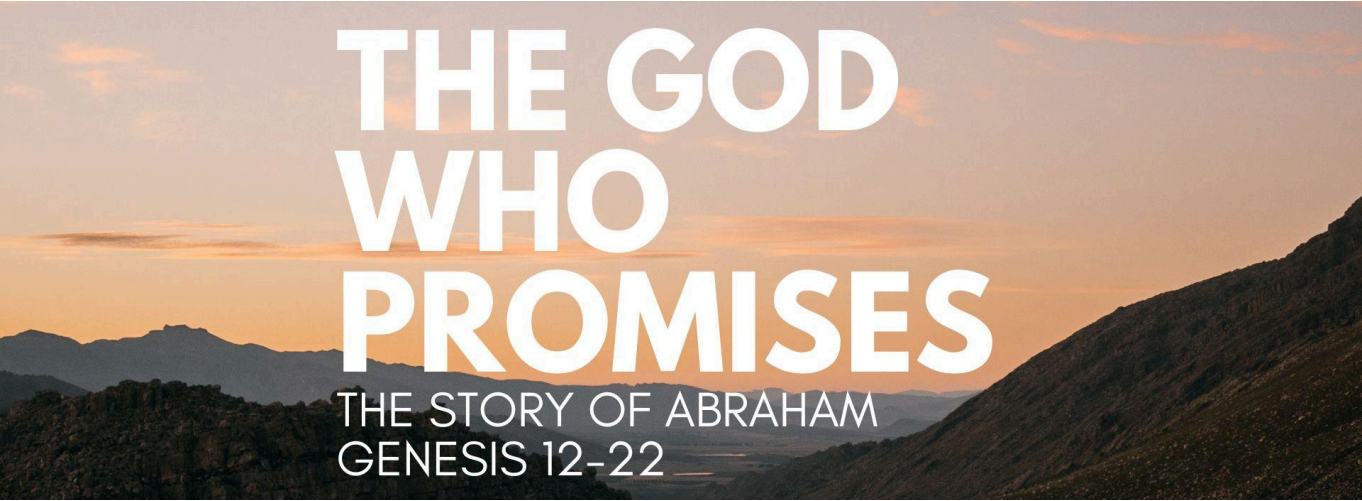




THE GOD WHO PROMISES

THE STORY OF ABRAHAM GENESIS 12-22

God tests Abraham - Genesis 22

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*(Leaders, please use these questions **as a guide for discussion**. Please don't feel like you have to go through every one!)*

Connect: What's one area in your life that God is calling you to greater obedience right now?

Warm-Up

1. Can you think of a time when you had to trust someone else's plan even though you didn't understand what was happening? How did you respond?

Read Genesis 22:1-2

2. What details in verses 1-2 show just how difficult and painful God's command to Abraham was?
3. Why is it important that verse 1 tells us this was a "test" before we read God's command?
4. What questions or emotions do you think Abraham may have been wrestling with after hearing God's instruction?
5. The sermon noted that God sometimes uses trials and testing in the lives of his people. What are some purposes God may have in allowing seasons of testing?

Read Genesis 22:3-19

6. What stands out to you about Abraham's immediate response in verse 3?
7. In verse 5 Abraham tells his servants, "we will come again to you." What does this reveal about his faith?
8. Read verses 7-8. What does Abraham's statement, "God will provide for himself the lamb," teach us about trusting God when we cannot see the outcome?
9. The sermon highlighted Isaac's willing participation. How does Isaac's response contribute to the picture of faith in this passage?
10. Read Hebrews 11:17-19. According to Hebrews, what was Abraham believing about God's power and promises?
11. What kinds of trials or testing circumstances do Christians commonly face today? How can Abraham's example encourage us in those situations?
12. What does the ram provided by God teach us about God's character?
13. In what ways has God provided for us?
14. How does this account point forward to Jesus?
15. What areas of your life are easiest to surrender to God? What areas are hardest? Why?
16. What have been some highlights from this look at Abraham for you? How has this grown your knowledge of God and your relationship with God?

Apply: How does knowing that God is faithful to his promises impact your relationship with him?

