

What Does Faith Look Like As a Parent

- All righty, we're still in the Book of Genesis. If you've not been here in months, you're like, "I wonder where they are?" They're still in Genesis. We're in Genesis 21 and 22, if you've got a Bible, and we're answering this question today. What does faith look like as a parent? And just so you know, it takes faith to be a Christian, but it takes a lot of faith to be a Christian parent, amen. There's faith, and then there's parental faith, and then there's raising a son faith. That's varsity faith.

- [Congregation] Oh, yeah.

- It takes more faith to raise a boy, amen. How many of you, you look at a daughter, you're like, "Oh, I could see this has got," you got a boy you're like, "Oh no. "Oh no, Lord help please?" And so what we're seeing today is they're raising their son, and I was thinking about it. You have faith when you're walking with God, and then when God gives you a kid, it's a whole nother level of test and trial of faith. Our youngest daughter, Alexie, she graduated from high school this last week, I could still remember the first day of kindergarten. I could still remember it. She's blonde, cute, adorable, looks like her mom, walked her into kindergarten first day of school, I'm a nervous wreck, she's fine, she's got her little backpack, sits inside, goes to her seat, I'm there, I'm like, "Are you okay?" She's like, "I'm fine." "Well, are you sure?" She says, "Yeah, I'm good." I was like, "Well, I'll just stand here for a while "and make sure." She's like, "Dad, I'm fine." I'm like, "Okay, so I'll stand over by the door." And eventually the teacher looks at you was like, "Are you gonna go?" I was like, "Um, I'm just gonna stand here "for a few months. "You know, I'm gonna just stand here." So I thought, "Well, I'm gonna go outside and just, "I'll look through the window, "and that way if she starts crying, "we're gonna homeschool. "That's what we're gonna do, "we're just gonna end this." So I'm waiting, waiting, she never even looks, she's totally fine. And then Grace and I eventually went to the car and we just sat there and cried, literally, for about half an hour. And I was like, "Oh my gosh, I'm not there. "I'm not there all day. "I can't keep an eye on her. "I'm not present. "Is she gonna have friends? "Is she gonna get picked on? "Is she gonna eat crayons? "Like what's gonna happen, I'm not there?" And it takes a lot of faith to assume and presume that the same God who was there for you is gonna be there for your kids. And the same God who got you through your difficult days is gonna be there to get your kid through their difficult days. And that's kind of what we see today, is how Abraham and Sarah are a case study, and they're one of the most significant couples in the history of the world. They appear around 300 times in the Bible, and they're synonymous with faith and family, and that's really what we've been studying. Their faith and how it affected their marriage and now how it's gonna affect their parenting, and how faith affects their family? So we're gonna look at the end of Genesis 21 at a season of their life, and then we're gonna look at what happens to their son, Isaac? So if you woke up today, you're like, "I hope we read an ancient treaty about a boundary "in the Middle East that regarded a well called Bathsheba." It's your lucky day. Here we go, just like you were hoping. Genesis 21:22-34. "At that time Abimelech," he's a political leader, who's a non believer, "and Phicol the commander of his army "said to Abraham, 'God is with you in all that you do.'" Let me tell you this friends. The anointing of God is the most significant thing on your life, more than your fame, more than your fortune, it's His anointing that makes the

difference. "Now therefore swear to me here by God that you will not "deal falsely with me or with my descendants "or with my posterity." He'd already lied to him once. As he was approaching he thought, Abraham did, "Oh no, they're gonna wanna take my wife "so I'll lie and say she's my sister." So this guy married his wife, they didn't consummate 'cause God got involved, spared them, so now he wants to make sure that there's no more conflict with Abraham as they work things out. "But as I have dealt kindly with you, "so you'll deal with me and with the land "where you have sojourned." "And Abraham said, 'I will swear.'" So they make an oath. "When Abraham reprov'd Abimelech about a well of water," here we are in the desert: true or false, a well is very significant? Right, if you moved her from Canada, you're like, "What's the big deal with the well?" Just wait, June, July and August, the beast, the false prophet in the anti-Christ come to the valley. And they're like, "It's hot. "So hell, what's a dry heat. "So hell you need water, amen." So there's "a well of water "that Abimelech's servants had seized, "Abimelech said, 'I do not know who has done this thing; "'you did not tell me, I have not heard of it until today.' "So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, "and the two men made a covenant. "And Abraham set seven ewe lambs, "baby lambs of the flock apart. "And Abimelech said to Abraham, "'What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs "'that you have set apart?' "He said, 'These seven ewe lambs you will take from my hand, "'that this may be a witness for me that I dug this well.' "'Therefore that place was called Beersheba." That means the oath of a well. So it's the place where they're going to make an oath regarding this piece of property. "Because there both of them swore an oath. "So they made a covenant at Beersheba. "Then Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his army "rose up, returned to the land of the Philistines. "Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba." As soon as you plant a tree you're planning on being there for a while, amen. They're settling in. "And called there on the name of the Lord, "the Everlasting God." So he's gonna have church, they're gonna worship God. They're settling in for the long haul. "And Abraham sojourned many days in the land "of the Philistines. So the Philistines here, they're the bad guys. These are the arch enemies of God's people. They're known as the sea people. They tend to have the ability to travel on water, wherever they land they tend to march like an army and they overtake everyone who comes against them. But he's got peace, even though he is surrounded by enemies. And here's the big idea for us. As long as we're surrounded by enemies, we're gonna need God's anointing so that we can have peace. How many of you right now, the world feels like it's all Philistines. It's just, they're all enemies, it's all bad, it's all dangerous, it's all just opposed to everything that you believe as a believer. But if God's anointing is on you, there still can be peace. There can be some level of life in the midst of living amongst an enemy. And that's the situation for Abraham and Sarah and their family. And ultimately this disposition that they are enjoying is because of God's anointing. Even the enemy of God and of Abraham and Sarah comes,, he's like, "Everything you do, God's in it. "God is with you. "God is for you. "Even though everyone and everything is against you, "God is with you. "God is for you." There's an anointing on their life and family. And so they're blessed. Here they are, they've got a water source, they've got a beautiful piece of land. This is a very large household, at least hundreds, probably thousands of people. They've got 318 in their army, plus all the servants, plus the cooks, plus whomever else is involved in the extended business. This is the largess state. And for those of us who live in the valley, we know how important a water source is. And they get a water source, that means

