

Review: *From your experience at the Cornerstone meeting last week, share something that helped build your faith.*

NOTE: The drama of the Book of Genesis reaches its greatest intensity in the heart-wrenching story of Abraham offering his beloved son as a sacrifice on Mt. Moriah. So momentous is the event and its outcome that it stands as one of the defining moments of salvation history. Had Abraham shown anything less than heroic faith, there is no telling how the grand narrative of the Bible would have developed thereafter. The question is how to interpret the significance of the episode.
Ignatius Study Bible

DAY ONE

Read Genesis 22:1-2

1a. We begin today after Abraham has lived many days in the land of the Philistines. In the beginning of verse 1, we read that "God tested Abraham." Record the words or phrases in one of the following verses that describe being tested.

Wisdom 3:1,5-6

Sirach 2:1-3

1 Peter 1:6-7

b. Bearing in mind the verse you recorded, what thought comes to mind about why God would test his people?

2. God spoke to Abraham calling him by name and he replied, "Here I am" (verse 1). Recall a prior incident when Abraham showed obedience by complying with God's commands (see Genesis 12:4; 17:24; 21:14).

3. According to verse 2, how was Abraham to be tested? Complete the verse below that includes the threefold order given him by God.

Take your son,

and go to

and offer him there

4. This is an unimaginable request of any parent but why do think this is especially hard for Abraham?

5. The Commentary suggests a few theories about why God asked this sacrifice of Abraham on pages 48-49. Explain one of those ideas in a few words or offer your own ideas.

6. **CONNECTION:** In today's readings, Abraham replied to the call of the Lord with "Here I am." Throughout our study of his life, we've learned how Abraham's faith gradually deepened as he let go of more and more to follow God. At each step, he was asked to love the Creator more than his creation; to esteem the Divine Giver above his most precious gifts. As Christians, we are all called to grow in faith. Can you trace the stages of your faith through testing and sacrifice in your journey towards complete trust in the Lord? Record some thoughts to share.

Read [James 1:2-4](#) and record verse 2. Begin your prayer today: "Lord help me to see the good that comes from testing that leads me to a more complete and mature faith."

DAY TWO

Read Genesis 22:3-6

NOTE: These events take place about ten years or more after Ishmael's exile when Isaac was at least 13 years old. Isaac is old enough to carry the wood for the sacrifice (Gen 22:6). The narrative begins with the reader being told that Abraham was being tested. The importance of this statement allays any doubt concerning God's purpose and that he does not intend an actual human sacrifice. Human sacrifice, especially child sacrifice, was a practice in parts of the Near East at this time. *Agape*

7. Previously, we learned that God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his only son. Considering that verse 3 begins, "So Abraham rose early in the morning..." it follows that their conversation took place sometime in the night. Describe the thoughts and feelings that Abraham might have experienced during the long dark hours that intervened.

8. List all that Abraham did early the following morning after hearing God's command (verse 3).

9. Although there are many differences in the details of the stories about Ishmael and Isaac, the similarities are significant. Compare Genesis 21:9-14 with verses 1-3 of this week's readings and note what you find.

10. The journey from Beersheba to the land of Moriah was approximately fifty to sixty miles long and took three days (verse 4). When they arrived, Abraham told the men who accompanied him to stay with the donkey until he and the boy worshiped and returned. Even though Abraham was willing to obey God, what do the words from verse 5 suggest to you about Abraham's state of mind?

11. Abraham and Isaac left the young men and went on together. What preparations did Abraham make for the final stage of the journey (verse 6)?

12. CONNECTION: Today we read that Abraham carried the fire and knife up the mountain to sacrifice his beloved son. As we search for meaning in this story, we can be assured that our loving Father would never intentionally ask us to sacrifice a child. It does teach us a vital lesson by asking the underlying question, "Is there anything or anyone I love more than God?" In order to answer this, consider how you spend most of your time, your thoughts and your money each day. Has anything become the center of your life, pushing God into the background? What are some ways to loosen the grip of worldly things and focus on God?

Today as you meditate on the story of Abraham and Isaac, say the "Suscipe" prayer of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will- all that I have and call my own. You have given it all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours, do with it as you will. Give me only your love and your grace. That is enough for me.

DAY THREE

Read Genesis 22:7-9

13. As today's lesson begins, father and son walked on Mt. Moriah and talked to one another. Compare the beginning of their conversation in verse 7 with the one between God and Abraham in verse 1.

