

“The Stewardship of Faithfulness”

Genesis 22

Scripture Focus

Genesis 22:1-19

Key Verse

Genesis 22:12

TDM Competency:

Live Biblically: Understand and apply biblical principles to all areas of life.

Overview

Abraham was called to demonstrate his faith that God is worthy of all that we possess. Abraham saw Isaac, his son, as one that belonged to God, so when the call came for him to sacrifice Isaac to God, he immediately acted. His faith is demonstrated through his actions. James 2:23 says that the actions of Abraham in Genesis 22 demonstrated that Abraham believed God. Without demonstrable action, our faith in God is invalid. It is only through our actions that our faith in God is legitimate.

Theme

Faithfulness to the Lord cannot be hidden. To confess faith with one’s mouth without expressing faith through one’s actions is evidence of no faith at all (James 2:20-26). Abraham was a steward of his faith. He put his faith to work.

Desired Learner Response [Aiming at the Heart for Life Transformation]

To live biblically by trusting God alone and for all. To demonstrate faith by utilizing it according to God’s Word and for His glory.

Teacher Preparation Tip: Read Genesis 22 several times in order to grasp the overall storyline of the text. Ask: What is the author saying? Ask: What is the author saying about his subject? For the first question, this lesson suggests the author is saying, “Trust God.” For the second question, this lesson suggests that the author is saying the below outline of four actions demonstrates one’s trust in God.

Outline

- I. Faithful to Hear God (vv. 1-2)
- II. Faithful to Trust God (vv. 3-8)
- III. Faithful to Offer All (vv. 9-12)
- IV. Faithful to Receive His Provisions (vv. 13-19)

Stewardship Dictionary: The following four terms must be clearly defined in order to accurately communicate this TDM Stewardship series. Many definitions for these terms exist, but the definitions provided below are intended whenever the four words are used in this series. The pastor will also use the definitions for each word as he preaches. Take time to make your class very familiar with these terms and definitions.

Generosity: Eagerly giving myself to others for God's glory.

Stewardship: Utilizing all God has entrusted to me, in accord with God's Word, and for His glory.

Tithe: Returning 10% of my monetary increase to God, through my church, as an expression of worship.

Offering: The expression of a generous heart, beyond the tithe.

Ask: What do people do when they are trying to understand God's will for their lives?

Note: God's will is only verifiable by His Word. God will never lead us to do or believe anything that is contrary to His Word. The first act of a believer seeking God's will is to pray the one-word prayer, "Yes." To say "yes" to God before one knows His direction is a step of faith. It is a prayer that prepares our hearts to do and believe whatever God says and to quickly act in a manner that honors Him.

I. Faithful to Hear God (vv. 1-2)

- A. Note that two times in these verses we see God "said." As in Genesis 12, Abraham heard God speak. Faithfulness to God begins with a heart inclined to hear all that God has to say. Emphasize to your class that there is no faithfulness apart from the intake of the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Challenge your class to examine the time they spend in the Word. Remind them that it is only by knowing the Word of God that we can faithfully obey the Word of God.
- B. **v. 1 "tested"** – Tests are used by the Holy Spirit to bring out the best God has given us to be used for His glory. Tests are used to demonstrate our desire to give ourselves for God's glory. God tested Abraham in order for Abraham to demonstrate his trust in God. God had promised in Genesis 12 that through Abraham a great nation would come. The call to offer his son on an altar was not just a call to sacrifice his very best for the glory of God, but a test to show Abraham that God will bring about His promises.
- C. Abraham's call to be the father of many began with three tests. Take time to examine each and highlight the manner in which God tested Abraham as well as Abraham's faithful responses to God. Note each test in Genesis 12:1-3.
 1. God told Abram to leave his country: He was called to demonstrate his trust in God by leaving that which was familiar and comfortable.
 2. God told Abram to leave his family: He was called to demonstrate his trust in God by leaving that which was a sense of security and belonging.
 3. God told Abram to leave his father's house: He was called to demonstrate his trust in God by leaving that which was his source of financial security in the future.
- D. All these tests were used to strengthen Abraham's trust in God. God never sends a test until He knows we are ready for it. It should serve as an encouragement to believers to be tested by God, as it is evidence of God's work in our lives. Truth

may exist in our words, but God looks for it in the heart. It is not evidence of faith to simply profess that we have faith in God. Faith is evident only when it is demonstrated by action. God did not only say that He loved us, He also gave His Son. Faith is not merely about language but about the manner in which we live.

