

REAL PEOPLE, REAL GOD:

Abraham's Sacrifice

REAL Sacrifice

At a time when Abraham and Sarah should be celebrating a milestone of Isaac's growth and development (weaning), the family tension again divides them.

- Ishmael mocks Isaac
- Sarah complains to Abraham and demands Ishmael sent away

“Do not be so distressed about the boy and your slave woman. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. I will make the son of the slave into a nation also, because he is your offspring.” **Genesis 21:12-13**

- Abraham obeys, sending Hagar and Ishmael into the desert with provisions

As we're about to see, this is only the FIRST of Abraham's sons that he'll be asked to sacrifice.

REAL Obedience

Our story jumps ahead several years. Most commentators believe Isaac was an adolescent, perhaps 12-15, when God tested Abraham:

“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.*’ *Early the next morning* Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac.” **Genesis 22:2** (*emphasis* added)

- “your only son, whom you love”—God acknowledges Abraham's love for Isaac. He's empathetic to our emotional pain.
- God “will show” him the mountain—an ongoing conversation with Abraham through this difficult journey.
- “Early the next morning” – Abraham wastes no time. He is *immediately* obedient to the difficult task God has asked of him.

REAL Questions!

Wait!!! Why would God ask a father to kill his son?!?!?! What a horrific command.

- Abraham was about 115 years old, and in the 40 years Abraham had followed Him, God had never asked him to do anything like this.
- God didn't ask anything of Abraham that He wouldn't do Himself – foreshadowing Jesus' death on the Cross (our Father sacrificing His Son).
- Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son for an all-powerful, infinitely-good God, BUT God sacrificed His Son for *sinful* humans.

Shines new light on the depth of sacrifice borne by both Father and Son at the Cross.

REAL Faith

Abraham was undoubtedly shocked and confused by God's command to sacrifice his son, but there was a sureness of his faith even in that confused state:

“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.’” **Genesis 22:5** (*emphasis* added)

- “we will come back,” points to Abraham's absolute certainty that God would make a way for BOTH he and Isaac to return down the mountain.

“Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.” **Hebrews 11:19**

- The Spirit-inspired New Testament writer knew Abraham's mind and tells us that he was certain God could raise Isaac from the dead if he had to go through with the sacrifice.

Abraham didn't KNOW how God would answer. And when Isaac asked, “...where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” Abraham was vague but truthful.

“God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together.” **Genesis 22:8**

Abraham had to WAIT for the answer and keep moving step-by-step in faith.

- Do you think Abraham searched for a lamb when they reached the top of the mountain?
- Took his time building an altar—“Here, lamby, lamby!”
- Arranged the wood on the altar, sloooowwly. *Lord, please give me a lamb instead!*
- Finally, he bound Isaac's hands and feet and laid his own son on the altar. Gulp.
- He lifted his knife...

Another REAL Question

If Abraham was 115 years old, and Isaac was 15 years old, why didn't Isaac resist or just run away?

- Obviously, Isaac would have had to climb onto that altar
- Consider Ishmael—also a teenager—who *willingly* submitted to circumcision.
- Maybe this family has an “extreme trust gene?” Nope.
- Only the surety of their father's love could enable such trust and obedience in these teenage boys—as Abraham was sure of his Heavenly Father's love and was able to trust Him completely.
- Another example of foreshadowing—Jesus submitted to the Cross and was absolutely certain of His Father's love.

REAL Provision

Abraham is poised with the knife above Isaac, and THE Angel of the Lord calls out to stop him.

“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.’ 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. So Abraham called that place ***The Lord Will Provide.***” **Genesis 22:12** (*emphasis* added)

- Anytime we see “*the* angel of the Lord” in the Old Testament, it is referred to as a *theophany*—a physical appearance of God. Basically, Jesus in the OT.
- Whatever we offer up as a sacrifice was given to us by God.
- Anything we have, God has given it, and someday He'll ask for it back. Why? So we can learn to love, to give, and to know Him in the process.
- Sometimes we don't recognize God's provision until we nearly lose it. We must seek to value the Giver more than the gifts.
- Remember Sarah began this story by protecting Isaac from Ishmael by making Abraham send the older boy away—now, Isaac was almost killed by his father's own hand. God is teaching both parents to loosen their grip on this precious son.

REAL Relationship

After Abraham shows his unshakeable obedience, God reaffirms His covenant AGAIN.

“I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 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, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.” **Genesis 22:16-18**

- We see Abraham building another altar—as was his custom when communing with his God.
- We see God reiterating His promises to Abraham—as was His custom whenever Abraham was faithful or faithless.
- We see both REAL PEOPLE and REAL GOD stepping into relationship again after a very rough beginning. Now, it’s up to Abraham’s family to maintain the Covenant relationship...

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