



“THREE TESTS OF FAITH!!”

- Our **mission** is to *Reach* people in the Name of Jesus; *Disciple* people in the Way of Jesus; *Empower* people in the Service of Jesus.
 - Our **method** is to ensure that everything we do is *Christ Centered; Word Focused; & Ministry Minded*
 - Our **message** is *the Gospel*.
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‘Have you ever felt like God was asking too much...?’
Genesis 22: 1-19

THOUGHT TO PONDER:

Strong faith does not save us; it is the object of our faith (not faith itself) that brings about new life. We are saved by Who our faith is in. It is not believing in ourselves but believing in Someone higher. We may have just enough faith to turn to God for healing and wholeness. We can barely turn, we can barely believe...yet God accepts our weakness; He even tolerates our faith failings--the many times we act on our own without trusting Him. Our faith is weak, but God is strong.

INTRODUCTION:

Sometimes people will ask us to do something, which we feel obligated to do or have to come up with some excuse not to and we tell ourselves, “They’re asking too much!” **What we really mean is that the person has asked us to go beyond the level of sacrifice with which we are comfortable.** (eg. Will you help me move again? We think, “That’s three times too many, bro?” We politely explain that we will be out of town and then we think to ourselves, “Where am I going to go?” Ultimately, if it is something we really don’t want to do, we can get out of it.

But, how about when God asks us to do something?

He may not send you an e-mail or call you on the phone, but there are times when you know that God was prompting you in your heart to do something. Usually the way we get out of that is simply to ignore Him. How many of you know you can run, but you can't hide!?!

What happens when your will and God's will comes into such conflict that there is no way that it can be a win/win situation? Would you follow God because He is God, or would you declare Him unreasonable and go your own way?

In Genesis 21, we read that Abraham was asked to send away his son Ishmael. Galatians 4 tells us that Ishmael represented the world and the works of the flesh. **We will never give God our Isaacs until we have sent away our Ishmaels.**

We agree that God has the right to ask us to give up the bad, but we never expect Him to require of us the good. It is a test between two loves. Abraham loved Isaac and God. Let's take a look at [three big tests of our faith.](#)

BIBLICAL STUDY:

I. Can You Trust God with the Possessions He Has Given You?

Abraham was a hundred years old when Isaac was born. Remember...he had already given up his other son, Ishmael. So, in a very real sense this is now Abraham's only son. This is the son whom Abraham had waited over a quarter century. This is the only son of his beloved wife, Sarah.

Then God shows up and orders that Abraham go sacrifice him as a burnt offering. God offers no explanation. He even uses painful words like "*your only son, whom you love.*" We cannot imagine the pain that Abraham is in. He must now choose between the God he has loved and served and his own son Isaac.

Sometimes we say we are willing to give up everything FOR the Lord, but are we willing to give it up TO the Lord? There's a big difference between giving up something for the Lord and giving it to the Lord.

God had given Abraham a priceless possession and then asked for it back! It was the test of Abraham's faith because he loved both Isaac and God. **It is not enough to give God a place in our life, or priority, He wants superiority. He doesn't just want prominence in our lives, He expects preeminence!** Is there anyone, anything, or any blessing that we love more than God? Is it possible that Abraham was beginning to love the blessing more than the Blesser, the gift more than the Giver? Was his world now getting more wrapped up in Isaac than the One who gave Isaac in the first place?

ILL. – The story is told a father who had just purchased a meal for his son at McDonald's. He was seated with him in one of those hard plastic booths. The father reached over to sample one of the boy's French fries and said, "Do you mind if I have one of these!?" The son gave his father a stern look and said, "No, these are mine!" He didn't want to share, didn't want to give his father even a single French fry.

Unamused by the boy's reaction, the father had three immediate thoughts about his son...

- 1) He really doesn't understand where the French fries come from.
- 2) He doesn't realize that I could take all the fries from him and there isn't a thing he could do about it.
- 3) He doesn't understand that I could get my own fries and don't need his.

So what is the point or the moral of the story...?