NOTE: 2 Chronicles 3:1 identifies the Land of Moriah with the mountain range on which Jerusalem is located and on which the Temple of Yahweh would be built a thousand years after Abraham during the reign of King Solomon. Jesus of Nazareth was crucified on an elevation of Mt. Moriah below the Temple, just outside the gates of the city. *Agape*

14a. As they walked along, Isaac asked his father where the lamb for the burnt offering was (end of verse 7). Abraham replied that God would provide it (verse 8). Compare this remark with his words to the two young men in verse 5.

b. The verses we read today were the only recorded conversation that took place between father and son in the bible. They were never together again until Isaac stood at his father's grave (Genesis 25:7). What strikes you about the conversation between them?

THINK: Keeping in mind that these words were written many years after the fact, read Hebrews 11:17-19 for some insights into what Abraham may have believed about the sacrifice of Isaac.

15. In verse 8 Abraham spoke of a sacrificial lamb. Read one of the following verses and record the phrase that refers to the sacrificial Lamb of God.

John 1:29

1 Peter 1:18-19

Revelation 5:12

16. Describe all that Abraham did when he and Isaac arrived at the place God designated according to verse 9.

NOTE: The text does not specify Isaac's age, only that he is old enough to talk and carry firewood (22:6-7). Jewish tradition believed him to be a grown man, either 25 or 37 years old. This would suggest that Isaac gave consent to be tied up and sacrificed, a notion found in ancient Jewish and Christian writings. *Ignatius Study Bible*

17. Isaac carried the wood to the site for the sacrifice, and this passage does not record any struggle as Isaac was bound and laid on the altar. Why do you think Isaac did not object?

18. CONNECTION: The three-day journey that followed Abraham's conversation with God must have been a time of anguish and uncertainty for him. Abraham's words seem calm and hopeful but as a loving father, he must have had doubts. To what extent does faith in God involve trusting him in spite of our reluctance and uncertainty? What are some ways we can believe in him when we cannot understand his ways or trust him when circumstances seem to contradict his promises to us? Can you share an example?

Read and record Hebrews 11:1. Write a prayer today asking for the kind of steadfast faith shown by Abraham.

DAY FOUR

Read Genesis 22:10-14

NOTE: The divine demand that Abraham sacrifice to God the son of promise is the greatest of his trials; after the successful completion of the test, he has only to buy a burial site for Sarah and find a wife for Isaac. The story is widely recognized as a literary masterpiece, depicting in a few lines God as the absolute Lord, inscrutable yet ultimately gracious, and Abraham, acting in moral grandeur as the great ancestor of Israel. *NABRE*

19. In today's lesson, we reach the climax of the story. Record Abraham's great act of faith and obedience in verse 10.

20. In verse 11 an angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven and he replied, "Here I am." This is the third time he repeated this phrase in this story (see Genesis 22:1, 7). What do you think is important about these words in the life of Abraham and in the life of the Christian today?

NOTE: The angel of the LORD sometimes appears to be a messenger of God sent from heaven to speak in God's name. At other times, however, he appears to be an actual manifestation of God and a sounding forth of his own divine voice. For theological and other reasons, this messenger is most likely an angel who mediates the words of God to the world and manifests his divine presence in visible and audible ways. *Ignatius Study Bible*

21a. What words were spoken by the angel of the LORD in verse 12 to stop Abraham from killing Isaac? Complete the phrases below.

Do not lay your hand

for now I know

since you have not withheld

b. Fear of the Lord does not mean terror or dread of God. Look up one of the following verses and record what it says about this idea; then explain what you think it means.

Deuteronomy 10:12

Psalm 111:10

Proverbs 14:26

THINK: This is not the first time God sent an angel to intervene in the lives of Abraham and his family (see Genesis 16:10-11; 19:15; 21:17). Spend some time today thinking about the presence of angels in your own life.

22. Summarize how the prediction made by Abraham in verse 8 (“God himself will provide the lamb...”) was fulfilled in verses 13-14.

23. Abraham is an example for all time of great obedience and faith. Read Luke 14:26 and comment on the kind of obedience to which Christians are called as followers of Jesus Christ.

24. CONNECTION: When we read this story, we may be fearful of what God might ask of us. We shudder to think of being put through such a frightening test, but it is comforting to remember that when Abraham reached out to kill his son, God stayed his hand. Sooner or later we will all confront a situation that will test us. With the grace of God, we are stronger than we think. Make a list of some things you most fear in life. What part of your faith do you think will help you endure?

