

## “Let Go!” (Genesis 22:1-24)

A man was walking along a narrow path, not paying much attention to where he was going. Suddenly he slipped over the edge of a cliff. As he fell, he grabbed a branch growing from the side of the cliff.

Realizing that he couldn't hang on for long, he called for help.

*Man:* Is anybody up there?

*Voice:* Yes, I'm here!

*Man:* Who's that?

*Voice:* The Lord.

*Man:* Lord, help me!

*Voice:* Do you trust me?

*Man:* I trust you completely, Lord.

*Voice:* Good. Let go of the branch.

*Man:* What???

*Voice:* I said, let go of the branch.

*Man:* [After a long pause] Is anybody else up there?<sup>1</sup>

Like this dangling, cliffhanger, are you ever afraid that God might ask too much of you? Consider for a moment what would be too much? Our daily lives are built around people and things we enjoy: a spouse, children, friends, a job, a hobby, possessions, and future plans. These are the pillars and beams of our earthly support system; and if one of them is removed, we sometimes feel as though the framework of our lives is collapsing around us. But there are times when God says “Let go!” and the nuts and bolts that hold our world together suddenly snap. If you've ever been in that situation you know the pressure a test like that can exert on your faith.<sup>2</sup> Abraham was well acquainted with such strenuous tests. In Genesis 22, we come to one of the greatest chapters in the entire Bible. It is also one of the greatest crises in the Bible. This crisis is a crisis of obedience and it is structured in three flowing segments.

**1. The test of obedience (22:1-8).** Our passage begins with the phrase, “**Now it came about after these things.**”<sup>3</sup> This phrase looks back over Abraham's pilgrimage of faith.<sup>4</sup> During these years, Abraham encountered several tests; some he passed and others he failed.<sup>5</sup> Abraham was quite human, like you and me. Yet, despite a mixture of success and failure, God sought to mature Abraham and use his life powerfully. Maybe you have had your share of success, but you've also experienced some failure along the way. You need to know today that God has not discarded you, nor is He finished with you. In fact, He wants to take you to your next spiritual level. He does this through tests. Notice the next phrase “**God<sup>6</sup> tested<sup>7</sup> Abraham.**” The word “test” still conjures up nightmares for me: burning the midnight oil to memorize volumes of facts, noticing my increased heart rate as the instructor passed out the test, staring into space and trying to remember a name or a date. We have all been through the stress of tests.<sup>8</sup> Yet, it is wrong to assume that tests only take place in school. The real tests take place in the course of our lives. In these tests, whether we pass or fail is of the utmost importance.

We must keep two things in mind here:

- ***First, there is a vast difference between God's purpose in testing a person and Satan's purpose in testing a person.*** God tests to confirm and strengthen. Satan tests to corrupt and weaken. In the New Testament, James lets us know that God was testing Abraham so his faith could be “perfected” before men (Jas 2:22). The word “perfect” means complete or mature.<sup>9</sup> Persevering through tests and being obedient to God made Abraham's faith visible to an on looking world. God tested Abraham in order to give him an opportunity to display his true character.<sup>10</sup> He will do the same for you. Every test God brings into your life is an opportunity for you to shine and advance to another spiritual grade level. This ought to excite you. Even if spiritual tests

are difficult, they have a wonderful purpose: to make you more like Christ so the world can see God's greatness revealed in you (Prov 17:3; Jas 1:2-4, 12-14; 1 Pet 1:6-7).

- ***Second, we need to be aware that Abraham had walked with God for about 35 years before God tested him in this most severe way.***<sup>11</sup> God did not give him this severe test until He knew Abraham was equipped for it. One of the great things about God is that He does not give us tests we cannot pass. His tests come when we are prepared. Furthermore, He supplies an extra measure of grace to help us through times of testing (1 Cor 10:13). God is not like some of our former teachers who gave us premature tests or pop quizzes on information they had never covered in lectures. He is gracious and faithful. He wants for us to receive the highest grade possible!

