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Abraham Trusts God

Genesis 22:1–19 · Bud · Ages 9–12

Abraham had waited decades for the son God promised. Isaac was the living proof that God keeps his word, and every other promise, a family as many as the stars, a blessing for all nations, depended on him.

Genesis 22 opens by telling us this was a test. God asks Abraham to take his son, his beloved only son with Sarah, to a mountain in the land of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering. It is the most shocking request in Genesis. Readers know something Abraham doesn't: God is testing him, and God will not let it happen.

Abraham rises early. He splits the wood, saddles the donkey, and sets out with Isaac and two servants. On the third day he sees the place. He tells the servants to wait, and says something remarkable: after they worship, he and Isaac will both return. Hebrews says Abraham trusted that God could even raise the dead (Heb 11:17–19).

Isaac carries the wood. Abraham carries the fire and the knife. As they walk, Isaac points out the obvious: they have wood and fire, but no lamb. Abraham tells him that God will provide. They keep walking together.

At the top, Abraham builds an altar and arranges the wood, and gets ready to obey. At that moment the angel of the Lord calls out his name twice and tells him not to harm the boy. Now it is clear that Abraham fears God and holds nothing back from him.

Abraham looks up and sees a ram with its horns tangled in the bushes. He offers the ram in place of his son. He names the place The Lord Will Provide, and the name lived on as a saying in Israel. God renews his promise, swearing by himself: Abraham's descendants will be countless, and through them all nations will be blessed, because Abraham obeyed.

Two important truths sit underneath this story. First, other peoples of that time did offer children to their gods, and the God of Israel later forbids it completely (Lev 18:21; Jer 7:31). This story shows that God does not want human sacrifice. He provides the offering himself. Second, Christians see in this mountain a picture of Calvary. Isaac carries the wood up the hill, as Jesus will carry his Cross. But where God stopped Abraham, God the Father went all the way and handed over his own Son for our sake (Rom 8:32). Jesus is the Lamb God provides.

Talk about it

1. Why do you think the story tells us at the start that God is testing Abraham?
2. What did Abraham tell Isaac about the lamb, and how did it come true?
3. How does this story point to Jesus?

Key verse: Gen 22:14. Look it up in your Bible.