PRAY: *Father, thank you that you are the God who provides. Help us to trust your promises even when we cannot see what you are doing. Thank you for providing Jesus, the perfect sacrifice in our place. Teach us to entrust our whole lives to you, knowing that you are faithful and good. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

TITLE: Abraham Tested

PASSAGE: Genesis 22

LOCATION: St John's Wishart 9AM

BI: YHW is the God who provides even in utterly unlikely circumstances

STRUCTURE:

- 1-2 - God's Test
- 3-14 - Abraham's Faith
- 15-19 - God's Promise

- Whether we know it or not, all of us make sacrifices each and every day.
- I make the sacrifice of my gut health and health of my teeth for a the sake of a bag of skittles or gummy bears every now and then
- We might sacrifice a place in line in the traffic to let someone in
- We sacrifice a bit of our savings when we purchase that coffee or lunch out
- we sacrifice work opportunities in order to spend more time with our families
- We sacrifice sleep in order to love and care for our kids
- We make this choices everyday and sometimes subconsciously because they are worth it.
- Give up time and energy for family? OF course!
- Make sure you get that daily coffee so you survive the day - totally!
- BUT What are we willing to sacrifice for God?
- What are we willing to sacrifice for God?
 - Maybe your answer might be:
 - A sleep in and 2 hours on a Sunday?
 - 10% of our income?
 - A night a week?
- If this is your answer - the bar is far too low.
- Because God is the God who **provides** and commands us to give up **everything** for him.

- We see this clearly in today's final instalment of our series on the life of Abraham.
- Against all odds, at the ages of 100 and 90 Abraham and Sarah have conceived. And Sarah has given birth to a Son called Isaac
- Throughout the chapters of Genesis Abraham and Sarah have swayed from faith to doubt from trust to distrust. They have had the promises of a son and that from their descendants will come a great great nation.
 - They've attempted to take matters into their own hands through Hagar.
 - They've doubted God and laughed!
- But now - God has come through. Isaac was born. He is the one that God is going to bless and multiply.
- He is the promised son.
- But today, we see God call on Abraham to do the unthinkable - Offer him up. Sacrifice him.
- This is God's final test for Abraham.
- Is Abraham willing to trust everything to God? Is he willing to put his whole life into God's hands even when the situation seems completely and utterly bleak?
- Yes.
- Because he knows that God is the God who provides.

- **God's Test**
- Gen 22:1 "After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am.""
- This concept of God testing people or allowing trials to happen isn't unique to Abraham.
- We can think of Job as an example. God allowed trials to happen to him. He allowed him to be tested

- In the New Testament, God tells us in James 1 to consider it joy when we face trials of various kinds; Romans 5 tells us that we can rejoice in our sufferings because suffering produces endurance, and character, and hope.
- God can send trials or testing circumstances sometimes as a prod to get us closer to him.
- But the test that God has for Abraham is completely unique to him:
- V2 "He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."
- Let's make it completely clear here what God is requiring Abraham to do.
- To take his long awaited beloved son, [By this point, Ishmael has left the picture] take him up to a mountain, kill him, and burn his body completely.
 - Wait - What?
 - Yes - you heard it right.
- This is what God is calling Abraham to do, to perform child sacrifice.
 - The notion of Child sacrifice wasn't foreign in the ancient near east. It was done to appease the pagan gods and get their attention.
 - Later on in the giving of the Law in Exodus - child sacrifice is forbidden!
 - One of the Israelite Kings is described as sacrificing his son to a pagan god in 2 Kings.
- So why is YHW asking Abraham to do such a terrible thing?
- Abraham hearing this must have been utterly perplexed, confused, heartbroken, disturbed!
- This is like death by a thousand cuts for Abraham.
- This long awaited child...Sarah could well be over 100 now! There's no hope of another child coming!
- But this isn't just an ordinary child - God promised that the covenant made to Abraham would also be made to Isaac and to Isaac's children and all of his descendants. Is God now going back on his word?
- Is this some kind of joke?
- Well there are three important things that we need to remember here:
 - Firstly, God is God and we are not. God can do as he pleases. I'm not here to act as a defendant on God's behalf!
 - Secondly, this is a unique situation. At no other time does God or will God command such a thing.
 - Lastly, this is a test for Abraham. God never intended Isaac to be killed in the first place.
- This is the ultimate test - will Abraham give up his most prized person for God? Will he be willing to give up his lifeline, his most hoped for person for God?
- Is Abraham willing to trust God yet again in the midst of impossible, confusing, and heartbreaking situations??
- Let's see.

- **Abraham's Faith**

- V3 "So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him."
- Abraham goes.
- He obeys. He entrusts himself to God.
- I don't think we can even imagine the thoughts running through Abraham's head.
- As he was chopping the wood, swinging the axe - what was he thinking about as every beat of the axe mocked the final heartbeats of his one and only son?
- We don't get that information...but he still trusted God.
- V4 "On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. 5 Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you."