We are told from the very first verse in this chapter that Abraham will be tested. Notice when God calls Abraham's name, Abraham responds with, **"Here I am"** (22:1; cf. 22:11).<sup>12</sup> He was willing to hear from God and be moved to action. Howard Hendricks, the great Christian writer and teacher, likes to say that great leaders must be "FAT: faithful, available, and teachable." Do those characteristics define who you are? Obedience and discipleship demand that you be a person who is FAT. Sometimes people and things can become too important to us. We grip them with closed fists and white knuckles, so God has to pry open our fingers to loosen our hold.<sup>13</sup> This is not ideal. Are you in the midst of a test? Is something that is important to you at risk or being taken from you? A job? A dream? A friendship? Your finances? Don't let God take it from you; give it to Him! Be a FAT person for the glory of God.

The Lord speaks again in 22:2: **"Take now your son,<sup>14</sup> your only<sup>15</sup> son, whom you love,<sup>16</sup> Isaac,<sup>17</sup> and go<sup>18</sup> to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains<sup>19</sup> of which I will tell you."** This verse is not made up of a series of gracious requests. Instead, God gives three blood-curdling commands ("**take**," "**go**," and "**offer**") without an explanation.<sup>20</sup> Abraham was not simply to wound his son and then nurse him back to health.<sup>21</sup> He was to offer his son as a burnt offering. Can you feel this man's pain? It must have been horrific!

The question that is often asked at this point in the text is, "How could a God of love command Abraham to offer up his only son as a sacrifice?" For family devotions, Martin Luther once read this account and his wife, Katie, said, "I do not believe it. God would not have treated his son like that!" "But, Katie," Luther replied, "He did" (see Isa 53:10).<sup>22</sup> Thus, we are forced to the conclusion that the sacrifice of Isaac could not have been wrong, whether only attempted or accomplished, because God is incapable of evil (Jas 1:13-15; 1 John 1:5). Much more than this, as Luther recognized, it could not be wrong to sacrifice an only son because God actually did sacrifice His only begotten Son (see John 3:16).<sup>23</sup>

Shortly after our first child, Joshua, was born, as his father I dedicated him to the Lord. I'll never forget that moment. I had just finished getting him ready for bed when the Lord impressed upon me that he did not belong to me. While little Joshua was lying on his back on our changing table, I got down on my knees and acknowledged to the Lord that Joshua was His. I told the Lord that He could have His sovereign way with him. I love Joshua with all that is within me, but I told the Lord He could take him from me at any time if that was in accordance with His perfect will. I pray that will not be the case, but Joshua is not mine; he is not Lori's. He belongs to God and God alone! You see, it's one thing to say, "The Lord blessed me with a child," but the question is, what do you say when the Lord asks for your child back? Life is merely on loan to us, both as parents and as children. God can ask for its return at any time. Are you living with this realization? I challenge you today to hold loosely what God has given you. In 22:3-4, we see that Abraham obeyed God's commands immediately and unquestioningly. Moses informs us that Abraham **"rose early in the morning."** Now, if I had been Abraham, I would have spent

at least a day or two praying and fasting. I would have talked things through with my wife. I would have sought the best pastoral counsel available. But not Abraham... he obeyed (Ps 119:60). Scripture does not say, but I suspect his decision to get up early may have had more to do with torment than eagerness.<sup>24</sup> Notice Abraham **“saddled his donkey”** and also **“split wood for the burnt offering.”** This is a man who is over 100 years old and has numerous servants. What was he thinking? My guess is he was probably trying to occupy his mind with activity so he wouldn't have to think about what lie ahead. Yet in spite of all of this, he **“arose and went to the place of which God had told him.”** What is even more unbearable is that he could not finish the deed quickly; he was given time to think about what lay ahead. It was a three-day<sup>25</sup> journey from Beersheba to Moriah<sup>26</sup> (50 miles). Three days in which to think about what he must do. This was all a part of the test of obedience.

