



February 11/12, 2012
Genesis 20-22
“A Sacrifice of Love”
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This study finally brings us to the long-awaited moment – the birth of Isaac. Abraham and Sarah have been waiting 25 long years for God to make good on his promise. Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90! The truth is that not only is this a remarkable event; it’s really a miracle. In a previous message, Pastor Gary mentioned that “God’s delay is often for his display,” and this is one of those times. God waited until they were well past their prime so no one could claim that this was a natural event, but only that this would be clearly seen as a supernatural event. In [Genesis 21:7](#), Sarah said, “*Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.*”

Isaac’s birth is an incredible moment and they laugh with delight. ¹ Actually, Isaac’s name means, “*laughter.*” God had selected his name in advance, not because Abraham and Sarah would laugh with delight, but because when God first told them they would have a baby in their old age, they laughed with disbelief. ² So the name God selected was appropriate. There was a lot of laughter concerning this baby. Abraham and Sarah first laughed with disbelief, but now they laugh with delight. It’s not hard to imagine that they were reminded of this every time they called Isaac’s name.

So, here they are celebrating the most joyous event in their lives, the birth of their first child together. But, in the next chapter we read that God asked Abraham to do the most unimaginable thing with the child they have waited 25 years to have; he asked Abraham to sacrifice him as a burnt offering! ³

¹ [Genesis 21:6](#) – “*God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.*”

² [Genesis 17:15-19](#) (Abraham) and [Genesis 18:10-15](#) (Sarah)

³ [Genesis 22:1-2](#) – “*Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, ‘Abraham!’ ‘Here I am,’ he replied. Then God said, ‘Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.’*”

It's a good think Abraham didn't have theology figured out, because he would have probably said, "God, I refuse to do this on the grounds that this is not consistent with your character and nature!" And that would have been a true statement. In this situation God was looking to "test" ⁴ Abraham, and he responded not with a theological argument, but with child-like faith and obedience.

Abraham and Isaac

1. Sarah is not involved in this account; it's 100% about Abraham and Isaac.
2. Abraham lived in Beersheba, which is in south-central Israel.
 - a. God told him to go to Moriah, which is a mountain range 50 miles north in Jerusalem.
 - b. According to [Genesis 22:4](#) it took Abraham three days to make the journey.
3. Even though Abraham is known as a man of faith, we shouldn't dehumanize him by thinking that he wasn't wrestling with God during the three-day trip concerning his will and God's will.
 - a. There's God's will and then there's our will, and when God asks us to do something that requires tremendous courage and sacrifice, we will wrestle with our will and God's will.
 - b. Jesus wrestled with his will and the will of God in the Garden of Gethsemane, when he said, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will" ([Matthew 26:39](#))
 - c. Abraham must have been looking at his son during their journey with tender eyes.
 - d. There must have been a battle going on in his heart between his love for God and his love for his son.
 - e. He must have asked questions like these:
 - i. How will my son ever understand what I am about to do?
 - ii. How will God make this work out?
 - f. Abraham did not have [Romans 8:28](#) ⁵ to rely on, all he had was raw faith married to simple obedience.
 - i. He didn't have any patriarchs to look to for a model of faith and courage; he was the patriarch!

⁴ The KJV uses the word "tempt." It's important to note that this word no longer is used in the same sense today. The truth is that [James 1:13](#) reminds us that "God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone." This word can also be translated, "to prove." With this understanding, it would mean that God was using this situation to prove something.

⁵ "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

- ii. There had to be moments of real agony over what was about to take place.
- 4. This account is has three “firsts.”
 - a. The first time the word “*love*” appears in the Bible is [Genesis 22:2](#).
 - i. God waited 2,000 years and 21 chapters in Genesis to unveil this word, and it’s important to know that this is a story about love.
 - b. The first time the word “*worship*” appears in the Bible is [Genesis 22:5](#).
 - i. This is a story about worship.
 - c. The first time the word “*lamb*” appears in the Bible is [Genesis 22:7](#).
 - i. This is a story about a lamb.
- 5. When God told him to take “*your only son, Isaac,*” that was the seventh time God appeared to Abraham.
 - a. Isaac was not Abraham’s only biological son, but he was the son that God had willed, and that’s why God repeated the phrase “*your only son*” three times in this chapter. ([Genesis 22:2, 12, 16](#))
 - b. Ishmael was born to Abraham and Hagar out human will.
 - i. Muslims have rewritten the biblical account and indicate in the Koran that it was Ishmael, not Isaac, who was nearly sacrificed, since Ishmael was the older son of Abraham.
 - ii. The Koran doesn’t mention Abraham’s name.
 - iii. Muslims believe that Mohammed was a descendent of Ishmael, as most Arabs are, so it’s a revisionist history because they want their ancestor to be the child of the promise, not the ancestor of the Jews.
 - iv. The biblical account mentions Isaac six times in [Genesis 22](#), but the account in the Koran doesn’t mention Ishmael by name one time.
 - v. The events of Genesis were recorded by Moses 2,000 years before Mohammed received his “revelation” of this story.
 - c. As far as God’s promise is concerned, there is only one son, and that son is Isaac.
- 6. Many incorrectly assume that Isaac was a little boy.
 - a. [Genesis 21:34](#) indicates Abraham “*lived in the land of the Philistines for a long time.*”
 - b. [Genesis 22:1](#) begins by saying, “*some time later...*”
 - c. [Genesis 23:1](#) records the fact that Sarah was 127 years old, which would make Isaac 37 years old.
 - i. Josephus believed Isaac was 25 years old.⁶
 - ii. The Jewish Talmud indicates he was 37 years old.