that there can be life and flourishing, they're planting trees, they're planting gardens, they're settling in. And so here's the big idea. This sets up the next scene. Two things I wanna make note of here. Number one: Abraham got to retake his test. When he first went into this region, he had fear, not faith. The opposite of faith is fear, and he was scared, "they're gonna want my wife, so they're gonna hurt me. "So I'm gonna lie about my wife. "I'll say, it's my sister. "I'll give her to the king so that they don't hurt me." God had to get involved. And here he acts in faith. He gets to retake his test. He gets to deal with the political leadership again. The big idea is this. It doesn't matter how many times you fail your test, God is gracious to allow you to take it again, right. He's given away his wife twice. What's amazing is God gives him an opportunity to retake the test. What's really amazing, his wife gives him an opportunity to retake the test. There's a lot of grace on his life. And there may be things in your life, you're like, "I failed there. "I did it again. "I tripped over my own feet. "I returned to a bad pattern. "Is there any hope for me?" Yes. You could retake your test. He's failed it twice, but here he passes it. And as a result, there's a season of peace and prosperity. Number two: they settle in here for at least a decade, as many as two or three decades. This is an extended season of peace and prosperity. And the big idea is this, it's all going really well. The reason we don't have a lot of reports during this time is there's nothing to report. How many of you would like it if your life was so boring? And so you're like, "I don't know, you know, "everything's good, everything's fine. "We're making a lot of money. "We're sleeping in, you know, "we're just worshiping the Lord." How many of you would love a boring testimony? I'll tell you this.

- Yeah.

- I think sometimes in church we bring up the wrong testimonies that people are like, "I ruined my life. "I was in the cartel. "I killed my mom, you know, "and now I run, you know." It's like, "I want a boring testimony. "That's what I want. "I would love a boring, "I would love it if in 30 years people are like, ""What happened the last 30 years?" Like, "I don't know. "I had some ice cream and took some naps. "That's all, it kind of went down, you know." And that's where Abraham is. He's got decades of just kind easy living. And that sets up the biggest test of his whole life. And the point is this, there are seasons like this, there are seasons in life where God's anointing and blessing makes it a real great season. And then sometimes a test comes out of nowhere and it could be the big one. And that's what's gonna happen for him. So we're gonna read a long section of Genesis 22 on having faith for your child. It's one thing to have faith for yourself, it's another thing to have faith for your marriage, it's an entirely different thing to have faith for your child. Genesis 22:1-19. "After these things," right 10, 20, 30 years of just peace and prosperity, "God tested Abraham." In the old English the word test can also mean proof. Here it's going to prove that Abraham's faith, he's going to pass this test. "And said to him, 'Abraham!' "And he said, 'Here I am.'" God speaks to him again. "He said, 'Take your son, your only son Isaac, ""whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, ""and offer him there as a burnt offering ""on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.'" They waited 25 years from the promise to the birth of the son. Now he is grown and God tells him to murder his own child. "So Abraham rose early in the morning," no rebellion, he gets right to it, "saddled his donkey, took two of his young men with him, "and his son Isaac. "And he cut the wood for the burnt offering "and arose and went to