In 22:5-8, we see that Abraham's obedience was based on faith. After seeing the dreaded destination, Abraham spoke. He instructed his servants to stay behind with his donkey. Why didn't Abraham bring the servants up the mountain with him? He knew his servants would try to stop him. They would have kept him from placing his son on the altar. They would have concluded that he had lost his mind and would have tried to subdue him “for his own good.” Granted, they would have done this out of ignorance. Nevertheless, they would have attempted to foil God's plan for Abraham. We must show the same wisdom that Abraham did. If we want to be faithful followers then we must be diligent in removing every obstacle. Sometimes we must eliminate people that keep us from holy living. We must constantly be evaluating our friendships because some people will lead us in the wrong direction.<sup>27</sup> Sometimes effective discipleship begins with subtraction. Here is another test of obedience. Are you willing to do whatever you can to walk with God?

Don't miss the last phrase in 22:5: **“we will worship<sup>28</sup> and return to you.”** Abe is saying, “God told me to go kill my son, but we are coming back.”<sup>29</sup> He was prepared to kill Isaac, burn his body as an offering and then watch God raise him up off the altar. Why? Because he believed God was able.<sup>30</sup> Now I'm sure he must have been praying his heart out, but he was obedient in the midst of great anguish. Abraham's response is rather remarkable when you realize that God's command was illogical. From every human viewpoint it was contradictory and inconsistent. God had promised Abraham He would establish His covenant with Isaac and it was to be “an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him” (17:19). So at the ripe old age of 100, Abraham became a father and now God wants to take his son. This doesn't make sense. Yet Abraham was obedient and did what contradicted logic (Heb 11:17-19).

There will be times in your life when obedience will not make sense. Are you prepared to obey God even in these cases? I confess there are many things in the Bible that I wish were not there—life would be easier. I could blend in better with our culture. But the real test of surrender isn't when I obey commands I like. If I say to my kids, “Eat your ice cream,” that is not a good test of how well they obey me. The true test is when I ask them to do something difficult.<sup>31</sup> If God is calling you to something difficult today, will you say, “Here I am?” Will you obey? If God is calling you to let go of something today, will you?

Abraham's test intensifies in 22:6-8 when he has to take the wood of the burnt offering and lay it on his son. As Abraham and Isaac are trekking along, it dawns on Isaac that the most important element is missing. So Isaac finally breaks the silence and speaks to his dad: **“Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”** (22:7) Who can imagine what went through Abraham's mind when Isaac asked that question? What could he say? “You're it! I love you, son, but I'm going to sacrifice you.”

Rather, Abraham replied, **“God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son”** (22:8). Not only did his response shroud the truth from Isaac, it also demonstrated faith in God.

What he was saying is, “Let’s let God take care of it.” I want to come to the place in my own life where I can confidently say, “God is big enough to take care of me.” If I’m faithful to obey Him in all He asks of me, He will provide for me all that I need.<sup>32</sup> The only way this kind of obedience can be pulled off is by walking with God and knowing His heart.

[Abraham passed the test of obedience, but now we come to...]

**2. The commitment of obedience (22:9-12).** In 22:9-10, we see that Abraham’s obedience was thorough and complete. The whole procedure is drawn out like a slow-motion replay. It has taken three days to get to Moriah. Once Abraham finally arrives, he has to climb Mount Moriah. Then he has to build the altar,<sup>33</sup> arrange the wood, bind his son, lay him on the altar, stretch out his hand, and take the knife to slay him. Now, on my best spiritual day, I probably would have had faith to build the altar but not to kill. Abraham did everything yet heaven remained silent. I’m sure as he raised that knife, every bone in his body must have wanted to disobey. But if Abraham had not raised the knife he would not have heard from God. Did you catch that? It took raising the knife of obedience with intent to kill (that’s commitment), and then Abraham heard from God. Many of us may be willing to lay something on the altar but when we do we take along a rubber knife. Yet, our obedience is not complete if there are some strings attached.<sup>34</sup>

One thing is very clear: Abraham could not have offered Isaac without Isaac’s consent and cooperation. Isaac, as the bearer of the wood, was the stronger of the two. As a young man he was also the faster of the two. Clearly, he was strong enough and big enough to resist or subdue his father. Apparently, Isaac had decided to obey his father whatever the cost, just as his father had decided to obey God whatever the cost (cf. Isa 53:7).<sup>35</sup>