- Is this Abraham floundering? Trying to come up with something last minute? Trying to keep the peace? Trying to keep young Isaac calm?
- No.
- This is Abraham genuinely trusting that God could do something miraculous. That God would provide somehow! He says to the servants that they are just going away for a bit and will both come back.
- V6 "And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. ⁷ And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" ⁸ Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together."
- We aren't told exactly how old Isaac is at this encounter...but he's old enough to carry the wood for himself.
- Quite possibly, Isaac is in his teens here.
- And still Abraham trusts that God will provide. That somehow God is going to work it out!
- The Author to the Hebrews writes in Hebrews 11:19 that Abraham considered that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead!
- And the story continues...
- V9 "When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood."
- Remember - Abraham is at least 110 years old, Isaac around 13-15.
- It's not like Abraham could physically overpower Isaac - I find it hard enough to restrain my 2 year old - but it says here that Isaac was bound.
- This not only shows Abraham's trust but also Isaac's trust in God's provision!
 - Isaac is going along with it! Like a Lamb to the slaughter - he doesn't open his mouth.
 - Abraham isn't forcing Isaac - Isaac is laying down his life of his own accord!
- They are both trusting that God will provide.
 - Times of testing are never easy.
 - Life circumstances, health challenges, exhaustion, work conflict, financial stress - these things can be intolerable.
 - It can drive us to the edge and end of ourselves.
 - They push us beyond the brink - but in the midst of these, somehow, God is working in us.
 - Teaching us. Bringing us back to him.
 - It may not make sense in the moment.
 - We might question what God is up to, we might complain to God, cry out to God - as we should!
 - But in those moments, God hasn't abandoned us or left us. God will provide for us.
 - Because as we'll see soon - God has already provided for us greatly...
- But let's get back to the story and see what happens:
- V10 "Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son."
- I think if I was Abraham - I might have just fainted at that point of the angel intervening!
- But God does provide! He sees Abraham's faith, and he provides a substitute offering instead of his son.
- And that's why

- V14 "So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided."
 - God provided for Abraham.
 - And God's testing proved Abraham's faith as true! Abraham was tested by God and his faith stayed the course!
 - In fact - while God was testing Abraham, Abraham was almost testing God in a way.
 - Remember Isaac was the promised son through whom God was going to achieve his purposes.
 - In a way, if Abraham was to really sacrifice Isaac's life and Isaac was to stay dead, then God wouldn't have been true to his word!
 - But God was faithful to his promises. And he provides.
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- And for us here today?
 - He has provided abundantly and will provide through the one who was a great great descendant of Isaac.
 - God sent his one and only son into the world to save it.
 - Jesus was born and came in order to be obedient to his father by laying down his life.
 - And he says in John 10 that he lays down his life of his own accord! He isn't forced into it, or wrestled into it, he went willingly.
 - Instead of carrying firewood up the mountain, he was forced to carry his own wooden cross.
 - When he was mocked he didn't mock back
 - He went like a lamb to the slaughter, silent before its shearers.
 - And he died as the substitute offering on our behalf. And rose again as the victorious Son and Lord of all
 - And through his - he provided amazing grace, hope, and salvation for us!
 - So that all who turn to Jesus as Lord can be brought into an eternal relationship with the promise making, promise-keeping God himself!
 - And know his great love and provision for eternity.
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- But as we wait - we wait for God to provide in his timing and in his ways.
 - We may not know exactly how or when God will answer our prayers for provision - but he will provide.
 - If God went to the expense of saving us through the suffering and death of his son 2000 years ago, why would he stop loving us or stop being for us right here and right now!
 - So no matter what way you are being tested or being pushed to the brink - God has redeemed you and will provide for you!
 - And we can be sure of this, because we worship a God who promises and keeps his promises.
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- **The God who Promises**
 - What's been astounding to me over these past 7 weeks in Genesis, is just how completely faithful and steadfast God is.
 - His word is completely sure.
 - We've seen his covenant with Abraham made and renewed and renewed again despite the unfaithfulness of Abraham;
 - We've seen God looking out for the oppressed and hearing the cries of the victim;
 - We've seen how all of these promises find their yes in Jesus!
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- And so as we look at these chapters and as we read God's word, we are reminded of just how great God is.
 - No matter what our circumstances or what we are going through, God is greater than them and is faithful through them.
 - Which should lead us to great comfort in the midst of our discomfort...and great assurance in the midst of our doubts.

- And we are reminded that when we entrust ourselves to God, we are giving ourselves over to the one who is completely trustworthy!
 - Abraham was called to sacrifice his one and only beloved son to God. Give up his hope and lifeline! Give it completely to God - dedicate it to him.
- Today, we are commanded to give our **whole lives** to God as living sacrifices to him!
- Deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him!
- Don't hold back, don't portion a bit of your life off for you here and there and then there's a bit for God over there - no, dedicate it ALL to God.
- Because he is completely worthy and deserving of our trust and our praise and our worship!
- He is the God who provides, the God who promises, and the God who keeps his promises.
- And as we trust in him and put our faith in him, this is what he promises:
 - That we will be blessed as a descendant of Abraham. We will be given life and life for eternity.
 - Through the sacrificial death and resurrection of Abraham's descendant and God's son Jesus - we are saved, ransomed, and forgiven. We are made God's children forever - for eternity.
 - And he will come again to bring us to his eternal home.