the place of which God had told him. "On the third day," three days journey, it's around 50 miles, "Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. "Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy "will go over there and worship and come again to you." "And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering "and laid it on Isaac his son." We're gonna deal with the parallels of the conclusion of the sermon, but notice, "the beloved son carrying the wood "on his own back to his place of death." "And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. "So they both went, both of them together. "And Isaac said to his father Abraham, 'My father!' "he said, 'Here I am, my son.' "He said, 'Behold, the fire and the wood are here, "'but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?.'" Awkward conversation. "Abraham said, 'God will provide for himself the lamb "'for a burnt offering, my son.'" "So they went both of them together. "When they came to the place of which God had told him, "Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order "and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, "on top of the wood. "Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife," to what? "Slaughter his son." Did he love his boy? Absolutely. But here's the good news. "The angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "'Abraham, Abraham!' "And he said, 'Here I am.'" "He said, 'Do not lay your hand on the boy "'or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, "'seeing you have not withheld your son, "'your only son, from me.'" "And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, "behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. "And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up "as a burnt offering instead of his son." You see the substitution. "So Abraham called the name of that place, "'The Lord will provide'; as it is said to this day, "'On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.'" "And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time "from heaven and said, 'By myself I have sworn,' "declares the Lord.'" So this isn't just the angel of the Lord, he tells us here it's the Lord. This is the Lord Jesus Christ. "Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, "your only son, I will surely bless you. Hear me in this. These are the last words that we're going to read now that God is going to speak to Abraham. This is God's final word in the life of Abraham. "I will surely bless you," our God is a good father, He loves to bless His kids. "And I will surely multiply your offspring "as the stars of heaven and as the sand "that is on the seashore." At this point he has one child and God promises a nation. "And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies," I'll protect you even though your nation and family's gonna be surrounded by our enemies. "And in your offspring shall all the nations "of the Earth be blessed." Here we are, a few thousand years later, actually 4,000 years later. We're one of those blessed nations. Exactly what God said has come true. "Because you've obeyed my voice. "So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose "and went together back to Beersheba. "And Abraham lived at Beersheba." God came to Abraham in Genesis 12 and said, "Go, leave your family, leave your demonic religion, "leave your estate, leave your inheritance "and go to the place that I will show you." And he went here. Here God comes and tells him again, "It's time to go on one more journey. "Go to the place that I will show you, "but this time you're not bringing your wife, "you're bringing your son." This is a 50-ish mile journey. They have sufficient time to turn back. Abraham knows that God is going to ask him to sacrifice his only son. Now, Isaac does not know. Can you imagine the tension? See, we can read this theologically or we can read this personally. We'll deal with it theologically in a moment, but first we need to deal with it personally. Many believe that Isaac here is as young as mid-teens to as old as mid to late 30s, depending upon which commentary do you prefer. The

Jews would say that he was around 37 years of age, the most conservative scholars would say he was in his teen year, 16, 17 or 18. Abraham at this point is well over 100. Does he love his son?

- Yes.

- Absolutely. I mean, my boys are 16, 20 and 22. I've raised them. I love being a dad. It's one of my favorite things in the whole world. One of the great joys in my life is seeing my kids grow up. And my sons are doing great, I'm so proud of them. Now, their personality and their gifts and they have their plans for their future. And my oldest son's married, and he's super excited about his life and his future. And my 20-year-old son's getting ready to graduate, and then he wants to go into ministry and he's got his path carved out. Our youngest son has a calling on his life, and I get to coach my boys, and pray with my boys, and listen to their plans, and try and add value, and try and lift burdens, and I'm so excited for their future. The thought of God coming and saying, "You need to kill him." "Me? I'm their dad. "I could never hurt a woman or a child." Everything in a man is hardwired by God to not hurt women and children, especially your own children. Can you imagine the 50-mile walk, Abraham with Isaac, "Hey dad, what exactly is going on today?" "Well, son, we'll talk about it when we get there." Do you think there were moments in that journey that Abraham was really contemplating just heading home? I'll tell you this. 50 miles: I wouldn't have made it. I wouldn't have made it. I was thinking about it, I wish I could tell you that I trust God so much that I could do this. No way. 0% chance, possibility that I could do this. I love the Lord. The Lord's only been good to me. God's been faithful to me since He saved me at age 19, I've seen Him do incredible things. But the thought of doing potential harm, let alone death, to my own child, I don't have that level of faith. I'm willing to die for my child, but I'm not willing to hurt my child. How many of you just, this is a bewildering moment in history. And in this, here's what would've happened, he was told to slaughter his child, dismember him and then burn the body. That's why they're bringing the knife and the wood. The knife is to kill and then to dismember the child. And then the wood is to sacrifice its dead body. Now the Old Testament law is not yet written, all of this is in the free study guide at realfaith.com, but in Leviticus 18 and 20, it says, that this is forbidden for God's people, that this is a demonic evil surrounding God's people were other religions and nations that worship demon gods and they sacrifice their children. Now I wanna be careful here. We can read this and there can be something in us that says "That's horrifying. Since Roe v Wade was legalized, we've murdered 30, excuse me, 63 million of our own children. So in our culture, sex is a religion, LGBTQIA are denominations, there are evangelists trying to convert. And when sex is the God, children are the demonic sacrifice that are the counterfeit to the Son of God giving His life. So we can't take the moral high ground here, this is one potential taking of a life. We've lost more people to abortion than live in Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona, and New Mexico. We've lost more people since Roe V Wade was legalized in 1973 than live in the nation of Canada. We have murdered more people through abortion than live in the entire nation of Ukraine, okay. So let's just be honest that this is something that we don't have the moral high ground. In addition, God told them to do this. God didn't tell us to do what we have done.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- In addition, Isaac here has the ability: true or false, to not obey and surrender and submit to the will of his father? Okay, I'll just tell you this. If you're over 100 and your son's somewhere between his-mid teens to his mid-30s, he can take you. I'll tell you this. At that point, a stiff breeze can take you. For sure, a ladder can take you. I mean, you know, and if he doesn't wanna overwhelm his father, can he just run away?