At this point in our story it is often our tendency to object to God’s demands. We wonder why God wants such sacrifice from us. We may ask ourselves, why does He want all of me? Well, let me try to put this into perspective. Husbands, is it inappropriate for your wife to want all of you? Is it wrong or unfair for her to not want to share you with other women? How much more so with our heavenly Father? He wants all of you!<sup>36</sup> Remember, total obedience is not only measured by what you give God; God also takes into account what you keep for yourself. Can God get close to the most important things in your life: your possessions, business, plans and dreams, and relationships? Are you willing to let go (Luke 14:26-27)? Sometimes the supreme test of our faith will be a matter of putting obedience to God above something we have lived for all of our lives. Sometimes it will involve something that might to everyone else seem foolish and ridiculous.<sup>37</sup> Are you willing to be sacrificially obedient to God in every area of your life?

As his knife was raised to slay his son, something amazing happened: **“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 stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.’”** (22:11-12). What a relief this interruption must have been. Abraham must have wiped his tears and jumped for joy! The angel of the Lord informs Abraham that Isaac was spared because **“now I know that you fear God”** (cf. 20:11). This verse cannot mean that God discovers by knowledge, in finite time, that Abraham fears Him as a result of Abraham’s faithful actions with Isaac. For that would make God less than one who is omniscient. The Bible teaches that God decrees all things and has done so before the creation of the universe; so certainly He need not wait until Abraham is faithful in deeds in order to “know” that Abraham fears God (cf. Ps 139:1-4, 16).<sup>38</sup>

The angel of the Lord is saying to Abraham, by your faithful actions I experientially know that you fear God. The language is accommodated to the human understanding, uttered, as it were, from man’s point of view. For example, a chemistry professor, lecturing to his class, says, “Now I will apply an acid to this substance and see what the result will be.” He speaks in this way, although *he* knows perfectly well

beforehand. Having performed the experiment, he says, “I now know that such and such results will follow.” In saying this he puts himself in the place of the class and speaks from their standpoint.<sup>39</sup>

We must differentiate between knowledge as *cognition* and knowledge as *experience*. Although God knew ahead of time what Abraham was going to do, there is still ample evidence throughout Scripture that God desires us to act out our faith and worship regardless of the fact that He knows our hearts. God wants us to pray even though He knows what we’re going to say and may already have the answer in motion. He wants us to praise Him even though He knows how we feel. God asks us to express our faith and love. It is honoring to Him for us to demonstrate those things that He knows exist because it pleases Him.<sup>40</sup> Are you willing to worship and fear God? Will you let go of people, things, or dreams that you’ve been holding on to? Will you commit to holding these things loosely?

[We’ve looked at the tests and commitment of obedience. Now our story shifts gears and transitions into...]

### 3. **The blessing of obedience (22:13-24).** Obedience is rewarded in three ways:

- **First, God blesses us by providing the things which He demands of us** (22:13-14). Moses writes, “**Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of<sup>41</sup> his son.** <sup>14</sup> **Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, ‘In the mount of the LORD it will be provided.’**” When Abraham demonstrated that he was willing to go all the way in his obedience to God, the Lord provided a solution to his crisis.<sup>42</sup> Remember, God was testing Abraham (cf. 22:1). He didn’t want the sacrifice of a son; He wanted the surrender of a father. Fittingly, Abraham named this place “**The Lord will provide**” (*Yahweh Yireh*) or literally, “The Lord will see.” In English there is a cliché that says, “The devil is in the details.” Typically, people who are not administratively inclined or detail oriented like to use this line. However, if the devil is in the details we are in trouble. Fortunately, in this verse Abraham is saying, “God is the One who is in the details.” He is the One who will “see to it” that everything is appropriately cared for.<sup>43</sup> The name he chooses does not draw attention to himself but to his Lord. He does not name the place “Abraham was obedient.” He focuses on God’s mercy and faithfulness, not on his own obedience.<sup>44</sup> Abraham wanted there to be a record for Isaac. He wouldn’t have any problem trusting God again. Here we see that God is both tester and provider. When God tests you He will provide for you.<sup>45</sup> What you release to God, He replaces with something even more valuable. Do you believe that?