- E. **v. 1 “Here I am”** – This is not just a statement of location. It is a profession of eagerness to obey God through stewardship. Remind your students of our definition of generosity as noted in the *Stewardship Dictionary* at the beginning of this lesson. Abraham was eager to serve the Lord. Both in Genesis 12 and Genesis 22 we see Abraham in a state of readiness to follow God at a moment’s notice.
Ask: Are you eager, ready, anticipating the next opportunity to serve the Lord?
- F. **v. 2 “son...only...love”** – The magnitude of that which God was calling Abraham to give is evident in these three words. A “son” was required in order for there to be future generations. Isaac was Abraham’s “only” son, therefore his only hope of continuing his family line. Isaac was not just an instrument by which Abraham’s family line would continue, but rather a son for whom Abraham had deep “love.”
- G. **v. 2 “offer him”** – Isaac was not just Abraham’s son. He was also the long awaited promise of hope for all future generations that would come from Abraham. In Abraham’s eyes, Isaac was the only way God’s promise of his being the father of a great nation could occur. As far as Abraham could see, without Isaac, the earth had no other way to be blessed by God. It was the ultimate test of Abraham’s faith that God would bring about His promises regardless of the resources available. As we sacrificially offer all that God calls us to give, we demonstrate faith that God will carry out His plan in our lives.
- H. **v. 2 “burnt offering”** – God’s call to Abraham was not merely a spiritual dedication of his son, but rather to fully engulf his son’s body in flames as a complete sacrifice. The burnt offering was to be totally consumed by fire, and the smoke symbolically rose to heaven. The burnt offering symbolized the total surrender to God of the individual or congregation making the offering.
1. **The details of burnt offerings:** Normally a male lamb or ram was offered to God. Making such an offering required attention to detail. The offering was led to the altar by the person making the offering and killed by the one making the offering; the priest would then take the blood of the slain animal and sprinkle it on the altar; the sacrifice was then cut open, intestines cleaned out, and then the head and torso were placed directly on the fire to be consumed.
 2. Although the above-described details are gory, they are necessary to convey the magnitude of that which God was calling Abraham to do. We often get the picture of Abraham raising a knife above Isaac just before the angel stops him, but that was only one step in making a burnt offering. Understanding the perceived savagery to which God was calling Abraham aids in grasping the magnitude of Abraham’s love and submission to God.

Application

Ask: What are some specific ways we can prepare ourselves to hear God’s call? **Answer:** Read the Bible daily with pen and paper in hand in order to write that which the text calls us to do.

Challenge your class to daily read the Bible with the expectation of seeing the directives of God

and with the faith commitment to obey. **Prepare** them for our emphasis of reading through the Bible in a year next year by noting that reading is not enough. We must read with the heart determination that we will obey that which God has made known in His Word. **Remind** your class that the Word of God and the will of God are synonymous. Just as God spoke to Abraham, He continues to speak to His people through His Word.

Ask: What is the definition of offering? You may need to read it aloud from the *Stewardship Dictionary*. **Ask:** What was the value of the offering God called Abraham to make? Note the priceless nature of Isaac in the eyes of Abraham. **Ask:** Do you have a generous heart? **Read** the definition of generosity from the *Stewardship Dictionary*.

II. Faithful to Trust God (vv. 3-8)

- A. **v. 3 “early”** – We live by promises, not explanations. Nowhere in the text do we read that Abraham questioned God’s directives, intent or ability to complete His promise should Isaac die. In the eyes of man, God’s request was truly unreasonable. Abraham could have easily bargained with God, perhaps offering double the number of animals or offering God his entire herd, but Abraham did not bargain. Faith did not pause to look at circumstances or ponder results, but rather faith acted immediately on God’s command. Such a response to God’s call revealed that Abraham lived in a state of submission to God. He lived ready to sacrificially give. God was the abiding support of Abraham’s heart so he lived prepared to give all for and to Him. It is easy to claim faithfulness when we see no demand for it. However, as we daily read the Bible with an expectation of seeing God’s will, we will regularly be put to the test of demonstrating our faith in God.
- B. **v. 5 “we”** – Abraham trusted God would intervene in some way so as to protect His covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12). God had not told Abraham that something else would take Isaac’s place in death at this point, so Abraham was showing great faith. Some commentators suggest that Abraham did not want to explain to his men what he was about to do to Isaac so he merely stated that both he and Isaac would return. The text gives no indication that Abraham was deceiving his men, but rather that Abraham was speaking with faith that God would intervene, whether through another provision for the sacrifice or through raising Isaac from the dead. Regardless, Abraham fully trusted that the covenant God made with him would not be hindered by the events of this day.
- C. **v. 7 “Here I am, son”** – Note that Abraham’s response to Isaac was the same as his response to God in verse 1. His response in verse 1 demonstrated his eagerness to obey God through stewardship. In this verse, Abraham’s response is a demonstration that he was eager to give all he had, namely his own son, to glorify God. His response to Isaac was one of affection and demonstrated his deep love for Isaac. Stewardship is utilizing all God has entrusted to me, in accord with God’s Word, and for His glory. Abraham’s affectionate response to Isaac allows us to see the extent he was willing to give in order to be a faithful steward.
- D. **v. 8 “provide”** – A word that conveys the idea that the Lord will see to it. Abraham could not depend on his feelings but on the promise and provision of God.
- E. **v. 8 “for Himself”** – Abraham’s understanding of all that was taking place centered on the glory of God. Even though he led his son to be sacrificed and saw

no other provision for a sacrifice as he prepared to slay his son, he professed that all was for the glory of God. Abraham did not say, “God will provide for me and you, Isaac.” He declared that the provision would be for God. As Abraham walked in obedience to God in order to give God his very best, he testified that it was not about him, but rather all about God. A steward gives for the glory of God, regardless of personal costs.