- [Congregation] Amen.

- Will a 100-year-old man, chase you? No.

- No.

- He has faith, but not that much faith. And so Abraham could just overwhelm his father. He could flee from his father, instead what he does, he surrenders to his father. He's bound. What we see here as well, this is the only recorded conversation in Genesis between father Abraham and his son Isaac. And mom's not involved. Let me say this. There are times that it's just between father and son. There are times that it's just between father and son. There are some seasons in life, your mom loves you, she's invested, she's involved, we all love, bless, honor, praise God for mom, but sometimes it's you just really need dad. Grace and I, we got three great sons, and there are certain times I'm like, "Hon, I got this. "This is the dad conversation. "Dad needs to get involved here." Mom is not making the journey, mom is not involved. Can you imagine how the story might read differently if mom was there? Yeah, you chuckle. Okay. So that's the honest laughter of all the moms. They're like, "Give me the knife." Then you're going after the husband, okay. So mom's not involved here, dad's got this. Dad's gonna lead his son and walk in the will of God. We see as well that, this is when Abraham's faith is most mature, he has been walking with God here. So it was 25 years from the promise that Isaac would be born to the birth of Isaac. So 25 years. So let's say he's 20, that's 45 years. Let's say he's 30, that's 55 years. That Abraham has been walking with God as a believer. How many of us truly at the beginning of our faith journey, our faith would not be this strong? Let me say this. Sometimes God waits to bring tests into your life until you're mature enough to handle it. I don't know, this just comes, God just brought something to mind. I've said this to people in counseling a lot over the years, sometimes people will be in their test. It's the big test. They're asking why. And I say, "No, honestly you should rejoice "because this means you're finally ready to take this test." The reason sometimes that we haven't had the test previously is we weren't prepared, we weren't ready, our faith wasn't mature enough. So just because you're going through a hard time, doesn't mean there's anything wrong. Just because you're taking a big test, particularly involving your own child or your children, that tends to be where a lot of our tests are taken. It may just be that at this point your faith is ready to take that test. Now, ultimately God does not want Isaac's life. What God wants is Abraham and Isaac's hearts.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- That's what He wants. And the test, let me say this, the test is not primarily for Abraham. Who's it for? Isaac. 'Cause if you come back, and some of you might, some of you won't 'cause of my personality, we'll just see what happens next week, but if you come back, you're gonna see that Isaac gets married and then he starts leading a family and Abraham dies, which means he's gotta have his own faith. He's gotta hear from God. He's gotta walk with God. He's gotta make his own decisions, he can't just lean on the faith of his father. He's gotta have his own faith, if he's going to become a father. So here the test is not so that Abraham could be tested, but that Isaac could see his father passed his biggest test. Let me say this. Sometimes when we're going through it, it's because our children are watching and who we are is truly revealed under pressure taking of a test. Parents, don't underestimate the fact that when you're going through your test, your trial, your trouble, your tribulation, even involving your own child, they're watching. And they're going to see how you respond. And they're going to learn about your relationship with God. Do you curse God or bless God when things are hard? Do you run to God or run from God when things don't go the way that you are hoping? Are you filled with faith or with fear when the moment of decision comes? Isaac is watching? Your children are watching. My children are watching. And it's not just for us, it's for our legacy. And so here, what we're seeing is a theological concept called substitutionary atonement. Substitutionary atonement is this, atonement means at one meant. So it's like, how does a holy God have a relationship with a sinful people? Well, there needs to be a payment for the sin. There needs to be the dealing with the sin. So either the sinner or the substitute pays the price for the sin. In this case, it is a substitute that is sacrificed instead of the sinner. This sets up the process of the Old Testament sacrificial system. This sets up the coming of Jesus Christ as our substitutionary atonement. And here the one who shows up and provides this substitution is called the Angel of the Lord. We've dealt with this. When it says "an angel of the Lord," it's usually a divine being. When it says "the Angel of the Lord," it's usually Jesus Christ, it's God. Angel means messenger. And here it is Jesus showing up and saying, "Don't sacrifice, I will provide." He provides a ram in that day, and then He provides Himself on a later day. I was thinking about it. My oldest son Zach teaches some over at students and he's doing work in Genesis, and we were having lunch recently, and I'll borrow one of his illustrations. We keep seeing Jesus show up in the storyline, little cameo. And he used an illustration with the students that was good. Any of you Marvel fans, you like Marvel, Marvel movies? Who's the guy who sort of is the godfather of the Marvel movies? Stan Lee. And he always shows up in his films, his first 20 Marvel films, at some point, he writes himself into the script and he makes a little cameo. And you're like, "Oh, there's the author of the story." Jesus does this throughout Genesis, and He does this throughout the Old Testament. He writes himself into the script, and He shows up for a little cameo, and here He shows up for Abraham and Isaac. Now just for a moment, just think about this, here's the question. What was Abraham thinking with a sacrifice of Isaac? Like what's going on? The New Testament gives us two commentaries on this event, says, James 2:21 and 22, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works "when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? "You see that faith was active along with his works, "and faith was completed by his works." So let me explain this. Faith is internal and it's external. Faith is an internal conviction that leads to an external action. Faith is a belief that guide's behavior. Abraham, couldn't say, "Lord, I trust you,"