One more important note: If you’re observant you may have noticed that Abraham stated that God would provide a lamb for the burnt offering. However, it wasn’t a lamb caught in the thicket, but a ram! The ram could not provide the once-and-for-all sacrifice that Abraham prophetically spoke of in 22:8. That high calling was reserved for God’s own dear Son, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time (1 Tim 2:6).<sup>46</sup> He is our substitute...our Savior. Salvation is recognizing your need of a Savior and placing your faith in that Savior Substitute, Jesus Christ.

- **Second, God blesses us by providing assurance of His promises** (22:15-19).<sup>47</sup> In 22:15-18, we have the final recorded instance of God speaking to Abraham.<sup>48</sup> God here says, “**By Myself I have sworn**” (22:16) in affirming the promises, which He has already given to Abraham. God has to swear by Himself because there is no one greater He can swear by (Heb 6:13-14).

It is unusual for God to speak with an oath. Abraham's supreme act of obedience drew forth God's supreme assurance of blessing.<sup>49</sup> If you lack assurance of God's promises to you, obey Him! He gives His greatest assurance to those who obey Him most fully.<sup>50</sup>

We are not told whether or not God spoke to Abraham during his three-day journey to the mountain. But once he arrived and was performing the sacrifice, God spoke commanding Abraham to stay his hand and then again to give a word of promise. It is a good word. It is as though He told Abraham, "Well done, good and faithful servant...enter into the joy of your master" (Matt 25:21).<sup>51</sup> It is worth noting, it is "**the angel of the Lord**" who speaks to Abraham. As it will be at the judgment seat of Christ, Jesus commends Abraham.

- **Third, God blesses us by providing for our future needs** (22:20-24). Our narrative closes with the happy news that Abraham's brother Nahor has become the father of 12 sons. They would later become the ancestors of 12 Aramean tribes.<sup>52</sup> The central purpose of this list is to introduce the future bride of Isaac, Rebekah (22:23). No doubt Abraham had wondered where he would find a wife for Isaac so that his son would not be absorbed into the Canaanite culture. God had already taken care of the matter in the person of Rebekah. When we obey God fully we can trust that He is looking farther ahead than we are. He is already taking care, not only of our future needs, but also of the needs of our children!<sup>53</sup> But please recognize that God has not promised Christians great physical blessings, but whenever we make a sacrifice for Him He gives us a deeper relationship with Himself at least. For this reason we should not fear making personal sacrifices for God.<sup>54</sup>

Several years ago, a pastor's family was driving along Interstate 94 in Wisconsin. Their gas tank was hit by a piece of road debris—a 5-by-18 inch hollow piece of steel bracketing used to hold mud flaps on trucks—weighing 20-35 pounds. The parents were in the front of the minivan. Six of their children were in the back. The vehicle burst into flames, killing five of the six children and injuring the sixth. The parents survived. What is most memorable about this tragedy was this Christian mother's response when she watched her children die. She said to her husband, "This is what God has been preparing us for all of our lives." I need to tell you: This kind of trust does not generate at the moment of impact. It had been developing for a very long time. It is the conviction that God can be trusted no matter what happens.<sup>55</sup>

A nail would certainly question the value of a hammer. To the nail, the hammer is a cruel instrument. But what it doesn't see is that each blow forces the nail to bite deeper and hold more effectively. Without the hammer the nail would not be effective. Tests are like the hammer. Sometimes they come suddenly...other times they appear over the passing of many months, slowly as the erosion of earth.

Are you a "nail" that has begun to resent the blows of the hammer? Are you at the brink of despair, thinking that you cannot bear another day of testing? As difficult as it may be for you to believe this today, the Master knows what He's doing (Heb 4:14-16). Your Savior knows your breaking point. The hammering process is designed to reshape you, not ruin you. Your value is increasing the longer He lingers over you.<sup>56</sup>

God wants you and me to hold people, things, and dreams loosely. To help us in this pursuit, He uses tests. He will test your obedience and your commitment. If you pass His tests, He will bless your life.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Michael P. Green, *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), Electronic Ed.

<sup>2</sup> Charles R. Swindoll, *Abraham: The Friend of God* (Fullerton, CA: Insight for Living, 1988), 123.