Application

Ask: What specific command have you obeyed this week from your time in the Word of God? It is imperative that we continually ask ourselves this question: does my faith have *action*?

Ask: Have you given out of a motive other than to worship God? **Note** that just the act of tithing or giving an offering is not the issue. The issue is the heart of the giver. It is possible to faithfully tithe but to do it in a way that it is sinful. The giver must examine his heart continuously in order to maintain a desire to give as an act of worship. Our sinful condition as fallen humanity constantly pulls us in a direction to give for self-seeking purposes.

As we give out of a motive to worship, we demonstrate that we have faith that God will provide all that is needed, but that the provision of God is also for Him. We erroneously view the blessings of God that come from giving if we think that those blessings are for our benefit. Just like Abraham, we must view the blessings of God as provisions that are to be used for His purposes. When God spared Isaac’s life, Abraham understood that Isaac was for the Lord. Whatever provisions God chooses to keep in our care, they are His and are to be used for His purposes.

III. Faithful to Offer All (vv. 9-12)

- A. **v. 9 “the place”** – Where did Abraham make this offering? In the exact place that God told him. Although the journey to Moriah was three days, Abraham obeyed God. Our definition of tithing includes “through my church.” It is to the local church, through which we are spiritually fed, and faithfully serve, that our tithe is to be made.
- B. **vv. 10-11 “Angel of the Lord called”** – When did God intervene and provide a substitute for Isaac? At the exact moment of need. Faith negates the sinful desire of man to see the provision before acting on the call of God. Note that this is the third time in the text that Abraham says, “Here I am.” Each time it is a demonstration of his priority of serving God with all that he has. **Ask:** Have you made this declaration to God? Have you said “God, here I am” as a statement of full surrender to whatever He calls you to?
- C. Why did God call Abraham to this act?
 1. **v. 12 “you fear”** – To show significance Abraham demonstrated his faith in God. Faith is always and only proven by action. Abraham’s willingness to give his son for God’s glory revealed his heart for God. Nothing was more valuable to Abraham than God.
 2. **v. 12 “not withheld”** – To demonstrate that faith in God expresses itself through withholding nothing in one’s possession from serving His purposes.

3. **v. 12 “from Me”** – To express that all sacrifice is for the glory and purposes of God. God is the central person of all giving, worship and service, not man.
 4. **v. 14 “the Lord will provide”** – To reveal the giving nature of God. God provides all that is necessary for His people to live. To foreshadow the coming Christ who alone would be the provision of God for man’s sin.
 5. **vv. 16-19 “By Myself”** – To remind Abraham that God would carry the covenant He made in Genesis 12, that through Abraham the nations of the earth would be blessed. The “Myself” emphasis serves as a reminder that God’s covenantal promises are not dependent on man’s obedience, but rather will be fulfilled because God who promised is faithful to do all He promises.
- D. **v. 13 “ram caught”** – How did God provide for the sacrifice? Often God provides in ways that seem natural, but are truly His intervention. It was not unusual for a ram’s horn to be caught in a thicket. However, the time, location and need demonstrated that God had placed a ram in that place, at that time to be used for His purposes. Highlight the foreshadowing of Christ in the text. Just as God provided a substitute for Isaac, so too did God provide Jesus as a substitute for us. Jesus took our place in the death that was due to us when He willingly sacrificed Himself on the cross. Isaac felt no pain, but Jesus suffered much. Isaac did not die, Jesus died in our place. Abraham could have offered Isaac as an acceptable burnt offering to the Lord. No one but Jesus could be the sacrifice for man’s sins. He alone could take the wrath of God on man’s behalf and He alone did. God spared Abraham the pain that He would experience as Jesus hung on the cross.

Application

Guide your class to consider that much of what they may perceive as normal may be the hand of God. Their job may be a normal path after graduating school, but have they considered that it is really a gift from God so that the money they make can be used for His purposes? Their possessions may seem to be a normal lifestyle, but have they considered them as provisions of God to be used for His purposes? Their health may seem to be a normal condition, but have they considered that it is a gift from God so that they may use their energy for His purposes?

Review the following definitions and ask the questions under each:

-Generosity: Eagerly giving myself to others for God’s glory.

Ask: What are ways we can give of ourselves? **Note** that to give for the glory of God means that we have confessed sin that seeks to serve self through giving and have sought God’s grace in order to give as an act of worship.

-Stewardship: Utilizing all God has entrusted to me, in accord with God’s Word, and for His glory.

Encourage your class to list all that they possess this week and note beside each item ways they can utilize it to serve and worship the Lord.

-Tithe: Returning 10% of my monetary increase to God, through my church, as an expression of worship.

Share your tithing testimony.

-Offering: The expression of a generous heart, beyond the tithing.

Prior to class **enlist** a person or couple to share a testimony of how they were led of God to give for His glory and purposes beyond the tithing.