
Abraham hears the command from God



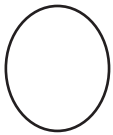
Abraham during the journey



Abraham as he lays the wood on Isaac and prepares to sacrifice him



Abraham as he is stopped by the angel of the LORD



Abraham as the ram is offered up and the promises renewed

1. Why is this the ultimate test of faith for Abraham?



Abraham and His World

Worship and Child sacrifice

This incident highlights a question of how did the patriarchs, like Abraham, worship God? From what we can gather from the passage, building altars upon which animals were sacrificed was normal. Isaac certainly seems to expect that a lamb would be placed on the altar, thus it must have been common practice. This practice of animal sacrifice is set out in more detail as the law is given to Moses in Leviticus.

But what do we make of child sacrifice? God does indeed suggest it in this passage, though He intervenes to ensure it never takes place. Many pagan idols required child sacrifice as a sign of devotion. However, it's clear from other parts of the Old Testament that God detests child sacrifice.

For example, Leviticus 20:2-5 states, *'Any Israelite or any foreigner residing in Israel who sacrifices any of his children to Molek is to be put to death. The members of the community are to stone him. I myself will set my face against him and will cut him off from his*

people; for by sacrificing his children to Molek, he has defiled my sanctuary and profaned my holy name.' There's no ambiguity there! So even though God suggests child sacrifice, this was only for the purposes of testing Abraham. Indeed, the final and ultimate sacrifice of God the Son has put an end to the need for any further sacrifice.



The author of Hebrews reflected on this story in 11:17-19.

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, ¹⁸ even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."

¹⁹ Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.

2. How does this Hebrews passage help us to understand the nature of Abraham's faith here?

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3. Why do you think God tested Abraham in this way? Nothing is explicitly mentioned but here's some theories to discuss:

- God needed to know for sure that Abraham's faith was solid
- Abraham needed to know that he trusted God beyond what he could see or reason
- Isaac needed to know what faith looks like
- As an example of faith for all generations of God's people afterward

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4. Does the idea that God would even suggest the sacrifice of a child make you uncomfortable? See the side box for more.

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At Journey's End



5. There are some clear parallels with Christ's sacrifice for us in this story. Can you think of any?

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Read Romans 5:6-11

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⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰ For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

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6. Abraham's faith is in a God who provides – even when it all appears a little too impossible. In what ways is Christ a miraculous provision for us?

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God's Worldwide Redemption Plan

7. If this incident is supposed to be one of THE defining moments of faith in Abraham's journey, how is it an inspiration for us?

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8. When do God's promises just seem plain impossible to you?

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9. Is our view of what is possible with God too small?

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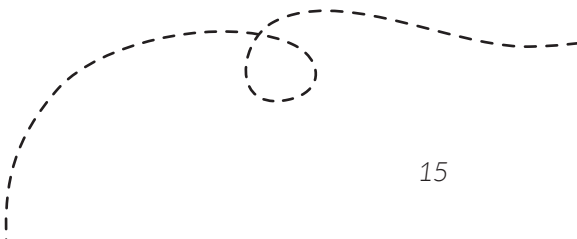
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Pray

In light of this incredible story, here's some things to pray for:

- Give thanks that Jesus is the ultimate substitutionary sacrifice for us
- Pray that we would know deeply that we trust in a God with whom nothing is impossible



Upcoming Events



Sticky Date
and Stories

Women telling their stories about life and faith

Saturday 10 June 700pm

Eatons Hill Community Hall

Soup on Sunday

Following combined service with
Eatons Hill & North Pine

June 18

Eatons Hill
Community Hall
Apex Grove, EATONS HILL