<sup>3</sup> Johnson writes, "In Genesis 23:1 it is said that Sarah lived 127 years. That is the next bit of chronological information that we have after 21:34. When Isaac was weaned, Sarah was 93 to 95 years of age, so the events of chapter 22 occurred during the intervening period of about 35 years. A comparison of 21:34 with the phrase, 'after these things,' in 22:1 leads to the opinion that the offering up of Isaac took place quite a time after the birth of the promised seed. Isaac was no longer a child. He was at least in his teens and possibly older." S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., "The Old Testament's Greatest Scene," Genesis 22:1-24: [http://www.believers-chapel.org/bulletins/genesis/37\\_Genesis\\_22\\_1-24.pdf](http://www.believers-chapel.org/bulletins/genesis/37_Genesis_22_1-24.pdf), 2.

<sup>4</sup> Five times in his pilgrimage of faith, God came to Abraham to make a request that must have severely tried his faith. First, God called Abraham to leave his country and family and go to a land He would show him (12:1). In the very next chapter, it was necessary for Abraham to separate from his nephew Lot who was probably more like a son to him (13:1-18). Later in chapter 17, Abraham administered the sign of the covenant, circumcision, on himself and his whole household. Abraham circumcised himself when he was 99 years old. Now that's faith! A fourth great crisis involved the casting out of Ishmael who for 13 years was thought to be the promised seed of Abraham (21:14). The fifth and greatest crisis is found in chapter 22.

<sup>5</sup> Abraham failed to fear God and trust Him with his future (see Genesis 12, 16, 20).

<sup>6</sup> The term "God" (*Elohim*) includes the definite article ("the God," Gen 6:2; 27:28; 31:11; 46:3; 48:15). This is a way of indicating that the true God is making these demands.

<sup>7</sup> Such testing shows what someone is really like, and it usually involves difficulty or hardship (cf. Exod 15:25; 16:4; 20:20; Deut 8:2, 16; 13:3; Judg 2:22; 3:1, 14; 1 Kgs 10:1; Dan 1:12, 14). This is the first time the verb (but not the idea) "test" (*nsh*) occurs in the Bible.

<sup>8</sup> Edward G. Dobson, *Abraham: The Lord will Provide* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1993), 145.

<sup>9</sup> Gk. *teleioo*, cf. 1 John 2:5; 4:12, 17-18.

<sup>10</sup> It is no surprise that the next chapter (Genesis 23) deals with the death of Sarah. God used the offering of Isaac to prepare Abraham for the death of his wife.

<sup>11</sup> There was a 24-year time-gap between Genesis 12:4 and 17:1. Another year passed before Isaac was born. Now Isaac is perhaps ten years old or more (21:8). Michael Eaton, *Preaching Through the Bible: Genesis 12-23* (Kent, England: Sovereign World, 1999), 117.

<sup>12</sup> See also Moses (Exod 3:4); Samuel (1 Sam 3:4); Isaiah (Isa 6:8); and Jesus Christ (Heb 10:7).

<sup>13</sup> Swindoll, *Abraham: The Friend of God*, 123.

<sup>14</sup> The repetition of the word "son" (*ben*) ten times and "only son" three times reiterates the severe nature of this test. This term can refer to an infant (Exod 2:6) or a young man (1 Chron 12:28). Hamilton provides us with insight into the beliefs of ancient Jewish scholars regarding the age of Isaac at this time: "Early Jewish tradition (Midrash Gen. Rabbah 56:8) suggested that Isaac was 37 at the time of his binding by Abraham. This number is arrived at by subtracting the age at which Sarah gave birth to Isaac (90) from the age at which she died (127), a sudden death caused by discovering that Abraham is about to slaughter Isaac. By putting Isaac in his late 30s, Jewish tradition gives a much larger role to Isaac than [does] Christian tradition, which has highlighted the obedience of Abraham and the faithfulness of God." Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 18-50*: NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 100.

<sup>15</sup> The word "only" (*yachid*) takes on a special meaning, for Ishmael has just recently been sent away to the wilderness. And there follows the words, "whom you love." He is reminded of his great love for his only begotten just at the moment when he is to lose him.

