

GOD PROVIDES **Abraham and Isaac**

Mine or His

Part 1

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"Scripture quotations taken from the Amplified Bible."

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Genesis 22:1-18

Amplified Bible (AMP)

22 After these events, God tested *and* proved Abraham and said to him, Abraham! And he said, Here I am.

2 [God] said, Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I will tell you.

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 split the wood for the burnt offering, and then began the trip to the place of which God had told him.

4 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance.

5 And Abraham said to his servants, Settle down *and* stay here with the donkey, and I and the young man will go yonder and worship and come again to you.

6 Then Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it on [the shoulders of] Isaac his son, and he took the fire (the fire pot) in his own hand, and a knife; and the two of them went on together.

7 And Isaac said to Abraham, My father! And he said, Here I am, my son. [Isaac] said, See, here are the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt sacrifice?

8 Abraham said, My son, God Himself will provide a lamb for the burnt offering. So the two went on together.

9 When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there; then he laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar on the wood.

10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand and took hold of the knife to slay his son.

11 But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, Abraham, Abraham! He answered, Here I am.

12 And He said, Do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear *and* revere God, since you have not held back from Me *or* begrudged giving Me your son, your only son.

13 Then Abraham looked up *and* glanced around, 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 for a burnt offering *and* an ascending sacrifice instead of his son!

14 So Abraham called the name of that place The Lord Will Provide. And it is said to this day, On the mount of the Lord it will be provided.

15 The Angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time

16 And said, I have sworn by Myself, says the Lord, that since you have done this and have not withheld [from Me] *or* begrudged [giving Me] your son, your only son,

17 In blessing I will bless you and in multiplying I will multiply your descendants like the stars of the heavens and like the sand on the seashore. And your Seed (Heir) will possess the gate of His enemies,

18 And in your Seed [Christ] shall all the nations of the earth be blessed *and* [by Him] bless themselves, because you have heard *and* obeyed My voice.

Hebrews 11:17-19

Amplified Bible (AMP)

17 By faith Abraham, when he was put to the test [while the testing of his faith was still in progress], had already brought Isaac for an offering; he who had gladly received *and* welcomed [God's] promises was ready to sacrifice his only son,

18 Of whom it was said, Through Isaac shall your descendants be reckoned.

19 For he reasoned that God was able to raise [him] up even from among the dead. Indeed in the sense that Isaac was figuratively dead [potentially sacrificed], he did [actually] receive him back from the dead.

Ice Breaker and Introduction of Suggested Film Clip

Imagine how surprised a 75-year-old nomadic herdsman named Abram was when the Creator God of the universe suddenly spoke seven amazing promises to him,

including this one: "I will make you into a great nation" (Genesis 12:2).

Did God speak in a whisper? Did His voice sound like thunder? The Bible doesn't tell us. But we do know that God had a miraculous plan in mind for Abram and his wife, Sarai, an elderly couple who were childless.

As years passed, Abram started worrying about not having a child of his own. "Don't be afraid," God responded.

"O Sovereign Lord," Abram replied, "what can you give me since I remain childless?" And then he added, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir" (Exodus 15:1-3).

In some ways, Abram was politely saying, "O Lord, who has supreme power and authority, when will You fulfill what You already promised my wife and me? We are older, still have no child of our own, and it looks as if a servant will inherit all my possessions."

God immediately answered. This time he stated that not only would Abram's wife bear a son, she and Abram would have so many offspring that to count them would be like counting all the stars in the sky!

God then made a special agreement, called a covenant, with Abram. Each of them agreed to keep certain promises. Abram promised to be obedient to God, and his descendants also would have to remain obedient. As more time passed, Abram and his wife began worrying again.

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, and Sarai was about ninety, God appeared to him again and promised:

- To make them the father and mother of many nations.
- To make them fruitful and be their God
- To give them a huge area of land in which to live—the region called Canaan (that later became the land of ancient Israel).
- To give them a son they were to name Isaac, with whom God would establish an everlasting covenant.

God also changed Abram's name to Abraham, which means "exalted father." And he changed Sarai's name to Sarah. (Exodus 17)

In return, God again required Abram—and his descendants—to obey fully the terms of their agreement.

The next year, Sarah gave birth to Isaac. Once again the living God had demonstrated His faithfulness. No doubt Abraham and Sarah, and their household and friends, celebrated joyously and praised God. A great future lay ahead of them.

As we'll see now in a short film clip, adapted from Genesis 22:1-18 and Hebrews 11:17-19, a few years later Abraham faced the most challenging test of his life.

God commanded him to make an unusual, costly, and—based on human standards—seemingly nonsensical and cruel sacrifice.

Why? To see if Abraham would trust God completely. To see if Abraham was willing to sacrifice everything he had—including his greatest treasures—in order to be obedient to God.

It would be a test the father and his son would never forget!

As you watch the film, think about:

- How God had miraculously given Isaac to Abraham Sarah.
- Whether or not Abraham remained passionately obedient to God.
- How God's past faithfulness concerning Isaac might have influenced Abraham's decision.

SHOW FILM

Key Message

Perhaps you are wondering, Why did God tell Abraham to sacrifice his beloved child—the one through whom all nations would be blessed? Many people have asked such questions.

Did you know that even before Abraham's time, thousands of years ago pagan people sacrificed children to obtain special favors from their gods? Abraham was probably familiar with this horrible practice.

God certainly was. He clearly stated in the Hebrew (Old Testament) Bible that such sacrifices were wrong. Any ancient Israelites—descendants of Abraham—who committed this detestable act were to be severely punished.

So why did God command Abraham to sacrifice Isaac?

It was a test—to determine whether or not Abraham would trust and obey his sovereign Lord fully and, in faith, make everything he had—including his beloved son—available for God’s use.

