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A publication of **THE DISCIPLE**, the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

Note: For each of the following questions, refer to the **Sermon Summary** inside.

Observation—*What do I see?*

- What key events from Abraham's life are highlighted as tests of faith?
- What command does God give Abraham in Genesis 22:2? How does Abraham respond?
What three aspects of Abraham did God test?
- What statement shows Abraham's expectation of God's provision?
How did God ultimately provide?

Interpretation—*What does it mean?*

- Why did God test Abraham and what is the significance of immediate obedience?
- How did Abraham resolve the apparent contradiction between God's promise and command?
- What does this passage teach about worship?

Application—*What do I do with this?*

- Who's your daddy? (See Galatians 3:6–7.)
- How do you typically respond when God's will is clear but difficult?
How about when His ways seem illogical or unclear?
- What might be an "Isaac" in your life? What would "costly worship to God" look like to you?
- How can you grow in knowing God so that you recognize His will more clearly?
- How should remembering God's past provision affect your current fears?

Sermon Summary Key Texts: Hebrews 11:8-10 & 17-19 and Genesis 22

Abraham was a source of great pride to the Jewish peoples. Some consider him to be more central to Jewish thought than even Moses. Three times in Scripture Abraham is referred to as the friend of God (2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23). Abraham didn't lead a perfect life, but he learned to trust God to fulfill the many promises made to him. Abraham's life was a laboratory of faith as God put him through several faith-stretching tests. God often seeks to strip away our self-sufficiency and place us in situations where we have no choice but to trust Him. Today's focus is on the supreme test Abraham was put through by God (Genesis 22). This story depicts one of the greatest examples of faith found in the entire Bible. Not only is it a faith-building event, but what Abraham goes through becomes a pattern for something that would happen on the same mountain many centuries later, when another sacrifice would be offered by a Father of His only Son—the Lord Jesus!

What was the purpose of God testing Abraham? We know that sometimes Satan will lay a trap for us, will test us, in hopes of bringing out the very worst in us. But that is the opposite of God's purposes for testing. God wants to bring out the faith in us; He wants to show us how strong we can be when we rely upon Him. The test God arranged for Abraham tested his entire being: his will, his intellect, and his emotions. Abraham's will was tested as he was to take his only son Isaac, whom he loved, and offer him as a sacrifice to God (Genesis 22:2-3). Abraham set out first thing in the morning to accomplish that which God had instructed him to do. Sometimes God asks us to say "Yes," even when we don't fully understand the thing he is asking us to do (Psalm 119:60).

God also tested Abraham's intellect. What God asked Abraham to do probably appeared totally illogical. After all, Abraham had been told that he would be the father of a great number of descendants (Genesis 12:2). Abraham didn't try to logically reconcile God's promise that through Isaac would come many descendants, with God's command to sacrifice him. The only conclusion he could come to was that somehow both things reflected God's will. Therefore, he concluded that God must be planning on raising Isaac from the dead, even though at this time, as far as we know, there had been no resurrections. Abraham had no historical precedent to rely on, only his faith in God.

Obviously this was an emotional test as well. In considering the heart wrenching command God gave Abraham, we must remember that God wasn't after Isaac. God was after Abraham because He wanted him to learn to live by faith. God wanted all of Abraham—his heart, soul, mind, and strength. God is not above coming and touching the place in our lives where our deepest emotional commitment lies in order to help us see that for us, this good thing has become an ultimate thing. It has become an idol—assuming the place that only God is worthy of. God wants all of us—He wants us to love Him with a full heart.

The Trial of Abraham's faith began with the length of his trial. Sometimes it is not the test itself that is such a trial - it is the waiting, the anticipation of the test. We must also consider the loneliness of Abraham's trial. Many times, in the midst of a trial, there is no one to unburden your heart to—no one who would truly understand what you are going through. That was undoubtedly Abraham's experience. There is also the loftiness of Abraham's trial. The depth of this test with respect to its implications for the spiritual life is profound. As Abraham approached the top of the mountain, he approached God to worship with a sacrifice that meant more to him than anything in the world. That is the exact picture we need to have in mind when we worship God. By faith, we must offer God the best we have to offer. The lesson of this trial is found in God's provision. God will never allow us to go through a test without providing what we need to complete it in a God honoring way.

The triumph of Abraham's faith is demonstrated in how his faith overcame his fears (Gen. 22:6-10). God often doesn't intervene until His intervention is absolutely necessary (Genesis 22:11-14). At just the right time, God intervened with a solution. God was the solution. In times of testing, our tendency is to look for other solutions instead of looking for God.

The testimony of Abraham's faith is found in how he proved God's faithfulness. In obedience, Abraham was prepared to take his own son's life when God stepped in and provided. If God provided for Abraham in the midst of his test, surely we can trust Him to provide for us! There are two things to be verified in every test: the faithfulness of God, and the faith in our own hearts. God spared Abraham's son, but He didn't spare His own son (Romans 8:32). That demonstration of His faithfulness should increase our faith beyond measure, no matter what tests God may send our way.

1. If you have not settled the issue of who is Lord in your life, you must do that (Romans 12:1-2).
2. Rest in God's good character; don't live in fear.
3. Spend time with God daily, getting to know him.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

Monday— Testing Is Lovingly Designed by God. How do the following texts reveal that trials are not random, but are personally measured by God for our growth? How can these insights help us replace “Why is this happening to me?!” with “What is God producing in me through this?”

- James 1:2–4 _____
- 1 Peter 1:6–7 _____

Tuesday— Testing Reveals the True Condition of One’s Heart. From the following texts, how can trials function like a spiritual “X-ray”, exposing what we truly trust, love, and fear? When we complain, what might it reveal? When we’re anxious, what might it reveal? What does anger reveal? Don’t waste trials—let them teach you what’s down deep in your heart!

- Deuteronomy 8:2–3 _____
- James 1:2–3 _____

Wednesday— Testing Aims at Our Eternal Good: Spiritual Maturity, Rather than Immediate Relief. How do the following verse reveal that God’s main goal is to produce endurance, character, and hope? How do they define “endurance”, and what is its value? What is “maturity” and why is it critical? Why does growth require remaining in the trial, rather than escaping from it.

- James 1:4 _____
- Romans 5:3–5 _____

Thursday— Testing Exposes “Idols in our Hearts”. Trials often threaten what we subtly trust instead of God—things like comfort, control, approval, health and financial security. What do the following verses teach us about our hearts? When our idols are threatened, our reactions reveal what has truly been ruling our hearts. Do you welcome trials as opportunities for repentance and for reordering what you love?

- Ezekiel 14:3 _____
- Psalm 66:10–12 _____

Friday— Testing Drives Us Toward Dependence on God’s Grace. How does God use weakness and pressure to move us away from self-reliance? Are you learning what Paul learned? How do trials push us to prayer, Scripture, and community? Is your goal in life greater godliness or mere self-improvement?

- 2 Corinthians 12:7–10 _____
- Hebrews 4:15–16 _____

Saturday— The Purpose of Testing is Future-Oriented. How do trials prepare believers for future glory and increase eternal reward? Compared to eternal glory, how do present sufferings compare? When our faith is refined, what will result? How does a biblical perspective on testing lift one’s eyes beyond the present moment to eternal perspective?

- 1 Peter 1:6–7 _____
- 2 Corinthians 4:16–18 _____