<sup>16</sup> Johnson observes, "We have here the first mention of the word love in the Word. Does it not suggest that the love of a godly father for his son is a miniature picture of the love existing among the persons of the Holy Trinity, and in particular the love of the Father for the Son of God. Cf. John 17:24. It is an interesting fact that in the New Testament the first occurrence of the word love is a clear expression of the love of the Father for the Son" (cf. Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). Johnson, "The Old Testament's Greatest Scene," 4.

<sup>17</sup> With every passing word, it gets worse.

<sup>18</sup> The Hebrew adds "by yourself." Abraham is called to "determinedly disassociate" himself from his familiar surroundings. Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 305.

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<sup>19</sup> On these mountains God later appeared to David who built an altar to the Lord (2 Sam 24:16-25). Here also Solomon built his temple (2 Chron 3:1) and Jesus Christ died. This place would one day be called “Jerusalem.”

<sup>20</sup> Arnold draws the parallels between Genesis 12 & 22:

	<b>Genesis 12</b>	<b>Genesis 22</b>
<b>Command:</b>	Go! To a land unknown (“I will show you”)	Take, Go, Sacrifice! To a mountain unknown (“I will tell you”)
<b>Response:</b>	12:4—obedience	22:3—obedience

Bill T. Arnold, *Encountering the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 108. Commenting on the same parallels, Ross writes, “The repetition of these motifs forms an inclusio in the narrative structure of the Abrahamic narrative, pointing out the complete cycle in the patriarch’s experience. The allusion to the former call would also have prompted obedience to the present one, in many ways a more difficult journey in God’s direction.” Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988 [2002 ed.]), 394.

<sup>21</sup> God abhors human sacrifice (Lev 18:21; 20:2; Deut 12:31; Ps 106:35-38; Ezek 20:30-31), so when Abraham was about to slay Isaac, God stopped him short and provided an alternative sacrifice.

<sup>22</sup> Pastor Bob Hallman, “The Test Of Faith” Genesis 22:1-24:

[http://calvarychapel.com/kauai/teachings/genesis\\_pdf/gen\\_22\\_notes.pdf](http://calvarychapel.com/kauai/teachings/genesis_pdf/gen_22_notes.pdf), 3.

<sup>23</sup> See Isa 53:6, 10; John 3:16; cf. Matt 26:39,42; Luke 22:22; John 3:17; Acts 2:23; 2 Cor 5:21; Rev 13:8. See Robert Deffinbaugh, *Genesis: From Paradise to Patriarchs*. Lesson 23: “Final Exams” Genesis 22:1-24 ([www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org), 1997), 2.

<sup>24</sup> R.C. Sproul, “Providence as Provision,” *Moody* March-April 1997, 47.

<sup>25</sup> In the biblical world, three days was a typical period of preparation for something important (cf. Gen 31:22; 42:18; Exod 3:18; 15:22; 19:11, 15, 16; Num 10:33; 19:12; 31:19; 33:8; Esth 5:1; Hosea 6:2; Jonah 3:3; Matt 12:40; 1 Cor 15:4). Waltke, *Genesis*, 307.

<sup>26</sup> “Moriah” means “Where the Lord provides” or “Where the Lord appears.”

<sup>27</sup> Bruce Goettsche, “First Place,” Genesis 22:1-19: <http://www.unionchurch.com/archive/062099.html>.

<sup>28</sup> The word “worship” (*shachah*) literally means “to bow oneself close to the ground.”

<sup>29</sup> Lit. “We are determined to go, we are determined to worship, and we are determined to return.”

<sup>30</sup> Hughes writes, “Abraham so utterly believed God’s promise that Isaac’s children would carry his bloodline that he reasoned that God would have to raise Isaac from the dead. Abraham envisioned the doctrine of the resurrection when as yet there had been nothing in history to suggest it! In this way he perhaps began to see Christ’s day” (cf. John 8:56). R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning & Blessing* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 302.

<sup>31</sup> Steven J. Cole “Ultimate Surrender,” Genesis 22:1-24:

<http://www.fcfonline.org/site/content/1/sermons/111796M.pdf>, 6.