In 1 Corinthians 10:13 we read that "God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength." Today pray for the faith to trust God in any test you may face.

DAY FIVE

Read Genesis 22:15-19

25. As we begin today, consider the ways Isaac foreshadowed the coming of Christ. Isaac, like Christ, was a promised son and both births were miraculous. Both were named by God before their birth and were expected to accomplish great things. Select one of the following pair of verses and explain another parallel between the stories of Isaac and Jesus.

Genesis 22:1-2 and Matthew 3:17

Genesis 22:6 and John 19:17

Genesis 22:7 and John 1:36

26. After Isaac was spared and the ram was sacrificed, the angel of the Lord again called to Abraham from heaven. Why did the LORD tell Abraham he swore an oath to him (verses 15-16)?

NOTE: Men swear oaths by calling on the name of the LORD. God, who has no superior to invoke, must swear by his own name to guarantee the fulfillment of his pledge using the words, "By myself" (verse 16). *Ignatius Study Bible*

27. The LORD promised to bless Abraham and repeated his promises that Abraham's offspring would be numerous (see Genesis 13:16; 15:5) and "possess the gate of their enemies" (verse 17). Comment on how being an heir to God's promises as an "offspring" of Abraham affects your relationship with God (see Galatians 3:29).

NOTE: The seventh and climactic statement of the blessings to Abraham. Unlike the other statements which were purely promissory, this one is presented as a reward for Abraham's extraordinary trust. *NABRE*

28. Verse 18 contains a third blessing that is similar to one we encountered earlier in Genesis 18:18. This blessing is most significant for us as non-Jews or Gentiles. Refer to Galatians 3:14 to explain why this is true.

29. Record all that Abraham did after the Lord spoke to him (verse 19).

NOTE: After God spoke to Abraham, he returned to live at Beersheba where he was told that Milcah had twelve sons with his younger brother, Nahor (verses 20-21). (Remember that Nahor did not accompany Abraham and his nephew Lot when they left their homeland in Ur of the Chaldeans.) In verse 23 the author introduces Isaac's wife, Rebekah, and her family who we will meet in a later chapter.

30. CONNECTION: Because he believed and obeyed God's voice, Isaac was spared and God swore that Abraham, his descendants and all the nations of the earth would gain his blessing. When we are able to trust God, to believe in him, and to obey his voice, not only will we receive his blessing, but so too our descendants and others in the world. Recall a time when you trusted God and stepped out in faith (even when it looked unpromising) and received a blessing that benefited your family and/or the world around you. Describe this incident to share with your group.

Read and record Proverbs 3:5-6. Begin your prayer today grateful for the legacy of faith that comes to us as blessing and faith from our ancestor, Abraham.

DAY SIX

Read Genesis 23:1-4

31. As chapter 23 begins, we return to Sarah. We learn that she lived to be one hundred twenty-seven years old (verse 1). She died in Hebron in the land of Canaan. Record how Abraham reacted to the death of his beloved wife (verse 2).

NOTE: Abraham was about age one hundred thirty-seven and Isaac was thought to be about 36 when his mother died.

32. St Peter tells us that "you [become the daughters of Sarah] as long as you do what is good and never let fears alarm you" (1 Peter 3:6). Though her life was not perfect, in what ways has Sarah become a role model for the women of our time?

33. According to verses 3-4, Abraham arose from Sarah's deathbed and addressed the Hittites. What words did he use in these verses to describe why his position in this negotiation was difficult?

34. In the final verses of this chapter, we learn that Abraham was successful in his negotiations. Skim verses 17-20 and record the location of the final resting place of Sarah.

NOTE: Abraham will be buried in this cave as well as others in his family (Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob and Leah).

35. What do you think the significance might be of this first possession of land by Abraham in the Promised Land? Refer to the Commentary, page 50.

36. CONNECTION: The story of Abraham and Sarah is one of the most colorful and intriguing in Scripture. The touching image of Abraham mourning and weeping at Sarah's grave after many years of marriage demonstrates this couple's love and devotion to one another. There can be no doubt that their relationship was far from perfect. Without the Lord at the center of their lives, it is possible that their marriage would not have survived. Close relationships are often difficult to maintain through our human efforts alone. Share with your group the story of one loving relationship that has inspired your life and your faith in God.

Read and record 1 John 4:7-8. As you pray today, recognize that all love ultimately comes from God and without God it is hard to sustain love.

Read pages 48-50 in *The Book of Genesis* by Lawrence DiPaolo, Jr., Ph.D. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, Catholic Edition. Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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