

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
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NOT YOUR AVERAGE FATHER-SON CAMPING TRIP

Genesis 20-22; Hebrews 11:19

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We are deep into the story of Abraham now. In fact, at times while studying for these messages, I feel as if I am traveling with Abraham as an embedded reporter, letting you know what's happening.

Today I have two points:

- Abraham was prepared for God's shocking command.
- Abraham's shocking obedience was based on reason.

**INTRODUCTION:** In Genesis, chapter 20, Abraham moved from where he had lived. We don't know why, however, the location where he went was approximately the same place he had been once before. This is the place where he detoured east and went into Egypt so his traveling estate would avoid famine. From the time he detoured until he left Egypt, we have no record of him consulting with the Lord on anything. I picture him as being on his own with the Lord watching. When he was thrown out of Egypt, he went back to the place where he had last worshiped the Lord. It was sort of a start over. I am sure you can relate.

Once again, he introduced Sarah as his sister. She was his half-sister, so I guess we can say this was a half lie... with the intent to deceive. He was afraid if he introduced her as his wife, they'd kill him and take her. The king of the area, Abimelek, took her anyway. As his supposed sister, they had no need to kill him.

God came to King Abimelek in a dream and told him she was a married woman. God told him Abraham was a prophet and if he returned Sarah to him, he would live. If not, he would die.

Abimelek felt bad for taking Sarah and so when he returned her to Abraham, he also sent a lot of things as gifts. He told Abraham to live wherever he wanted.

Now, let's look in chapter 21.

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 21:1-7

*Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. <sup>2</sup> Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. <sup>3</sup> Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. <sup>4</sup> When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. <sup>5</sup> Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.*

*<sup>6</sup> Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." <sup>7</sup> And she added, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."*

The promise of God had been fulfilled.

In verses 8 – 21 we learn the destiny of Ishmael, the son of Abraham with Hagar. It comes across to me as a sad story, but that may be because I am reading it through twenty-first century eyes.

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 21:17-20

*God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. <sup>18</sup> Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation."*

*<sup>19</sup> Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.*

*<sup>20</sup> God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. <sup>21</sup> While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.*

So even with Abraham's mistake, God blessed Ishmael.

Pardon me for oversimplifying the rest of that chapter, but the thrust of it is that Abimelek and Abraham had formal agreements.

## **ABRAHAM WAS PREPARED FOR GOD’S SHOCKING COMMAND**

Let’s go to chapter 22:

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 22:1-7

*Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!”*

*“Here I am,” he replied.*

<sup>2</sup> *Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.”*

<sup>3</sup> *Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. <sup>4</sup> On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. <sup>5</sup> He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.”*

<sup>6</sup> *Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together,*

<sup>7</sup> *Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, “Father?”*

*“Yes, my son?” Abraham replied.*

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

**EXPLANATION:** At this point, you may think...how brutal, how cruel! God told Abraham to sacrifice his son and Abraham made his son carry the wood. But since we have the rest of the story right in front of us, we know that God never had plans for Isaac to be sacrificed. In fact, there is no record anywhere of child sacrifices for those who followed God – Yaweh of the scripture.

How old was Isaac? We do not know exactly. He was old enough to walk, talk, and carry firewood on this back.

Abraham had a history of obeying God...we see that in the first part of the narrative. God told him to go in chapter 12, and he did. Every time God told Abraham to do something, as far as I can tell, he did it. We don't have record of Abraham just refusing to do what God wanted.

Abraham also had a history of believing God. We see that throughout these chapters.

We also see that Abraham took steps of faith on numerous occasions, and as we've followed the story we see that God incrementally increased his faith along the way. One of the biggest steps of faith is when Abraham and his men became an army and defeated the army that captured the people of the city where Lot lived.

We also see that Abraham reasoned or bargained with God. In chapter 18, we see that God told Abraham he would destroy Sodom, but would spare it if there were 50 righteous people. Abraham reasoned with God. What if there were less than 50? God said ok. 45? Abraham and God bargained back and forth lowering the number each time all the way down to 10 people.

So, we see that Abraham has a history of obeying God, believing God, taking steps of faith with God, and bargaining with God. We also see that Abraham had a history of trying to help God here and there:

- He tried to help God when he diverted east to Egypt to avoid famine.
- He tried to help God when he lied about his wife.
- He tried to help God when he had a baby by Hagar.
- He tried to help God when he lied about his wife again.

