

God Foreshadows His Promise

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: God calls on His people to trust Him completely, no matter what.

MAIN PASSAGES: Genesis 22:1-14; Hebrews 11:17-19



How have you responded in times of loss, whether great or small?

Times of loss or potential loss provide us with the opportunity to experience God deepening and refining our faith. It's not just a matter of submitting to God; it's a matter of submitting willfully. Faithfully. Joyfully. The pain of loss is very real, but the goodness of God is even more real. That is what must sustain us in times of loss: God is good and He can do the impossible.

Group Time

Point 1: God's covenant comes at a cost (Gen. 22:1-6).

¹ After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!"

"Here I am," he answered.

² "Take your son," he said, "your only son Isaac, whom you love, go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

³ So Abraham got up early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took with him two of his young men and his son Isaac. He split wood for a burnt offering and set out to go to the place God had told him about. ⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go over there to worship; then we'll come back to you."

⁶ Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac. In his hand he took the fire and the knife, and the two of them walked on together.

God's tests are not easy; that which grows us rarely is. And not knowing what God is doing only adds to that difficulty. God's tests can leave us confused, distressed, and heartbroken. But it is in these moments of weakness that the strength God gives us can shine forth.



What have you learned about God and yourself through God's past tests?

God's tests are for our _____. They grow us, strengthen us, and give us the confidence we need to _____ through future hardships.

Point 2: God provides a substitute sacrifice to pay the cost (Gen. 22:7-14).

⁷ Then Isaac spoke to his father Abraham and said, “My father.”

And he replied, “Here I am, my son.”

Isaac said, “The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

⁸ Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” Then the two of them walked on together.

⁹ When they arrived at the place that God had told him about, Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood. He bound his son Isaac and placed him on the altar on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son.

¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” He replied, “Here I am.”

¹² Then he said, “Do not lay a hand on the boy or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your only son from me.”

¹³ Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught in the thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it as a burnt offering in place of his son. ¹⁴ And Abraham named that place The LORD Will Provide, so today it is said: “It will be provided on the LORD’s mountain.”

Abraham held the knife above Isaac, but then the angel called out. Mercifully, the test was over. Abraham had proven his faithfulness. It was evident that Abraham feared God because he was willing to let go of his beloved son. And in not holding anything back from God, Abraham revealed who was most valuable to him—God.



What are some things we can tend to withhold from God? Why?

God prevented Abraham from sacrificing Isaac, but then He provided a substitute sacrifice in his place. So Abraham named that place after a foundational truth he had witnessed there—“The LORD Will Provide.” And this foreshadows the promise of the gospel; this is what God did for us with His Son.

Christ as Sacrifice: Unlike the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, whose sacrifices were _____ to take away sin (Heb. 10:4), Christ’s sacrifice on the cross was able to _____, “once and for all,” take away sins.



How has remembering and dwelling on God’s provision of Jesus sustained you through adversity?

Point 3: God calls His people to trust in His provision (Heb. 11:17-19).

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac. He received the promises and yet he was offering his one and only son, ¹⁸ the one to whom it had been said, Your offspring will be called through Isaac. ¹⁹ He considered God to be able even to raise someone from the dead; therefore, he received him back, figuratively speaking.

Why was Abraham able to tell the two servants that he *and his son* would return? Why was he able to tie his only son, his beloved son, and lay him on top of the altar? Why was he able to lift a knife, ready to spill Isaac's blood? What made such surrender to God possible was Abraham's faith that He can do the impossible: Abraham believed that God could raise his son from the dead.



What are some “impossible” situations that we can trust God with?

Figuratively speaking, Isaac was raised from the dead, but *historically speaking*, Jesus was raised from the dead. Abraham believed God and received his son back, having passed his test. Christians believe God and receive the blessings, benefits, and righteousness of the resurrected Son of God, whose resurrection will one day be ours as well. Therefore, every day, every breath, every good gift from our good Father becomes an opportunity to live on mission for the God who has given us everything in Christ (Eph. 1:3).



Voices from the Church

“Real satisfaction comes not in understanding God’s motives, but in understanding His character, in trusting in His promises, and in leaning on Him and resting in Him as the Sovereign who knows what He is doing and does all things well.”¹

—Joni Eareckson Tada



What has God provided you to use for the kingdom mission He has given you? How can you steward that well this week?

My Mission

Because we are people who have realized the fullness of God's promise and been saved by God's sacrifice of His Son, we trust God with full confidence in His resurrection power, willing to sacrifice all for His mission.

- **How will you respond in faith to the sacrifice of the Son of God to take away the sin of the world?**
- **How can we walk together and support and encourage one another as we experience loss or potential loss in our lives?**
- **Whom do you know who has experienced a painful loss? How can you share God's provision of Jesus with this person?**

Notes

Daily Study

Day 1: Read Genesis 18

In Genesis 14, when Abraham liberated Lot and his family and recovered the possessions and people plundered from Sodom, the king of Sodom asked Abraham only for the people, leaving the plunder to Abraham as a reward. But Abraham refused it. He did not want the king of Sodom getting any credit for making him wealthy; that honor belonged to God alone.

