

A SUBSTITUTE

GENESIS 22:1-14

(Prepared by Gene Thompson using LifeWay's ETB material.)

When I was in school there was one phrase that struck fear in my heart: "Put your books away and take out a sheet of paper and a pen." I knew we were about to have a "pop quiz".

Why did a "pop quiz" strike fear in my heart? (I wasn't prepared! Some of my friends had no fear at all—they were ready for whatever the teacher had for us.)

God presented Abraham with an unexpected test in today's text. Abraham's test was so radical it demanded a complete and utter dependence on the Lord. How he would respond is a true indication of how much he had grown in his faith in the last 35 or so years. When God allows our faith to be tested, He has our spiritual growth and wellbeing in mind. Are we prepared to pass the test, or do we tremble in fear when God presents us with an unexpected test?

God already knew what the outcome of the test would be, but Abraham didn't know. The question Abraham would really have to answer was: Do you love the gift more than the Giver?

THE COMMAND! Read Genesis 22:1-3

"After these things..." refers to the events in Genesis 20 and 21; Sarah's rescue from Abimelech; the birth of Isaac; Hagar and Ishmael sent away and Abraham's covenant with Abimelech.

1. When God called Abraham how did he respond? ("Here I am.")
We find this response to God's call several times in Scripture: Abraham; Jacob; Moses; Samuel; Isaiah; and Ananias.
2. Why did God ask Abraham to slay his son? ("Why? Why would a good and loving God ask an obedient and faithful man to do this? The answer can be found in the original language of Moses, the inspired, human author of Genesis. The Hebrew word *nasah*, translated "Tested" in Gen. 22:1, has the idea of proving the quality of something, usually by putting it through a trial of some kind. God wanted to prove the validity—the authenticity—of Abraham's faith."—Josh Hunt.)
3. If God already knew how much Abraham loved Him who would learn the strength of Abraham's faith? (Abraham. See Hebrews 11:17-19.)
4. How quickly did Abraham react to what God commanded him to do? ("Early the next morning...")
5. What is delayed obedience? (Disobedience!)
Notice God said "your only son Isaac..." Ishmael had already been sent off. So there would be no backup plan if Isaac was killed!
6. What preparations did Abraham make? (Just in case there was no wood where he was going, he took the wood for the burnt offering with him. There would be no excuses.)
7. What is a habit or activity you would struggle to give up? (Modern conveniences, like cell phone; vehicle; comfortable home; etc.)
8. What would make that sacrifice so difficult for you? (I've become so use to having them.)
9. Why does God ask us to do difficult things? (So we will depend on Him more.)

THE CLIMB! Read Genesis 22:4-8

1. When we think about the third day in Scripture what normally comes to mind? (Jesus' resurrection. The "third day" is often associated with significant events. The phrase appears no less than forty-one times in the Bible.)
2. What did Abraham say to his servants in verse 5 and what does this reveal about his faith? (He believed that somehow, they would both return.)

Isaac had witnessed enough sacrifices to know how they were carried out. He noticed they had everything needed to make the sacrifice except one thing. So, his question to his father was a reasonable question—where is the lamb?

3. What did Abraham's answer reveal about his faith? (He thoroughly trusted God at every step of the way!)

What God wanted from Abraham was for Abraham to sacrifice his own will, to surrender his will to God by giving up his dearest possession.

4. When have you placed something completely in God's hands and how did that feel? (Most of the time that happens when I have exhausted all my resources and have nowhere else to turn.)

Isaac carrying the wood brings to mind John's description of Jesus carrying His own cross to Golgotha (John 19:17).

When Abraham and Isaac arrived at the place God indicated, it was time for the final preparations.

THE TEST! Read Genesis 22:9-12

1. What kind of faith did Isaac have in Abraham? (We don't know exactly how old Isaac was but probably in his early teens and Abraham around 115. There is no recorded resistance on Isaac's part.)
2. Didn't God already know how strong Abraham's faith was? (Yes! The test was not for God's affirmation of Abraham's faith, but for Abraham's affirmation of his faith, and as a testimony to Isaac and all future generations, including us, that God can be trusted, and our faith demands an obedient response to Him.)
3. What does it mean to fear God? (To fear God means to revere him as sovereign, trust Him implicitly, and obey Him without question or protest.)

On Moriah, Abraham and Isaac built an altar. Then, Abraham "bound" Isaac and placed him on the wood as a sacrifice. Scripture suggests that Isaac voluntarily submitted to his father.

4. What do you think may have been going through Abraham's mind as he held the knife ready to slay his son?

As Abraham held the knife to complete the sacrifice, the "angel of the LORD" stopped him. Abraham's obedience demonstrated his absolute loyalty to God.

It's important to be listening for God to speak to you and for you to respond immediately.

Having proven his faithfulness and loyalty, Abraham received Isaac back without harm. But God still had more. As Abraham acted in faith, God provided for their worship experience.

THE SUBSTITUTE! Read Genesis 22:13-14

1. How does the ram point to the mission of God? (Jesus is our substitute just as this ram was Isaac's substitute.)
2. In what common situations might we use a substitute to fill in for someone else? (Teacher; preacher; etc.)

Isaac is viewed as a foreshadowing of the Messiah. Like Abraham, God offered His only Son, whom He loved, to die as an innocent sacrifice. Yet, unlike in Isaac's case, there was no ram to take Jesus' place. Jesus died in our place. He paid the wages of our sins. Jesus provided Substitutionary atonement for all

who will believe in Him. He died so that we might live. The Lord did not want Isaac to die; human sacrifice was never on God's agenda. God doesn't want us to die either.

3. What did Abraham name the place where the altar was built and used to worship God? (The Lord will Provide. This is the same location Solomon built the Temple.)

These events occurred almost two thousand years before Jesus was born. God was working from the beginning of time to provide a substitute sacrifice for our sin. All we have to do is accept His offer! Give thanks to God for providing a substitute who took your place on the cross so you could spend eternity with Him!

CHALLENGE!

1. What makes trusting God for our needs so difficult?
2. How can we help share Jesus' Substitutionary death with others? (We can pray for people we know who have not yet trusted Him. Witness to them. Invite them to church and Bible study.)

Just as Abraham's faith was tested, so our faith is tested today. God's provision of Jesus as our substitute and the Holy Spirit as our advocate leads to confidence that God has a plan for us.