Now let's look at how God had prepared Abraham for this ultimate test of faith.

- God told him to go and, from day one, God was faithful to Abraham.
- God challenged Abraham to trust him for his daily sustenance.
- Even when Abraham messed up, God forgave him and was faithful.
- God told him to look at the stars and compare the number of stars with the number of his descendants.
- For a long time, Abraham waited and believed that some day he and Sarah would have a son.
- God regularly reiterated his covenant with Abraham.

When we get to chapter 22, we see a different Abraham than we knew at the beginning. In chapter 22, we see Abraham with a direct order from God to sacrifice the son he loves. He obeys. He does not bargain. He does not lie. He does not try to help out God. In this chapter, Abraham's faith is so strong, he'll do whatever the Lord tells him to. This is the place where God's covenant with Abraham and Abraham's faith intersect.

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 22:8-18

*Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.*

*<sup>9</sup> When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. <sup>10</sup> Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. <sup>11</sup> But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"*

*"Here I am," he replied.*

*<sup>12</sup> "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."*

*<sup>13</sup> Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. <sup>14</sup> So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."*

*<sup>15</sup> The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time <sup>16</sup> and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, <sup>17</sup> I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, <sup>18</sup> and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."*

## **ABRAHAM'S SHOCKING OBEDIENCE WAS BASED ON REASON**

**EXPLANATION:** Why did Abraham have so much confidence in God? Why did he just obey?

Here's why. Abraham had rock solid evidence that God had never failed him, and he reasoned that God would not fail him now.

Turn in your Bibles to Hebrews 11:19

**SCRIPTURE:** Hebrews 11:19

*Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.*

- NAS: He considered that God is able to raise the dead.
- KJV: Accounting that God could raise the dead.
- INT: Having reckoned that even God could raise the dead.

The Greek word for reasoned is *logízomai* (the root of the English terms "logic, logical") – properly, *compute*, "take into account"; *reckon* (come to a "bottom-line"), i.e. *reason* to a *logical conclusion* (decision).

Why did Abraham have so much confidence in God? Because “he reasoned,” “he came to the bottom line,” “he logically concluded” that God could raise the dead. Why? Based on his personal experience of God.

I was just about tickled pink when I ran across this word because for some weird reason in our modern times, we see faith and logic as being diametrically opposed.

In Abraham's story, faith and reason go hand in hand. On the way up the mountain, Abraham had time to logically conclude that:

- Since God had always been faithful, it was logical that he would be now.
- Since God had reiterated the covenant with Abraham numerous times and had never recanted, it was logical that the covenant was still intact.
- Since Isaac was the promised son, it was only logical that Isaac must be alive for the promise to be fulfilled.

THEREFORE, without hesitation, Abraham went up the mountain with his son. He did not question or bargain. *Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.*

Abraham was at a point of complete surrender.

Consider the vast difference between God telling Abraham to take a journey and God telling Abraham to sacrifice his son. A whole lot happened between those two steps of faith. God increased his faith at levels he could handle until he was able to handle the command to sacrifice his son.

Faith and reasoning are not diametrically opposed. They are joined together.

And God intervened! Abraham's comment in verse 8: "*God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.*" When read alongside Hebrews 11:19 - *Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead...* it leads me to believe that when he told Isaac "God would provide a lamb", he meant Isaac would be the lamb. And then God surprised and stopped Abraham while he had a knife in his hand. God provided a ram to be the sacrifice. Yes, he could have risen Isaac from the dead, but he chose not to.

When you have a decision to make, you must make the decision based on the information you have. You must make the decision based on your experience. And when you ask God to lead you, you'll have to remind yourself what you know about God, and what you've experienced with God. When you do that, what you decide will not be an act of impulsive stupidity, but an act of faith based on solid reasoning.

**APPLICATION:** "Well, I'll just quit my job and trust God and see what happens." Shake and bake that statement for a minute. Use your own information and personal experience to logically conclude where that will go. Unless a person has adequate savings or some kind of plan, that's not a good idea. How about this instead? "I'll continue in my current job while asking God to lead me to another one."

That's just one example. We could talk about this for a long time. Some of you listening may be on the verge of a decision. Some of you may feel led by the Lord to do something, but you are hesitant. Maybe your faith is weak. Maybe you are afraid of change. Maybe you are just afraid. Remind yourself how the Lord has been faithful to you. Remember the times you've taken steps of faith and how your life was more fulfilling because you trusted him.

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