unless he got up, journeyed 50 miles, found the mountain that God told him to go to and did what God instructed. But ultimately faith and obedience are intimately tied. You show me what you do, I'll show you what you believe. See, 'cause Christianity's not just lip service, it's lifestyle. It's easy to say a lot of things, but what you truly believe is demonstrated by what you do or do not do. How many of us, the acts of faith that are the hardest involve our kids, right. So for those of you who are parents, or you're grandparents, are just, you're gonna have to, we're gonna have to, I struggle with this as well, trust our kids to the same God that we trust ourselves to.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- I mean, this is where we live our life and we make our decisions as we've seen the life of Abraham out of faith or fear. And we tend to have fears around the people and things we love the most, 'cause we don't want anything to happen to them, 'cause we love them, we care for them. And we love our kids so much. It's where a lot of our fears come in, and that's where our faith gets tested. You're pregnant, like, "Is the baby gonna be okay?" The baby's born. "Are they healthy?" "Are they gonna grow up?" "Are they gonna be all right?" You send your kid off to school. "Are they gonna make friends?" "Are they gonna get bullied?" "Are they gonna do okay?" "Are they gonna fail?" Put your kid on a sports team, you sort of, like, "I hope this works out," you know. Raising a kid oftentimes is just, it's a lot of acts of faith. It's like, okay, they wanna go to college. Oh gosh. Oh no. Or they said they met somebody. Oh-oh, you know. Oh-oh. At college. Oh-oh. It's just, okay, now they wanna get married. Oh boy! Okay, now they're they're gonna buy a house. They're gonna start a company. They're gonna start a ministry. They're gonna have their own baby! Oh-oh! Parents, we feel it right. And some of you, it's hard. You've got a child that's sick. They're not healthy. Like, I hope they're okay. You've got a child that's a prodigal, they're not walking with God, they've walked away from God. And you're trying to hold their hand, you're trying to hold His hand, and you're kind of getting torn in the middle, like, "I just wish you and the Lord would hold hands "and walk together." Sometimes these are the kids that grow up and they cut you out and you just, your relationship is distant for a bit. Or maybe they're in a wayward season, or maybe they're making bad decisions. You're like, "Don't do that. "Don't be confused. "Don't self destruct. "Don't hurt yourself. "You're young, you're gonna make decisions "that are gonna affect the rest of your life. "And I love you so much." And they do need a parent, but let me say this, the best way to be a good parent is to learn to be a good child. Because what you learn when you're parenting is this, that you still need a parent too. And I'll tell you what, I've learned more about God as father by being a father. There are days in my life, and with our kids, it's like, "Dad help. "I don't know what I'm doing here. "I don't have access to their heart. "Father you need to keep an eye on them." I spend a lot of time talking to the Father about my kids and He's talking to me as one of His kids. And what you learn when you become a parent is, you're a parent for a season, but you're a child of God for every step of your life. And what James says is, it demonstrates itself with the decisions we make and the lifestyle that we live. Let me ask you this, for those of you who are parents, what's the big faith act for your kid? What's the big sacrifice? What's the test? What's that decision that you need to make to just trust that the Lord is going to be involved? And I'll just say this. I love you parents, I'm not trying to pick on you. But if we don't believe that God is sovereign over our child and we try to be