⁶ *Antiquities*, chapter 13, section 2. As with all Wikipedia or Web site information, caution is advised. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josephus> - <http://www.josephus.org/>

iii. Adam Clarke's understanding was that Isaac was 33 years old.⁷

7. The important thing to be aware of concerning Isaac is that he was a willing participant/sacrifice, not a passive nine-year-old boy that Abraham had to bind up in order to bring to Moriah.
8. Moriah means, "Yahweh displays himself."
 - a. The word "*Moriah*" only appears two times in the Bible, here and in [2 Chronicles 3:1](#), where we learn that Mt. Moriah was the place King Solomon built the Temple.
 - b. Abraham called this place, "The Lord will provide." ([Genesis 22:14](#))
 - i. He used a future tense, because he was looking ahead to a time some 2,000 years later when the Lamb of God, at that very place, would die for the sins of the world.
 - ii. The peak of Mt. Moriah is called Calvary.⁸
 1. The outcroppings of the hill look like a skull, and it was at this place that Jesus would be bound and nailed to a cross as the willing sacrifice for the sins of the world.
 - a. See photo of what is known as Gordon's Calvary on page #7 of this study guide. What looks like eyes, nose and a mouth are seen in the side of the hill to the left of the structure and wall in the lower area of the photograph.⁹
9. The word "*worship*" means, "to lie prostrate; to bow down."
10. Abraham's faith is demonstrated when he tells his servants, "*We will worship and then we will come back to you.*"
 - a. [Hebrews 11:17-19](#) - "*By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, 'It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned [reconciled]. Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.'*"
11. Abraham carries the fire and the knife, but Isaac, the willing participant, carries the wood!

⁷ As with all Wikipedia information, caution is advised. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adam_Clarke

⁸ As with all Wikipedia information, caution is advised. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calvary>

⁹ http://blog2.bibleplaces.com/uploaded_images/65858a26df9f_F1DB/GordonsCalvarymat06666.jpg

12. [Genesis 22:6b-7](#) is the only recorded conversation in the Bible between Abraham and Isaac.
13. Isaac understood what had been known for 2,000 years concerning a blood sacrifice; that God provided the skins of animals to cover Adam and Eve, and that Abel offered the right sacrifice and his brother, Cain, did not.
14. Abraham replied to Isaac's question about the whereabouts of the lamb by telling Isaac that "*God himself [would] provide the lamb...*" ([Genesis 22:8](#))
 - a. Jehovah-Jireh means, "the Lord will provide," which is the covenant name for God.
15. There must have been rejoicing when "*... the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven*" with instructions to "*not lay a hand on the boy!*"
16. Abraham sacrificed the ram (male lamb) instead of his son.
17. God was making Abraham an example of faith for us.
 - a. God already knew his heart, because he knows all things.
 - b. He wasn't doing this "*test*" to find out something about Abraham, he was doing it to prove something to us.
 - c. God was showing that a father's act of love and a son's act of humility would ultimately be expressed at the cross.
 - d. He was proving something to us about love, worship and a lamb, and that as bizarre as we think it is for God to even test a father by asking him to sacrifice his son, which is exactly what God did for us, only that wasn't a test.
18. Ten Parallels Between Isaac And Jesus
 - a. Both are born according to a promise.
 - b. Both are born under miraculous circumstances.
 - c. Both are loved by their father.
 - d. Both are about the same age at the time of sacrifice.
 - e. Both are escorted to the same place of sacrifice (Moriah).
 - f. Both carry their own wood.
 - g. Both willingly submit to their father.
 - h. Both ask a question of their father.
 - i. Isaac was brought back from the dead figuratively, and Jesus was brought back from the dead literally.
 - j. The next event for Isaac was to get a bride (Rebekah), and the next event for Jesus was to get a bride (the Church).

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Genesis 21:1-6](#) and [Genesis 22:1-14](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. Spend time talking about the times you've doubted God.
 - a. What triggers your memory of this experience?
 - b. How have you experienced God's goodness not being predicated upon how much faith you have?
4. How has the Lord been good and true in your life, when you have been neither?
5. What are some examples of times when you responded to the Lord with child-like faith and obedience instead of a well thought out manner?
6. Would you have been as willing as Abraham to take your son to the place of sacrifice?
7. How have you dealt with the struggle between your will and God's will?
8. Read and discuss [Romans 8:28](#).
 - a. How has the Lord "worked things out" in difficult circumstances and situations?
 - b. Discuss Pastor Gary's quote: "Abraham did not have [Romans 8:28](#) to rely on, all he had was raw faith married to simple obedience."
9. Who are the men and women who've been a model of faith in your life?
 - a. Name specific characteristics you've seen in their life.
 - b. Are there specific examples of experiences you've had that you can share that demonstrate their godly influence in your life?
10. Read and discuss the three firsts in #4 above.
11. What was your reaction to the fact that Isaac wasn't a little boy, but a 30-something-year-old adult? (See #6 and #7 above)
12. Read and discuss the ten parallels between Isaac and Jesus. (See #18 above)
13. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: remember that God is always working behind the scenes *"for the good of those*

who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28); learn to yield themselves and their will to the will and of God; make the choice to trust in the Lord with child-like, “raw faith married to simple obedience”; model a life of faith to others as a testimony of God’s goodness!



* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).