

September 26, 2012

Abraham & Isaac

Genesis 18:1-15; Genesis 21:1-3; Genesis 22:1-19

LESSON FOCUS*"God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and discipline."* (2 Timothy 1:7)

The point of reviewing God's ways with Abraham is to reveal how God operates. This is not a story of two old people who had a baby and the old man almost killed him, but a revelation of the original pattern of salvation: People are saved by God, into Whose hands they entrust their lives, their futures, and their eternal souls. Abraham and Isaac are original patterns of the way *God thinks about humans and how He operates with us, which is the prime purpose of religion, after all.* (How we think and operate with God is secondary.) Thus Abraham's biography contains milestones in God's routing to outmaneuver the enemy Satan.

After a lot of ups and downs (chs. 14-20) in Abram's life, the great event arrived. By now Ishmael was fourteen, but he was NOT the "one and only" special child the Lord had promised.
vs.1-3

It took special miracles to procreate this baby; for Sarai had never become pregnant during her fertile years and was now in menopause. Miraculously, the LORD saw to it that Sarai and Abram could engender a baby. After a normal pregnancy she gave birth, exactly as the LORD had promised them in 17:16-19, the "one-and-only" son to bear the covenant-promise: *But My covenant I will establish with Isaac* (not with Ishmael), born to Sarah (not to Hagar).

The sacrifice of Isaac, Ch. 22: 1-19

Secure against Ishmael's threat, Isaac grew into adulthood sheltered in the love of his parents.
v.1

We deduce that the LORD was not toying with Abraham, but that this test was necessary for Abraham's soul-care. The father's love for his one and only son needed adjusting lest it displace his love and respect for the LORD.

vs.2-5

There can be no doubt as to God's intent, for He spelled it out in detail. Thus Abraham was not in trouble with God (5th and 8th commandments) in telling his servants that the lad would return, for he was fully convinced that after he killed Isaac, God would raise him back to life (Heb.11:17-19).

vs.6-8

Although Isaac was perplexed, Abraham's loving response helped him maintain the highest trust.
vs.9-12

Step by step, Abraham moved forward with faith in the LORD; Isaac submitted out of confidence in his father. It was no game-playing for Abraham to build the altar, bind Isaac upon it, and raise the knife for a fatal stab. The LORD has seen into his heart: *Now I know* speaks of knowledge based on the evidence, just as His final judgment will be based on evidence of actions. (Deeds are the product of motives, which are engineered in the power plant-heart; and the engineer for spiritual activity is the LORD.) Jehovah had won over Abraham's heart to love and revere Him above and beyond even his dearly beloved one and only son.

vs.13-14

The substituted animal, providentially provided, was returned to the LORD as a thank-offering for all His goodness. (Jesus had no such substitute, for the stakes were too high to allow it.) By time Moses wrote this account, it had become a proverbial saying full of Messianic meaning: "In the hill of Jehovah provision is made."

v.15

The Angel of the LORD, identifying Himself as God (both here and in vv.11-12), took an oath on Himself. This level of assurance occurs only twice elsewhere in Scripture! He reaffirmed the blessings of ch.12, reaching the zenith in "*all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in your seed,*" the seed identified as Jesus in Galatians 3:16.

v.16

As this chapter in his life closes, Abraham is at home in Beersheba, chastened and strengthened by the experience on Moriah, the child of God who has become the hero of faith, the exemplar for every generation of God's sons and daughters.

Abraham's Faith

This is not the story of an old man who almost murdered his boy, nor is it a Jewish legend of a blood-thirsty God who enjoyed torturing people. Rather, we see here that our LORD was following a faith-building program to strengthen and toughen Abraham to depend on **His** best judgment in all situations.

When Abraham left his fatherland with its familiar comforts...he gave up his ties to family and tribe...when he endured the privation of childlessness...he lost contact with nephew Lot...he lost Ishmael as the potential "chosen seed"...(plus a lot more) each step of the way the LORD assisted, nurtured, and assured Abraham that He would take care of the whole program, even in the details, so that by the time of the sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham had been strengthened enough (in relying on the LORD) to be able to give up his one-and-only boy, if God so requested it.

God's Promises

Promises are meant to be kept. A promise-maker is obligated for two reasons: to prove the promise-maker reliable, and to benefit the person receiving the promise. That's how God works--whether in small or large promises; God does not make a promise He won't or can't keep; so when He pledges Himself to do the job of saving our souls and to be our Helper in all earthly needs, we can bank on it that He will keep His word.

Human Limitations

Perhaps one of your students has a handicap. Can God turn a handicap into a good tool in His service? Certainly! Every child of God has his/her limitations; even the apostle Paul had a severe one, and God let it bother Paul all his life because Paul had enough of God's grace to carry him past/over/around his handicap to become the greatest soul-winner in the early Christian Church.

APPLICATION

Why do we spend time learning about Abraham and Isaac? Through such examples we can learn how God functions. Just as we learn the laws of gravity, electricity and magnetism, light and heat, the ecosystem, etc., so that we use and make applications of these laws to ourselves, so we learn of God's ways with sinners in order to apply His rule of grace to our own salvation.