- 1) We often fail to see or forget where our blessings and possessions come from, not recognizing the true source. Psalm 22:28-30 *"28 For the kingdom is the LORD's, And He rules over the nations. 29 All the prosperous of the earth Shall eat and worship; All those who go down to the dust Shall bow before Him, Even he who cannot keep himself alive. 30 A posterity shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation,"*
- 2) We frequently think that we are in full control of our possessions (time, talent and resources), thus forgetting the Sovereignty of God. If you ever need a good reminder of the 'Sovereignty' of God take some time to read the entire 104th Psalm. *"1 Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, You are very great: You are clothed with honor and majesty, 2 Who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain. 3 He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters, Who makes the clouds His chariot, Who walks on the wings of the wind, 4 Who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire."*
- 3) The third spiritual lesson we can take from the story is that we think that what we have is actually our own, missing the fact that everything is God's...we need Him, He doesn't need us. Psalm 24:1 *"The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."*

The test is somewhere along life's journey when God will ask us to give some blessings back to Him. Can we trust Him with our possessions?

II. Can You Trust God with His Purposes for You?

Not only did God give Abraham a possession, but He gave him a purpose. **"With Isaac there is a purpose, and through him the nations will be blessed."** Understanding and doing the will of God requires three simple steps—*finding*, *following* and *finishing* the will of God.

The opposite of obedience of course is disobedience. **Faith is not simply obeying in spite of the evidence; it is obeying in spite of the consequences.** It is obeying whether or not we clearly understand the point of the purpose. Job said in Job 42:2-3 *“I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. 3 You asked, ‘Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.”*

During these times, only the heathens and pagans made human sacrifices, so while he may not have been totally shocked at the idea, it was no doubt perplexing because **this was the first time God had ever asked for human sacrifice. So I can imagine Abraham thinking to himself, what is this thing God is really asking me to do?**

He got the supplies, cut the wood, saddled the donkeys and the little party of four headed out. The silence is conspicuous but Abraham’s mind must have been churning with all sorts of questions...

- “I waited for my son to be born for so many years. Will Sarah and I ever have another one?”
- “What will happen to all the promises that God has given to me?”
- “How will I ever be able to look Sarah in the face again? How will I be able to return home with the stains of Isaac’s blood on my clothes?”

How many of you would agree that there are times when we go through hardships for reasons that are not apparent until God’s greater will is fulfilled? Times when we have to pass through adversity before we are able to understand how God uses trials to complete His purposes in our lives!?!

Here’s the problem... **Life doesn’t afford us the opportunity to pay what we like and still gain what we want...neither does God! Sometimes we offer sacrifices for which God is not asking!**

Jesus himself said in John 12:26-28 *“If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor. 27 “Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify Your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, saying, “I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.”*

Abraham was beginning to walk in the direction that God had planned for him. His was informed, intentional, immediate, and obedient! You don’t see Abraham whining all the way to the top of the mountain. In fact, when Isaac said, *“We have the wood, the fire and the knife, but where is the sacrifice,”* Abraham said, *“God will provide for the sacrifice.”* He was speaking faith into the heart of his son.

Can we trust God with the possessions He has given, and can we trust Him with the purpose He has for us?

III. **Can You Trust God with the Promises He has Spoken to You?**

God said to Abraham years earlier, “*You are going to have a son. It’s going to happen.*” Did it happen the next day, or during the next ten years? Neither, but **the day came when Isaac was born in fulfillment of God’s promise.**

Further God said, “Not only are you going to have a son; all the world will be blessed through your son Isaac and his descendants.” That was the promise God had given Abraham. Jesus said about Abraham in John 8:56, “*He saw My day, and he rejoiced.*” Abraham saw it on Mount Moriah. That’s where God gave him a vision of the Messiah Who one day would take away the sins of the world.

CONCLUSION:

Faith is a gift; it’s not in our hands, so we can relax. We don’t have to summon up faith; we simply take what level of belief we have and run with it, trusting that God will help us to keep going one day at a time. Here is another personal thought for you to ponder as well, “*I used to think that faith was a state at which you arrived, but I am finding that faith is an ongoing conversation between God and me.*”

Need more faith? God has an app for that! Romans 10:17, “*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*” The more we read and gain a working knowledge of the Bible, the more faith we’ll have. When faith flickers, stoke the fire.

Faith is following a path with few guarantees. We choose to trust God even when we’re not sure if our lives will improve. Sometimes all we have is a hang-by-the-fingernails faith. Only in a world where faith is difficult can faith exist, for faith might begin as an experiment but it must become an experience.

