

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.

WELCOME ACTIVITY

Build an altar

Supplies:

Cardboard building blocks

Ask children to help you build an altar. Explain what an altar is.

"Abraham believed God." Romans 14:8 NIV

OPENING

God asked Abraham to do some amazing things.

WILL YOU DO IT? GAME

Have the children line up in a horizontal line across the back of the room. This game is similar to Mother-May-I. Instead of taking turns all the children listen to your question and respond with, "Yes, I do". You then issue the command and they all may respond. In this game everyone will be a winner when they reach you. (Adjust the commands according to your room size, so that they can reach you by the time you've finished asking the questions.)

1. Mother asks you to turn the TV off. Will you get up and do it without saying, "wait"? (You may take 3 baby steps forward)
2. Teacher asks you to stop talking in class when she's talking. Will you stop talking? (You may take 4 little hops forward)
3. Big brother asks you not to play in his room while he is at school. Will you stay out of his room? (You may take 1 giant step forward)
4. Grandmother tells you eating cookie dough is bad for you. Will you keep your fingers out of the mixing bowl when she's not looking? (You may take 2 scissor steps forward)
5. Daddy tells you to come straight home from school and not stop for any reason. Will you go straight home even though your friend calls from his house to come see his new kittens? (You may take 3 side-winder steps forward)

Remind the boys and girls that often we have to obey even though we can't understand the reason for it. Only Jesus can help us do that. When someone asks you to do something and you feel like saying, "no" say a prayer for Jesus to help you.

Discussion: Think about the thing you have that you treasure the most. Is it a toy? Is it your Mom or Dad? Now imagine having to give up that thing. Imagine seeing it destroyed. How does that make you feel? God knows how that feels. He gave up the thing most precious to him, His son. God was asking Abraham if he was willing to see his precious son destroyed.

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 had promised Abraham not just one child but many children.
Abraham and Sarah were getting very old and still they had no baby.
God wanted to make Abraham's and Sarah's faith stronger. He wanted them to learn to trust only in Him.

The Lord came to Sarah and did something wonderful for Sarah, just as He had said He would. He gave Sarah and Abraham a baby boy when they were very old.

Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90 when they had their baby. This was exactly the time God wanted the baby to be born. Abraham called his new baby boy, Isaac. And Sarah said, "God has made me laugh, and everyone who hears that I have had a baby will join with me and also laugh." She knew everyone would be surprised and happy that two old people could have a baby.

After some years had passed, God wanted to be sure Abraham still loved and trusted only God. One day God told Abraham to take his only son, Isaac, the son he loved so very much, and offer Isaac up as a burnt offering to God. Abraham got up the very next morning. He called his only son, Isaac, and two servants to go with him. He got some wood to burn the offering. Then they started to travel. It took them three days to walk to the mountain. It was where God wanted them to be.

When they got there, Abraham told his servants to stay behind while he and Isaac went on a little further. Isaac was carrying the wood. Abraham had the fire and a knife. Isaac asked his father where the lamb was that they would offer on the fire to God. Abraham told Isaac that God would make sure they had a lamb.

When they came to the exact place where God wanted them, Abraham built an altar. He put the wood on it. Last of all he tied Isaac up and put Isaac on the altar. He pulled out the knife and lifted it to kill his only son. Suddenly the Angel of the Lord called out to him and told him, "Don't kill your son. Don't even hurt him. Now I know you love and trust me more than even your only son. "

Just then Abraham saw a ram caught in some bushes behind him. Abraham took that ram and offered it on the altar instead of Isaac. Then the Angel of the Lord called out to Abraham again and said, "Because I know you love me more than your only son, I promise I will bless you and give you many more family members. Some day you will have such a big family you won't even be able to count everyone.

Also, your large family will be very strong. Best of all, the Savior will come from your family and all the world will be blessed through the Savior."

Can you imagine how sad Abraham felt when God told him to offer his son as a burnt offering to God? Yet, he was going to do exactly what God told him to do. God made Abraham's faith strong, so he could do what God asked. He wants to make our faith strong too. He will take care of us just as He took care of Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac.

GOD'S WORD IN MY HEART

"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: 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?

GAME

Follow the Leader or "Simon" Says – substitute God for Simon – Repeat from last week

Play a game of "Follow the Leader" with your kids and talk about how Abraham followed God. Children sit or stand in a circle. Choose one student as the leader. The leader begins an action such as clapping hands, stamping feet, wiggling fingers, etc. Children imitate the leader's actions Repeat game as time permits.

CLOSING ACTIVITY

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

Sing: Father Abraham

Jesus Loves Me

Pray: Dear God, thank you for loving me and taking care of me. Thank you for all the people who are a blessing to me. Thank you for sending Jesus to take away my sins. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.