sovereign over our child, this is where you get high control parents and they don't understand that they worship a God who also is sovereign and has control. It doesn't mean that we neglect our parental duties, but that we accept that He is a father as well. and He's invested, involved in the wellbeing of our child. It's just amazing that the biggest test of Abraham's life is with this kid. How many of you, I mean, if you're here with your kid, don't raise your hand, but like, you know, or do this to your kid, but, you know, how many of you, the biggest test in your life of your faith is with your kid.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- Amen. In addition, here's what he was thinking. It tells us in 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 be reckoned.'" "Abraham reasoned," this is unbelievable, "that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, "he did receive Isaac back from death." So to catch you up on the story, God came to Abraham in Genesis 12, Abraham was in Ur of the Chaldees, its ancient Babylon, its modern day Iraq. He's a godless guy. It says in the Bible that his father Nahor worship demon gods. So he's non-believer in a pagan place, worshipping a demon god with a barren wife. God's like, "You know what? "I'll start there." 'Cause God needs nothing to accomplish everything. So then God tells him, "I'm gonna give you a son through your wife, Sarah, "through that son who's gonna be named Isaac, "which means laughter," 'cause God always gets the last laugh, "is going to come a nation, the nation of Israel. "I'm gonna give you the Promise Land for your family. "And then through your family is gonna come generations, "and then ultimately through your family "and through your son, I'm going to bring from God's family, "God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, "the blessing to the nations of the Earth." They wait 25 years. Every day, Abraham and Sarah get up, he's like, "How are you feeling?" She's like, "Not pregnant." 25 years. Finally she gets pregnant, she's showing. There's so much joy in the house. He's kicking, he's doing good. He's on his way. He's born: they get to hold him. Remember the first day you held your kid. Now they got to see him grow up. He's healthy, strong, he's doing good. He loves the Lord, he loves us. Finally it's all been worth it, 40, 50, whatever number of years it's been. And then he's gonna give us grandkids, lots of them. And then they're gonna give us a big giant family, that's gonna be a nation. And then our family gets Jesus. Yes! God's like, "Kill him." We haven't, what about all the promises? And it says that Abraham believed that even if he died God would raise him from the dead. See you and I, we read this 4,000 years later, we're like, "Yeah, Bible has a lot to say about resurrection." Yeah. At that point there was no Bible. There was no verses. He couldn't go to first Corinthians 15, be like, "I've got a whole chapter on the resurrection." It's just him and Sarah. The first time in human history that anyone reports resurrection is in the book of Job 19:25. I'll never forget, I was a freshman in college reading the Bible that Grace gave me, I became a Christian reading that Bible, and I was reading it through for the first time, and I was in the book of Job. And I'll never forget, I was sitting on my bed and it's just like Job 19:25, just leapt off the page. Job says, "I know that my Redeemer lives," he's talking about the Redeemer Jesus Christ living in heaven, the unseen realm, he says, "even though I die, "one day His feet are gonna stand on

the Earth, "and I will come back and I will see him with my own eyes." I was like, "Oh my gosh, Jesus knew that, excuse me, Job rather, "knew that Jesus existed "in the unseen realm, was going to come into history "after Job died, and that He would resurrect "Job's body from the dead. "And that Job would see Jesus in his resurrected body, "through his resurrected eyes." I remember, I just literally dropped my Bible. I was like, "That's unbelievable that he knew that." Abraham knew that. Here's the big idea. We know far more than Abraham, and we believe far less. He knew very, very, very little, but he trusted very, very, very much. The point is this. It's not just what you know, but the depth of faith that you have in commitment to what you know. Again, here we are 4,000 years later, we've seen Jesus die, and rise, and come back, and prove his resurrection. We remind ourselves every Easter, we know about the resurrection of the dead, Abraham did not. But what he said was, "God made a promise. "And if God made a promise, even if I kill my only son, "my God will raise my son from the dead "and He will fulfill His promises."

- [Congregation] Amen.

- Okay. Let's just be honest. Abraham's had some bad days, right. Gave his wife away twice. Those are bad days. He was fearful on some occasions, he's tripped over his own feet. His walk with God is two steps forward one step back. It looks a little bit more like a conga line, you know, he's got a lot of activity going on, but this is mature faith, this is seasoned faith, this is tested and proven faith. And I'll be honest with you, I don't have this kind of faith. If I was looking at my son in the eye, I couldn't do it. I just, I'm completely incapable. Let me say this. If Abraham believed that God could bring someone back from the dead, you and I should believe that God is gonna bring us back from the dead.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- I mean, Jesus already proved it. So not only do we have faith, we have sight. So what was God doing with the sacrifice of Isaac? How many of you, and if this is your first day at church, you know, you've hit a running treadmill, I apologize, I know this is complicated. You're like, "Huh, what? "I've got to go get my kid "outta the kid's ministry right away." No, they got water slides, they're doing good, okay. But what was God thinking? How many of you, "This is shocking." "Like God, what do you think, what are you doing?" Let me, so Genesis 22:2. Let's look at this again. "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, "go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there "as a burnt offering on one of the mountains "of which I shall tell you." Many years later, God showed up to King David, guess where? The land of Moriah, and on the mountain where Abraham almost sacrificed Isaac. And He told him, "Your family's gonna build a temple for me, "where I will be worshiped in that place." 2 Chronicles 3:1. "Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord "in Jerusalem," on? "Mount Mariah, where the Lord had appeared "to David his father." Let me set this up. Abraham is told by God, "Go and I'll show you where to go. "So go to the region of Moriah, "I'll bring you up to mountain." He goes there, he almost sacrifices Isaac. Jesus shows up, says, "I will provide the sacrifice." So a ram is provided. Then later God appears to David says, "Build a temple here." He can't build it because

