

STUDY GUIDE

CHURCH NAME
THE COMEBACK
ABRAHAM, PART 2
GENESIS 22:1-19
02/04/2018



NEW VISION

MAIN POINT

Just as God provided the sacrifice to take Isaac's place, so He has provided Christ, the Lamb of God, to take our place.

INTRODUCE

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is the most difficult sacrifice or decision that you've ever had to make?

How did this decision test your faith? How did your faith inform your decision at the time?

How did the results of that decision confirm and/or challenge your faith?

God in his infinite and mysterious wisdom sometimes leads us to do things that don't make sense to our finite minds. It is only after some time removed from the event or decision that we can see His purpose in it. God does not always act how we expect or prefer that He would. Genesis 22 is a vivid and well-known example of this. Nevertheless, we should not avoid difficult passages such as these because God is pleased to reveal Himself and His purposes in them. In this specific passage, God's command for Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac seems not only strange but also morally atrocious. Yet, here we are given a glimpse of the gospel itself: blessing and salvation will come to the world through a son of Abraham, one who is offered up as a sacrifice.

READ AND REFLECT

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GENESIS 22:1-10.

Why do you think people struggle with passages like these in the Bible? How can we keep ourselves from feeling embarrassed or ashamed about parts of the Bible that are not pleasant or endearing to our culture?

What is most shocking to you about Genesis 22 and God's command for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac? Has God ever shocked you with one of his commands in Scripture and/or with a life situation?

Given Abraham and Sarah's experience with barrenness and God's earlier promises to them, why would this

command come as a shock?

Which details in verses 1-10 indicate that Abraham was obedient to God's command?

How do verses 5 and 8 indicate that Abraham believed that Isaac would somehow survive the burnt offering?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GENESIS 22:11-19.

Why would God wait until the last moment to intervene in order to prevent Abraham from killing Isaac?

What does God's providing a ram as a substitute indicate about His character and grace? Why is God within His rights and justice to require Isaac's life?

What does God's statement to Abraham in verses 16-18 say about His role in bringing about God's earlier promises to him and for the world (e.g., Gen 12:1-3)?

HAVE VOLUNTEERS READ HEBREWS 11:8-12,17-19; ROMANS 4:16-25; JAMES 2:20-24.

In light of these New Testament passages, what does the Abraham-Isaac story tell us about the nature of the gospel and salvation?

According to Hebrews 11:17-19, how does the Abraham-Isaac story point not only to Jesus' sacrifice but also to His resurrection?

APPLY

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

When has God provided for you in a "last moment" sort of way? What did this reveal to you about your level of confidence and trust in God? How is Christ's sacrifice the ultimate display of "last moment" provision?

What can we glean from this passage about how we should approach difficult texts in the Bible? Why must we keep the "big picture" in view when looking at difficult texts (or any individual text)?

How does Abraham's trust in God—even to the point of nearly sacrificing his son—challenge you? What sort of things might God be calling you to sacrifice in order to demonstrate your trust in Him?

PRAY

Pray by acknowledging God's trustworthy character and asking for His help in trusting Him even during difficult times. Thank Him for His gracious provision of His only Son, Jesus, through whom blessing and salvation comes to the world.

COMMENTARY

GENESIS 22:1-18

22:1-2. Abraham's ultimate test of obedience to God is described in 22:1-19. God used this event to affirm the sterling character of Abraham's faith by giving him the incredibly difficult task of sacrificing his son Isaac. Pagans in Canaan during the OT period regularly practiced child sacrifice by making them pass through the fire (2Ki 16:3) to give them as food to their gods (Ezek 23:37). With this command God was asking Abraham to demonstrate that he was as committed to the Lord God as pagans were to their gods.

22:3-4. Confirmation of Abraham's amazing trust in God is found first in the fact that he was up before sunrise (early in the morning) the next day to begin the journey. His diligence in going to the place God had told him about contrasts sharply with Jonah's actions (Jnh 1:3). Traveling from Beer-sheba, it was not until the third day that Abraham reached the Jerusalem area.

22:5-8. Evidence that Abraham believed God could raise Isaac from the dead (Heb 11:17-18) is found in his comment, we'll come back. Abraham carried the most dangerous elements of the sacrifice—the fire and the sacrificial knife—himself, perhaps as a sign of his protective love for Isaac. Ignorant of God's command and surprised that his father would forget the most important element in an animal sacrifice, Isaac asked Abraham where the lamb was. Abraham's faith-filled response was that God Himself would provide the lamb ("sheep").

22:9-14. Abraham followed the standard procedure for a burnt offering involving a living being. In describing his preparation, the Bible emphasizes only Abraham's systematic acts of obedience, omitting any mention of Abraham's or Isaac's feelings. Just before the knife was put to Isaac's neck, the Angel of the Lord spared him. The patriarch had passed the test, providing experiential evidence that he feared God more than he loved his only son. Exactly as Abraham had predicted (v. 8), God had miraculously provided a sheep—and the most prized variety, a ram. To memorialize the event Abraham named that place The Lord Will Provide.