Since there are notable correspondences between Isaac and Jesus, a special reason for placing this OT episode into the series is to help us concentrate on our Savior. Some similarities are:

- each was the "one-and-only" son of the father;
- each was long-promised and long-awaited;
- each bore the promise of bringing blessings to all nations;
- no human substitute dare take his place (not Ishmael for Isaac/not anyone imperfect for Jesus);
- each submitted obediently to the father's will (as a lamb to the slaughter);
- each to be sacrificed on Moriah (the site of the temple in Jerusalem);
- Isaac was as good as dead until the third day; Jesus physically dead until the third day;
- each returned to his father to carry out his life's purpose.

In these ways Isaac is a type of Jesus, and Jesus is the prototype for Isaac.

Isaac's birth was almost as big a miracle as the virgin birth of Jesus. This demonstrates that God ignores human limitations when He chooses to do so in order to get His salvation program moving forward or to pass it on from one soul to another.

BIBLE STORY

Abraham & Isaac Genesis 18:1-15; Genesis 21:1-3; Genesis 22:1-19

Read from your Bible. Ask students to find it in a Bible too. Those that can read can follow along. Choose the passages you would like to read aloud. Use visuals to help tell the story.

God tested Abraham's faith when he told him to offer his only son as a burnt offering. Abraham did not withhold his son and passed the test. Do we have something we hold more dearly than God?

How many of you have ever seen a lamb? They are very gentle animals and they have woolly coats that we use to make soft clothes. A long time ago, people would use these lambs for a sacrifice to God. When they killed the lamb, the lamb would be burned on an altar to God to take away their sins.

Abraham was a great man of faith. God tested Abraham by telling him to sacrifice his only son as a burnt offering. Abraham had to travel three days to the land of Moriah to the place God told him to go. This area was the same place where Jerusalem is today.

God was asking Abraham to do something he would do himself when Jesus became the Lamb of God at Golgotha many years later. Where Abraham's offering would only cover his sins, Jesus' death was to cover the sins of everyone who ever lived and trusted in him.

Abraham was attentive to God's call. Many times when God would call his name, Abraham would answer "**Here I am.**" When Isaac and Abraham came near to the place for the sacrifice, Isaac asked him where the lamb for the sacrifice was. He didn't realize that Abraham was planning to use him for the lamb. Abraham answered him in faith: "God will provide himself a lamb." When Abraham took the knife to slay Isaac, the angel of the Lord called to Abraham and prevented him.

God knew Abraham was obedient, even to the point of being willing to sacrifice his only son. Abraham had the faith to believe that if it was God's will for him to take the life of Isaac, God also had the power to raise him from the dead.

God blessed Abraham for being obedient. He said he would **multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore.** (verse 17) This meant Abraham would be blessed with many descendants.

We can thank God that he was willing to give his only son, our Savior Jesus, as the one sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

BIBLE CHALLENGE

“God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and discipline.” (2 Timothy 1:7)

Read this passage from your Bible. Ask students to locate it in a Bible too. Help them learn this verse.

Activity 1: Trust Walk

Blindfold a child or children and ask a partner to walk them through the maze of tables. Have the partner now be blindfolded and the other to walk them through the maze.

Ask: Did you trust your partner to walk you through the maze of tables?

What happened?

Did Abraham trust God to provide another way?

Activity 2: Paper Activities

- God Promises Abraham a Son
- God Tests Abraham

GAMES

Game 1: Tunnel Ball

Create tunnels from chairs, tables to form a course similar to croquet. The object of this game will be for the ball to go through the tunnels in the order specified.

You'll Need:

Masking tape

Foam balls

2 teams

Mallet: Sponge taped to the end of yard long dowel (1 for each team)

Bible verses for each tunnel (at the end of this section)

Read aloud Genesis 22:1-19

Ask: In the Bible Abraham had to wait a long time for God to keep his promise to send Abraham a son. The time finally came and Isaac was born. Then God asked Abraham to do an impossible task, use his son as a sacrifice. God kept his promise....Abraham and Sarah had a son.....Abraham trusted God.....God spared Isaac and provided a lamb instead.

Today we're going to play a game that might take some patience.

We're in two teams....each team will have a ball.

You're going to work cooperatively around the course from start to finish, taking turns rolling the ball. Each team member begins when the ball stopped rolling. The ball **MUST** pass through each tunnel in order. You must use the mallet provided. If the sponge falls off, your team must tape it back on.

As the ball goes through a tunnel, team must look up the Bible passage and read it out loud before going on.

SCIENCE EXPERIMENT

Laughing Cup

What You'll Need:

- Paper cup
- Paper clip
- Cotton String
- Scissors
- Paper towel
- Water

Here's How to Do It This simple noise-maker creates amusing sounds by rubbing a string attached to a cup.

Tie about a half-meter (2 feet) of string to a paper clip with a double knot. Push the paper clip through the bottom of the cup so it ends up in the cup (use scissors to poke a small hole if you need to). Then, pull the paper clip out of the cup, slide the knot to the middle of the length of the paper clip and pull the paper clip back into the cup.

To play your laughing cup, moisten a paper towel and fold it over the string. Hold the cup in your other hand without touching the string. Pinch the string through the paper towel. Then, holding the string taut, pull the paper towel along the string a bit at a time to make laughing noises.

How many kinds of sounds can you make? Experiment with the way you pull the string to make different sounds, such as a rooster or other animal sounds.

GAMES Bible Passages

Genesis 22:1

Genesis 22:15-18

Joshua 1:9

Proverbs 3:5-6

Psalms 29:11

Psalms 136:26