of his disqualifying sin, so his son builds it. The temple was built in the place where Abraham almost sacrificed Isaac. That then became the place of substitutionary atonement. It's the place where the priest, who was the mediator between man and God, would take a sacrifice, an animal, would confess or impute the sins of the people to the animal, the animal would then be slaughtered as a substitute. The wage for sin is death. Without the shedding of blood there's no remission for sins. The temple was the connecting point between heaven and earth. That's where the presence of God was. And it's where sinners would offer a sacrifice and a substitute would die so that the sinner could be forgiven by the God whom they had sinned against. I mean, blood literally flowed from the temple. All of this was to prepare us for the coming of Jesus Christ, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, the substitute. So then Jesus arrives, and we read this in John 3:16. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only"?

- Son.

- Son. Does this sound familiar? This is the whole father sacrificing a son that he loves with Abraham and Isaac was to show us that the Father was sending His son, the Lord Jesus Christ, "that whoever believes in Him should not perish, "but have eternal life." I have such good news for you if you're not a Christian. Jesus Christ substituted Himself for you. You know what? You and I should die, and we should go to hell to pay God back for all of our sin against Him, and instead God loved us so much, we read here that the Father sent His only Son, that He would substitute Himself and die for us, and that He would rise from the dead. Literally the longing, the hope, the faith that Abraham had for his son was fulfilled in God's Son. He did die and He was risen from the dead. And the good news is this. You can be forgiven for all of your sins. You can be reconciled in relationship with God. You can know that your eternal life with God is secure and that your resurrection is guaranteed if you believe in the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. He says this as well, Romans 8:32. "He who did not spare His own son," sounds familiar, right? "But gave Him up for us all. "How will He not also with Him "graciously give us all things." What He says is this. Just like Abraham loved Isaac and would do anything for him, so when God the Father adopts you into His family, He loves you and He would do anything for you. This is the Father Heart of God. This is why a cruel father, a greedy father, an absent father, a selfish father, an ungenerous father is not a reflection of the Father Heart of God. What He says is not only does He save us, He blesses us and He gives us all things. The Father that I know, He not only brought me into His family, He's blessed me every moment that I've been in His family.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- I just feel inclined in the spirit to say this, men. We have this tremendous opportunity to give our children and to give children in general a picture of the Father Heart of God. I'll never forget this. I just kind of think about it as I'm standing here, I'll never forget, I was tucking one of my daughters in, and at night we would read the Jesus Storybook Bible, and we'd pray, and I'd tuck them in and sing with them. And I've got a terrible voice, but, you know, they're kids and so they give grace to their dad and we're worshiping and praying, and snuggling, and having fun. And I

tucked them in, I'll never forget, my daughter pulled the covers up right to here and she looked at me, she said, "I'm so blessed, I have two dads." And my thought was, "Oh. "I got to talk to Grace about this." You know, my God. And she said, "I have a daddy in heaven "and a daddy on Earth, and they both love me "and take care of me." And I remember thinking, "Oh my gosh, "I share a title with the heavenly Father. "She calls me father. "We're supposed to call Him father. "How I treat her, defines for her "what a father is and does." I started crying. My girls make me cry all the time. And I just prayed, I said, "God, help me be a father "with the Father's heart. "Let that title be consistent between Your heart, "for her and my heart for her." As men, we have this profound opportunity to not only have children, but bless them. And that's what He says here, again, in Romans, that He blesses us, that this is the heart of our Father. Well, let me show you today, that's where Abraham almost sacrificed Isaac. It's really interesting, you read the Bible and you ask, "Well, okay, did these places exist?" "Yeah, we know exactly where they are." "Did this really happen?" "Yeah, it did." So that's the Temple Mount, it's in Jerusalem. It's in the Promised Land that God promised to Abraham and gave him the borders of, and there's the Dome of the Rock. So what you've got, you've got three major world religions that would see this as a sacred and holy place. The Jews will go there for the Wailing Wall, they put the prayers in the Wall. The Muslims control much of the Temple Mount, so they've got the Dome of the Rock, which you see there with the orange, and they've got a mosque, and many who go there for the pilgrimages are descendants of Abraham through his son Ishmael, who is the father of the Arab people. And then you've got the Christians that make pilgrimages there as well. And some of you might ask, "Okay, well, where is the temple?" It's gone. It was destroyed in 70 A.D.. Today all we have is a 37 acre mount. It was basically the foundation. You can go underneath and investigate the underpinnings of what was previously the temple, we've done that as a family, but the temple's gone, it was destroyed in 70 A.D.. Do you know why? We don't need it? See when Abraham brought Isaac there, it was to prepare everybody for the priesthood, the temple, the sacrifices to prepare us for the coming of Jesus. And once Jesus died on the cross, He said, "It is finished." And the work of salvation was done. And the substitutionary atonement for our sin was accomplished. And the promise that Jesus made to Abraham and Isaac was fulfilled by Him on His cross. He said, "The Lord will provide." And then He is the Lord, and He did provide. Here's the big idea. Our God doesn't take our life, He gives His life. That's how good our God is. So what happened then the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D., no longer exists because we don't need to go to a place to be in God's presence, God sends us the Holy Spirit to make us the place of His presence. So now you're the temple of the living God, that's what Paul tells the Corinthians. In addition, we don't offer sacrifices 'cause Jesus Christ was the once for all sacrifice for all sin.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- We don't have a priest because we have Jesus our great high priest. And so we don't have a sacrificial system because we have not only a dead but a risen savior. Just as Abraham said, "Even if my son dies, he'll come back. "God said, that's true of my Son, "He will die and come back." So for us today, we don't see the center of our faith in a place but a person. This is where our faith is different than other faiths. So Muslims and Jews, they would wanna go to these