Obedience to God demonstrates our love for Him and is the key to receiving His blessings.

Abraham was not perfect, but he passionately trusted and obeyed God.

God loved Abraham, shared a dynamic relationship with him, and greatly blessed him, his family—and eventually the world.

The theme of obeying God—and how important such obedience is to our relationship with Him—flows powerfully throughout the entire Bible. For example:

- Just after creation, God told Adam to obey Him by not eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And Adam and Eve disobeyed!
- As the Old Testament records, God evaluated the ancient kings of Israel by how completely they obeyed His commands.

Today, each of us—like Abraham—is challenged to obey God—and that includes having faith that He will keep his promises and carry out His perfect will for our lives.

God tells every follower of Jesus to be passionately committed to obeying Him.

1 John 2:6

Amplified Bible (AMP)

6 Whoever says he abides in Him ought [as a personal debt] to walk *and* conduct himself in the same way in which He walked *and* conducted Himself.

Jesus always obeyed the Scriptures. His obedience to His Father took Him to the cross for the sins of humankind.

As it was during Abraham's day, our obedience demonstrates our love for God. So it's important for us to learn what He tells us to do—and what to avoid. How much do you love God—as demonstrated by your commitment to obey Him in all areas of your life?

To obey God passionately often involves *sacrifice*, making everything we have—including people and things we love—*available for God's use*.

That final scene in the film clip was really powerful, wasn't it?

It's hard to imagine how difficult it was for Abraham as he pondered God's costly command.

This test was important. Abraham needed to determine in his heart and mind whether or not he would be completely committed—completely sold out—to obeying (loving) God.

Yes, we know how everything worked out, that God stopped Abraham from sacrificing Isaac.

But why was Abraham willing to sacrifice Isaac?

Something Abraham said to the servant before he and Isaac left to make the sacrifice gives us a clue. He said that both he and Isaac would return after the sacrifice! Abraham had great faith in his God:

- The God who had guided him to a new land
 - The God who had miraculously given Isaac to him and Sarah
 - The God who had promised to bless him and generations of his family . . . through Isaac
- Abraham knew that God would not break His promises and let Isaac remain dead after the sacrifice.

Do you—and I—have that much faith in God? That day God demonstrated to Abraham and Isaac—and readers of Scripture ever since— that He was not like any pagan god that would have permitted Isaac to die a horrible death.

God did not allow His loving character to be compromised by such an evil action.

The God who commanded Abraham to sacrifice one of his most treasured possessions— Isaac—is the God of compassion, love, mercy

Will we listen to God’s voice—through prayer, the Bible, the wisdom of other people? And willingly obey Him no matter what sacrifices He tells us to make?

God is faithful and always keeps His promises. When our obedience requires us to make sacrifices, and we make them, we will experience His peace and contentment. Most importantly, we will grow closer to the infinite yet personal God who loves us more than we can know and desires our love (obedience) in return.

Matthew 5:11-12

Amplified Bible (AMP)

11 Blessed (happy, to be envied, and spiritually prosperous—with life-joy and satisfaction in God’s favor and salvation, regardless of your outward conditions) are you when people revile you and persecute you and say all kinds of evil things against you falsely on My account.

12 Be glad *and* supremely joyful, for your reward in heaven is great (strong and intense), for in this same way people persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 16:24-27

Amplified Bible (AMP)

24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone desires to be My disciple, let him deny himself [disregard, lose sight of, and forget himself and his own interests] and take up his cross and follow Me [**a**]cleave steadfastly to Me, conform wholly to My example in living and, if need be, in dying, also].

25 For whoever is bent on saving his [temporal] life [his comfort and security here] shall lose it [eternal life]; and whoever loses his life [his comfort and security here] for My sake shall find it [life everlasting].

26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life [his blessed **b**]life in the kingdom of God]? Or what would a man give as an exchange for his [blessed] [**c**]life [in the kingdom of God]?

27 For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory (majesty, splendor) of His Father with His angels, and then He will render account *and* reward every man in accordance with what he has done.

2 Corinthians 8:8-9

Amplified Bible (AMP)

8 I give this not as an order [to dictate to you], but to prove, by [pointing out] the zeal of others, the sincerity of your [own] love also.

9 For you are becoming progressively acquainted with *and* recognizing more strongly *and* clearly the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (His kindness, His gracious generosity, His undeserved favor and spiritual blessing), [in] that though He was [so very] rich, yet for your sakes He became [so very] poor, in order that by His poverty you might become enriched (abundantly supplied).

When we sacrificially offer our *lives* to God's service, it is an act of *worship* to Him.

Abraham had a long history of walking with God. Never once did he experience anything other than God's complete faithfulness. Each time he obeyed, and each time God provided, Abraham learned that God is fully trustworthy.

We are all on a spiritual journey with God. Although we sometimes become discouraged with our individual progress, it's helpful to remember that the development of faith is a life-long process.

The apostle Paul realized this principle that Abraham had learned so well: God is worthy to receive not only our possessions and what we hold most dear—He's worthy to receive our very lives.

Romans 12:1

Amplified Bible (AMP)

12 I appeal to you therefore, brethren, *and* beg of you in view of [all] the mercies of God, to make a decisive

dedication of your bodies [presenting all your members and faculties] as a living sacrifice, holy (devoted, consecrated) and well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable (rational, intelligent) service *and* spiritual worship.

Pastoral Challenge

In which areas might God be testing your willingness to obey Him fully and trust Him with your life and all that you have?

What is the relationship between obeying God and receiving His blessings? In what way(s) might you obey God more completely from now on, as an "act of worship"?

Wrap Up and Close

Man on the train in South Africa