<sup>32</sup> Twice it is said that the “two of them walked on together” (cf. 22:6, 8). It reminds us of the beautiful harmony that existed between the Father and the Son, as the mediatorial work was carried out by the Son (cf. John 8:29). Johnson, “The Old Testament’s Greatest Scene,” 6.

<sup>33</sup> The theme of Abraham’s altar building culminates here. He has been a faithful worshiper. Will he continue to worship when called upon to make such a radical sacrifice? See NET Notes <http://www.bible.org/netbible/>

<sup>34</sup> J. Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1988), 90.

<sup>35</sup> Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning & Blessing*, 303; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 18-50*, 110; Waltke, *Genesis*, 302.

<sup>36</sup> God never asks us to do something He Himself is unwilling to do. We need to remember that God gave His one and only Son as a once-for-all sacrifice for the sins of the world.

<sup>37</sup> Eaton, *Genesis 12-23*, 112.

<sup>38</sup> Waltke suggests, “[The narrator] focuses upon the reality that God does not experience the quality of Abraham’s faith until played out on the stage of history” (cf. Deut 8:2). Waltke, *Genesis*, 308.

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.biblestudymanuals.net/gen22.htm>

<sup>40</sup> John H. Walton, *Genesis: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 514.

<sup>41</sup> This is the first explicit mention of substitutionary sacrifice of one life for another in the Bible, though it was implied in Noah’s sacrifice (Gen 8:20-22). Waltke, *Genesis*, 308.

<sup>42</sup> The Hebrew says “another ram.” Ancient and modern versions have missed the point when they render “a ram” or “a ram behind him.” Isaac was the first ram. Here is the second one.

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<sup>43</sup> This idea came from Walton, *Genesis*, 516.

<sup>44</sup> Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), Electronic Ed.

<sup>45</sup> Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning & Blessing*, 304.

<sup>46</sup> Hallman, "The Test Of Faith," 6.

<sup>47</sup> Sailhamer comments, "The promise reiterated here is similar to that of chapters 12, 13, 15, 17, and 18. The promise of 'blessing' (v. 17) is similar to 12:2. The increase of Abraham's 'descendants' is similar to 13:16; 15:5; and 17:2. The view of the 'nations' enjoyment of and participation in Abraham's blessing (v. 18) is similar to 12:3 and 18:18. The reference to Abraham's act of obedience as the basis of the promise is similar to 18:19. Perhaps, also, the reference to Abraham's descendants possessing the 'cities of their enemies' (v. 17) is to be taken as a reference to the gift of the 'land' that is found throughout the earlier narratives" (e.g., 12:7; 13:15; 15:18; 17:8). John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis: EBC* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), Electronic ed..

<sup>48</sup> God spoke directly to Abraham eight times (Gen 12:1, 7, 13:14; 15:1; 17:1; 18:1; 21:12; 22:1, 15).

<sup>49</sup> The word "because" (*egeb*) bears this out (Gen 22:16, 18).

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Genesis 12:1-3, 7, 13-16; 17:1-8, 15-16, 19-21. In substance they are not much different from what has gone before, but several features are added. To the promise of offspring as numerous as "the stars of the heavens" (22:17), God now adds that these offspring shall be as numerous as "the sand which is on the seashore." His descendants would also occupy the city gates of their enemies. This means God will give Abraham the ability to face his enemies and ultimately conquer them. These statements intensify God's promise. God also swears by Himself in giving this testimony (cf. Heb 6:13-14).

<sup>51</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: Vol .2 Genesis 12-36* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998 [1985]), 707.

<sup>52</sup> Most of the other names in this genealogy are the ancestors of cities and tribes around Israel. They are precisely the peoples who are to be blessed through Abraham's offspring. What a privilege God gave to Abraham...to be a blessing upon others.

<sup>53</sup> Cole "Ultimate Surrender," 8-9.

<sup>54</sup> Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Genesis* (<http://www.sonlight.com/constable/notes/pdf/genesis.pdf>, 2005), 170.

<sup>55</sup> Leith Anderson, *Leadership that Works: Hope and Direction for Church and Parachurch Leaders in Today's Complex World* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1999), 207.

<sup>56</sup> This general idea came from Charles R. Swindoll, *Encourage Me* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 36.