sacred places. For us God comes to be with us and wherever He meets with us that becomes a sacred place. So for us, the center of our faith is not a place, it's a person. It's the Son of God. It's the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, okay. Here's the big idea friends. Everything in Genesis is about God. We learned at the beginning, "In the beginning, God," that's how the book started. And as we are examining the book, we're getting more insights into who this God is. And here we realize that He is a son who is going to die for sinners at the hand of His father. So let me do this. I'm gonna share with you some correlations and some parallels between Jesus and Isaac. And as I do so I just want you to see how the whole Bible, it's about Jesus. Jesus is the center of the Bible in human history. Jesus is the theme of the Bible. Everything points to Him. Everything comes from Him. Everything is held together by Him. I just want you to, just for a moment, just consider Isaac and Jesus were both born in accordance with promises given many years before. Isaac and Jesus were both born at God's appointed time, after years of waiting. They waited 25 years for Isaac, and 2,000 years from this time for the coming of Jesus. Isaac and Jesus were both born of miracles. Isaac's mother was barren and beyond childbearing years, Jesus' mother was a virgin. Isaac and Jesus were both firstborn sons, Isaac and Jesus were both loved by their fathers, Abraham and God the Father respectively. Isaac and Jesus both left their father's homes. Isaac left Beersheba, Jesus left heaven. Isaac and Jesus both journeyed three days. It took three days for Isaac to get from Beersheba to Mount Moriah. It took Jesus three days to get from the cross to the empty tomb. Isaac and Jesus were both escorted by two men to their sacrifice. Isaac had two servants, Jesus was crucified between two thieves, Isaac and Jesus were both young men who carried wood upon their back to their place of sacrifice. Isaac and Jesus both willingly submitted their lives to their fathers. Isaac and Jesus were both laid down as an offering for sin. Isaac and Jesus both asked their father a question, "Where is the lamb?" and, "Why have you forsaken me?" Jesus is the angel of the Lord who spared Isaac and died as the sacrifice for sin. Isaac was promised that God would provide, and Jesus was that provision. Isaac was raised from death figuratively, and Jesus was raised from death literally. Isaac and Jesus both went forth to get their bride. You'll see it coming up. Isaac has a bride that he adores named Rebecca and Jesus has a bride that He adores named the Church. That's you. That's us. This is a time for us to meet with God. How is your faith? Have you trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you walking with the Lord Jesus Christ? Is this a season of testing your faith? Is this a season that is testing your faith for your family, your marriage, your child? My encouragement, my hope, my prayer for you, 'cause I love you, and I'm your pastor and I thank you for giving me the honor of teaching you God's Word. You need to meet with God. What we saw Abraham do is he met with God. This was his regular practice being in God's presence. The reason that his faith was so strong is because as we saw previously, he spent decades just meeting with God, talking to God, singing to God, praying with God and strengthening his trust in the goodness of his God. We're gonna give you an opportunity to do that right now. If you need faith for yourself, ask God for it. If you need faith for your marriage, ask God for it. If you need faith for your child or your family, ask God for it. You're still His child. And the father gives all things to the children that He loves. Father, I thank You for Your heart, that You have a father's heart for us. God, I thank you that in the story of Abraham and Isaac, in that little story we see the big story of the whole Bible. Lord Jesus, thank You that You showed up and intervened. Thank You that You promised that You

would provide. Thank You that You came later as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as the Son of God, as the fulfillment of the need for a substitute. And Jesus we thank You that not only did You die for our sin, but you rose and You returned to heaven. Right now, You're hearing our prayers. Right now You're still meeting with us and speaking to us. And God, we don't need to get on a plane and go to a holy place, we just need to stop and invite the Holy Spirit to make wherever we happen to be that sacred place of meeting. So Holy Spirit, we invite You here now. I just have a sense that there's some people that need to get saved and they need faith. There's some people whose faith is struggling because it's being tested. There are some marriages that are in difficult times and they need faith that You're gonna get them through it. There are parents that have wayward children, confused children, rebellious children, estranged children, and Lord God these parents need faith just as Abraham did to trust that You will be good to them as You've been good to us. So Father, we invite You to send the Holy Spirit as we meet in Jesus' name. Amen.