Faith is not a feeling...yet when we’re hurting, our feelings may overpower our faith. We need to remind ourselves of God’s promises and stop thinking with our feelings. Sometimes we say things that do not reflect how we believe; our words are simply an expression of wounded emotions. God understands.

Belief involves risk; we carry on with no clear end in sight and perhaps even no clear view of the next step. We need to admit when our faith is weak. Maybe all we have is a tiny germ of faith; that may well be the Holy Spirit working in us, and it’s enough. Trust God to make that tiny faith grow.

I opened this study talking about “**Three Tests of Faith**” those being in the areas of: **Possessions**, **Purpose** and **Promise**, but I want to conclude this study mentioning 3 things which are completely amazing about God’s Provision that also start with the letter P....

1) **God's Provision is Prophetic**

God's provision is perfect because He knows what we need, where we need it and when we need it. He provides the right thing at the right place and at the very right time. Remember that the word **Jireh** means to see or foresee. We have a God who sees what we need. In actual fact, He foresaw yesterday what we need today.

Not only does God provide the perfect things before there is a need, He often provides before there is even a prayer uttered. There are no prayers recorded in the Genesis account, no arguing or debating with God. I don't know, maybe Abraham did pray, or maybe he just didn't know what to say and so said nothing. Unawareness or the lack of asking doesn't stop God from providing for us. He is a loving Father who knows what we need before we ask and He loves to surprise us. Is 65:24 says "*Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.*"

2) **God's Provision is Productive**

Even though the request to sacrifice his son was a horrifying one, the knowledge that God would provide was strong and it allowed Abraham to do 2 things (which a knowledge of God's provision can produce in us) ... Worship & Giving! ...

Abraham made it abundantly clear to everyone that he was going to Worship God. He was going to offer a burnt offering to God back in (V.2). He was being called to come and worship God and Abraham was prepared to do this. Verse 5 he tells his servants to wait while he and Isaac go and worship God. Don't you think that is amazing? Before God provided for Abraham, he was willing to worship him as God and Lord.

Are we willing to worship God before we see the provision in our lives? Or do we actually wait for the provision and worship the provision rather than the provider?

The second thing that Abraham was able to do was to be a giver. Because he knew that God would provide all his needs, he was willing to give to God that which was most valuable to him. What is it that you could not dream of giving up? Whatever it is... "If you can't bear to think of giving that very thing up, you don't know God as **Jehovah Jireh**. Hear that again... if we can't bear to think of giving something up, we don't know God as **Jehovah Jireh** because if we did, we would hold that thing loosely. Are you prepared to give up all that God has given you now so that you can receive what he has in store for you?

3) **God's Provision is Perpetual**

Our God is an eternal God who doesn't change. Therefore His provision will always be there for those who trust Him. "**God's work, done God's way, will not lack God's support.**" **YAHWEH is not just the God who provides but He has also become the PROVISION itself. In the Genesis account you have the Father's Sacrifice, the Son's Submission and God's Substitution. In Jesus' death at Calvary, you have the Father's Sacrifice, The Son's Submission and God's Substitution!**

When God provided a substitute for Isaac, Abraham called that place “*The LORD Will Provide*” and for evermore there became a saying about that place “*On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.*” Centuries later, outside the walls of the city of Jerusalem, a city built on that very same mountain, Christ was crucified and the prophecy of Abraham was fulfilled. At Calvary “*It was provided*” and it was provided for all generations. What Christ accomplished on that cross, no one else could have. What He accomplished was the chance for us to be forgiven completely of all our sins. We don’t need to offer guilt offerings ever again, because the One offering of the Perfect Lamb of God achieved once and for all what we needed. God Provided and His provision is perpetual.

Do you know God as **Jehovah Jireh**? Do you trust Him to provide just what you need when and where you need it. He will because His provision is prophetic. Are you trusting in His provision enough to be worshipping Him now in all your current circumstances? And are you willing to give up all you have to gain what He is wanting to give you?

Can you trust the promises of God even when the circumstances of life do not add up? Can you believe that God has a way to keep His Word? On life’s journey, you may face many problems, sicknesses, and disappointments – but God will still keep His promises.

If you haven’t already get to know God as **Jehovah Jireh**. May you be able to say (if not already) that “**He is my provider!**”