Here we see Abraham intercede on behalf of Sodom, as well as Gomorrah, when he learned that the Lord was going to destroy the cities because of the seriousness of their sin. Abraham's bold intercession teaches us two things about him:

- First, Abraham understood God's character as a good and righteous judge. Abraham did not quibble with God's right to judge the cities, but he did ask for God to be merciful on their behalf.
- Second, Abraham cared deeply for Lot and the people of those cities. Abraham did not merely appeal for Lot to be spared; he appealed for their entire populations. More importantly, Abraham knew that God cared about people more than he did.

Both of these observations will be revisited when Abraham is called on to sacrifice Isaac. Once again, Abraham would trust in God's character—His faithfulness and power—and His love for him and his son as he navigated that challenging test.



Whom can you pray for as an intercessor? What attributes of God will inform your prayers?



Voices from Church History

"We are trusted to spread the spirit of love ... If love weakens among us, if it ever becomes possible to tolerate the least shadow of an unloving thought, our Fellowship will begin to perish. Unlove is deadly. It is a cancer. It may kill slowly but it always kills in the end."²

—Amy Carmichael (1867-1951)

Day 2: Read Genesis 19

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah can feel like an odd interlude in the midst of Abraham's narrative. But God decided to tell Abraham about what was going to happen in Sodom and Gomorrah because Abraham was the one He had chosen to bring blessing to the world (18:18). Destroying Sodom and Gomorrah was simultaneously God's just punishment for sin, and opportunity for Abraham to be a blessing, and a protection for Abraham's family, as God removed such evil in close proximity to them.

But there was perhaps another reason for this account. God destroyed the entire cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, yet he spared one man, Lot, and his family. Lot reminds us of another one who was spared God's judgment: Noah. And like Noah, the message of Lot's salvation from destruction is one of grace. God saved Lot by grace. God saved Noah by grace. God was working in and through Abraham by grace. And God does the same for us—we are saved and used by God through grace alone.



How has God been gracious to you this past week?

Day 3: Read Genesis 20

For the second recorded time in his life (the first being Gen. 12:10-20), Abraham lied about Sarah being his sister. He was motivated by fear as he traveled in a foreign land; he was afraid that someone would want to take Sarah as his own wife and kill him to have her. Fear, not faith, was controlling the patriarch at this point. God had promised to bless those who blessed Abraham and to curse those who treated him with contempt (12:3), but that promise had been forgotten, or disbelieved, in the moment.

But there was another troubling aspect to Abraham's deception. Just before this, God's messengers told Abraham and Sarah that within a year they would have the son they had been waiting for (18:13-14). But here we see that Abraham allowed his wife to fall into the hands of King Abimelech, presumably to be his wife. Abraham's faithlessness in this moment not only dishonored his wife and showed a lack of faith in God, it also jeopardized the promise of a son from his own body through Sarah.

Yet God intervened and protected and preserved Sarah and the promise. Abraham's act of faithlessness almost caused much more harm than he could ever have imagined.



How are you struggling to trust God right now?

Day 4: Read Genesis 21

God has a way of taking our moments of doubt and our failings and turning them around. When the three men were visiting with Abraham, Sarah overheard that she would have a son within the year (18:10). This was what the couple had been waiting twenty-five years for. But instead of celebrating and worshiping God, Sarah laughed to herself (18:12). When she was confronted for laughing, she denied it out of fear (18:15). But within the year, Sarah would find out that nothing is impossible for the Lord (18:14).

When we reach Genesis 21, we read that the Lord came to Sarah and did what He had promised; she became pregnant and had a son at the appointed time (vv. 1-2). The couple named their son Isaac, which means “laughter,” and Sarah declared that God had made her laugh and everyone who heard of her joy would laugh with her (v. 6). God had truly turned Sarah’s skeptical laughter into joyful laughter. Surely every time Sarah called her son to dinner or introduced him to others, she was reminded of how God had turned her doubts upside down.



How have you experienced God’s kindness and grace in your times of doubt and disobedience?

Day 5: Read Genesis 22

When we read this chapter, we have to be careful not to sterilize it. We can do that at times as we read the Scriptures. We sometimes forget that these were real people with real feelings. Yes, Abraham trusted God. Yes, he had faith that God could raise Isaac from the dead. But that did not diminish the pain he must have felt.

It’s important that we remember Abraham was a person and consider the pain he felt in this account because it helps us. We feel pain too—many of us concerning children.

No matter how we read this passage, we can know that we are not alone in our pain. Abraham walked through this pain too, and more importantly, Christ Jesus did as well (Heb. 4:14-15). We find comfort in sharing in Abraham’s pain, but we find greater comfort in sharing in his resurrection hope. Christ Jesus has defeated sin and death, and one day our heartaches will be no more.



How can you draw from your painful experiences in life to minister to someone else?

Encourage One Another

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- God's covenant comes at a cost (Gen. 22:1-6).
- God provides a substitute sacrifice to pay the cost (Gen. 22:7-14).
- God calls His people to trust in His provision (Heb. 11:17-19).



How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?



What personal sacrifices that you have made remind you on a regular basis of God's transforming grace at work in your life?



How can you encourage others to exercise complete trust in God without sounding cliché or trite?

Notes