22:15-18. As the Angel of the Lord who had the Lord's authority, the divine emissary delivered a second message (v. 12), this one in the first person. Because Abraham had passed the "priorities test" by obeying God and not withholding his only son, the Lord would indeed bless him with offspring, victory, land, and goodwill.

ROMANS 4:16-25

4:16-17. God's promise is by faith, so that it may be guaranteed to both Jews and Gentiles who believe. If it were by law, no such guarantee would be possible. To make it certain, therefore, the promise was according to grace. Abraham was also promised to be the father of many nations. Abraham believed in the God who created everything from nothing and gives life to the dead.

4:18. It seemed humanly impossible for Abraham to become the father of many nations when he was old, but he placed his hope in God's promise.

4:19-20. Abraham had a realistic evaluation of his prospects for fatherhood. He was about 100 years old, and Sarah was childless and long past child-bearing years. Yet Abraham did not doubt God's promise, and God strengthened his faith.

4:23-24. Everything in Scripture is for our benefit. The experiences of Abraham are as relevant to us as they were to him, for we serve the same Creator God who can do the humanly impossible. We are credited as righteous before God in the same manner as Abraham: by faith.

4:25. Jesus was delivered up for our trespasses as promised in Isa 52:13-53:12. Who delivered up Jesus? Was it Judas? Pilate? The Jewish Sanhedrin? Satan? Certainly all these were causal agents in the crucifixion of Christ, but ultimately it was the sovereign God who brought it to pass in order to fulfill His plan of redemption (Ac 4:27-28). The Father delivered Jesus up for our trespasses, and raised Him so that His righteous Servant would justify many people (Isa 53:11).

JAMES 2:20-24

2:20. Verse 20 calls on the objector to recognize that the conclusions of verses 18–19 are correct while also introducing verses 21–26. James appeals to us to become learners. We can rephrase the question as: "Are you willing to be taught that a barren faith is worthless?"

Foolish also appears in Mark 12:3, translated "empty-handed." The objector was spiritually foolish or willfully ignorant. The last word of the verse is different in important Greek manuscripts. King James follows the reading of many manuscripts in translating: "dead." Most modern versions follow Greek manuscripts with a word which means useless or "barren." The

same Greek word in 2 Peter 1:8 is translated “ineffective.”

Have you ever dealt with professing Christians who felt they could keep their faith to themselves and did not need to demonstrate their faith? We must lead these people to see that true faith shows itself in visible deeds, not merely by agreeing with a creed. Examples of Faith That Works (vv. 21–26)

James selected Abraham and Rahab as examples of people who showed genuine faith by their deeds. Their examples stand in complete contrast. Abraham was the ancestor of both Jews and Gentiles. He provided a sterling example of faith (Heb. 11:8–12). Rahab was a Gentile and a prostitute (Josh. 2:1–24), but Matthew listed her in the genealogy of Christ (Matt. 1:5). Although they came from different backgrounds, both showed the reality of their faith.

2:21–23. Verse 21 picks up the Old Testament incident in which Abraham showed his willingness to offer Isaac as a sacrifice (Gen. 22:1–18). Verse 23 refers to the incident in which “Abraham believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness” (Gen. 15:6), which took place at least thirty years before that of Genesis 22.

Verse 21 concludes that Abraham showed his righteousness by his willingness to offer Isaac on the altar. kjv translates “justified” instead of niv’s considered righteous. Paul uses the same Greek word in Romans 3:28; 4:2, 5; and 5:1 (“justified”) to describe the righteousness God credits to a believer through faith in Jesus Christ. James uses the word to describe the righteousness we show to others as we obey Jesus. The saving faith of Abraham showed itself by his total obedience to God in the matter of offering up Isaac. The faith James commended moves the heart and controls the life. Again, James was demanding that true faith must be alive and vital.

Verse 22 states two facts about Abraham’s faith. First, his faith and his actions were working together. Abraham’s faith prompted his obedience. It prodded him on to do good works. Second, his faith was made complete by what he did. His obedience demonstrated the integrity of his faith. This is not to say that previously Abraham had a weak faith. His willingness to sacrifice Isaac vividly demonstrated the existence of true faith.

Verse 23 summarizes the entire process. Abraham’s willingness to offer Isaac fulfilled the promise of Genesis 15:6. Abraham’s obedience showed he was a righteous man. God declared Abraham righteous as a matter of grace. Abraham showed the reality of this righteousness by his actions in Genesis 22. As a result of this obedience, God drew Abraham into a closer fellowship with him and called him God’s friend. Note that Abraham did not merely determine that God would be his friend. God initiated the action. God reached out to him and gave him the privilege of intimacy and closeness.

2:24. Verse 24 presents the conclusions about Abraham. Abraham had shown the reality of his faith by his willingness to offer Isaac in obedience to God’s command. We are made right in God’s sight through a faith which produces works. This does not claim that God justifies his people by our deeds. The Bible insists that saving faith must show itself by visible commitment to the Lord and compassion for others. Faith alone will bring salvation to anyone, but saving faith does not come alone. It is accompanied by works which show the genuineness of faith.