



## “He Will Provide”

Genesis 22:1-19

**Idea:** The Tester is also the Provider.

**Intro:** Legend has it that a man was lost in the desert, just dying for a drink of water. He stumbled upon an old shack – a rickety, windowless, roofless, weather-beaten old shack. He looked about this place and found a little shade from the heat of the desert sun. As he glanced around he saw an old rusty water pump about 15 feet away. He stumbled over to it, grabbed the handle, and began to pump up and down, up and down. Nothing came out.

Disappointed, he staggered back. He noticed off to the side an old jug. He looked at it, wiped away the dirt and dust, and read a message that said, “You have to prime the pump with all the water in this jug, my friend. P.S.: Be sure you fill the jug again before you leave.”

He popped the cork out of the jug and sure enough, it was almost full of water! Suddenly, he was faced with a decision. If he drank the water, he could live. Ah, but if he poured all

the water in the old rusty pump, maybe it would yield fresh, cool water from down deep in the well, all the water he wanted.

He studied the possibility of both options. What should he do, pour it into the old pump and take a chance on fresh, cool water or drink what was in the old jug and ignore its message? Should he waste all the water on the hopes of those flimsy instructions written, no telling how long ago?

Reluctantly he poured all the water into the pump. Then he grabbed the handle and began to pump – squeak, squeak, squeak. Still nothing came out! Squeak, squeak, squeak. A little bit began to dribble out, then a small stream, and finally it gushed! To his relief fresh, cool water poured out of the rusty pump. Eagerly, he filled the jug and drank from it. He filled it another time and once again drank from it.

Then he filled the jug for the next traveler. He filled it to the top, popped the cork back on, and added this little note: “Believe me, it really works! You have to give it all away before you can get anything back.”

I think many Christians approach life much like this man. They often wonder if God will really provide for them. They wonder if He can be trusted. They wonder if the message they are reading or hearing is trustworthy.

“Faith never knows where it is being led, but it loves and knows the One who is leading.” – Oswald Chambers

Today, we are in week 2 of a four-week sermon series we have entitled, “He Will.” It is a study on trust, looking at some of the great miracle stories in the Bible. No matter what is going on in your life and family, through this series, you will learn that God can always be trusted. He will empower, provide, protect, and be present in your life. We must trust.

**Inquiry:** Today, we are looking at the story of Abraham and Isaac. We will see that He will provide.

Abraham's life of faith was launched when he left Ur in obedience to God's promise that He would make Abram into a great nation and bless him and that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through him (Gen 12:1-3). Over the years that great promise was repeated and reiterated with remarkable drama and specificity. At the onset, as Abram, fresh from Ur, traveled through central Canaan, the Lord appeared to him, promising the land to his offspring, and there the patriarch built an altar in the heart of the land (12:7). Next, Lot separated from Abram and took for himself the best portion of the land, God commanded Abram from Ramath Nabor (the highest point in central Israel) to look north, south, east, and west – promising everything in a 360-degree radius to Abram's offspring forever, also indicating that his children would number like the dust of the earth (13:14-17).

Sometime later, after Abram had rescued Lot from the kings of the north and lay fretting one night over his childless state, God dramatically promised him an heir. God took Abram out under the stars and challenged him to look up and count them, if he could. Then God said, "So shall your offspring be" (15:5). Awed and humbled, Abram was silent under the stars. But the Scripture speaks for him: "And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness" (15:6). Abram said a silent amen to the promise of God. He was absolutely sure that he would have a son. "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for" (Heb 11:1).

The next day Abram obeyed God's directives as God told him to arrange the parts of slain animals for a covenantal sacrifice. And sunset, God appeared as a flaming furnace radiating orange in the darkness. Then the glowing furnace moved – gliding down the gruesome path lined with glistening animal parts (15:17-21). Abram saw God alone pass between the pieces. This, then, was a unilateral, unconditional covenant announcing that if Abram's descendants did not get the land, God himself would be severed. So we see that on succeeding nights Abram was assured first by God that a countless people

would come from his body and then that the land would go to his people.

Years later, when Abram was 99 years old and God was preparing his heart for the covenant of circumcision, God changed the patriarch's name from "father of many" to "father of multitudes" (Abram to Abraham). Again, signifying that the old man would be fruitful and that nations and kings would come from him and that Canaan would be their possession (17:1-8). Sarai was also renamed Sarah, reaffirming her role as "princess" because she would have Abraham's son from whom kings would come – and ultimately the Lion from the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10). God also named their yet-to-be-conceived son Isaac ("laughter"), promising that he would be born within a year (Gen 17:17-21). Upon bestowing these new names, circumcision (the sign of God's promise) was instituted, and Abraham and all his house were circumcised. Aged Sarah would also herself laugh at the promise, but baby Laughter was coming (Gen 18:10-15).

During those long years that the great promise of a people and a land and a blessing was being reiterated, Abraham's growth in faith had been uneven. Faith's mountaintops were always edged by dark valleys such as Abraham's identical lies to Pharaoh and Abimelech about Sarah and the Hagar affair, which precipitated some 16 years of domestic misery. But with the birth of Isaac, the necessary departure of Ishmael, and the treaty of Beersheba, Abraham was reassured of a people and a land. Abraham's faith in God's word therefore soared as evidenced by his calling upon the Lord as *El Olam*, "the Everlasting God" (Gen 21:33). This designation of the Lord that Abraham used is evocative of the stability, security, and permanence that Abraham now felt in the covenant and in his relationship with God.

Genesis 21 ends with the description that Abraham sojourned many days in the land of the Philistines. Most likely several years had passed between the end of chapter 21 and the beginning of chapter 22.

## Read Genesis 22:1-19.

Abraham's responses throughout his life teach us that spiritual growth depends on how we handle the tests and trials that come our way. The Bible clearly tells us that God sought to put Abraham's faith to the test. His life and this story are examples for us today. They remind us that God puts our faith to the test too for the purpose of our spiritual growth.

Tests are not easy. They are stressful, exhausting, and sometimes painful. Through them, though, our faith and trust in God is refined and deepened. We learn four things about God's tests from Abraham.

### **1. God's testing of you is an opportunity to trust Him.**

Obedience to the command of God forms the fabric of this chapter. It begins by pointing out that God tested Abraham. In many ways this serves to cushion the reader from the shock that follows.

We know that this was a test (vs. 1), but Abraham did not have such knowledge. He had been tested before, such as when God called him to leave Ur for Canaan. He was tested when promised offspring and land. He was tested when he was asked to believe that Sarah in her old age would bear a son within a year. This test, however, surpassed them all. This command came in the form of a family endearment. *"Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah"* (vs. 2a). Isaac was Abraham's only son. Ishmael had been sent away earlier, and he was the son of promise.

Abraham's trust was to be weighed in the balance against common sense, human affection, and life-long ambition. As Derek Kidner says, "It was an act against everything earthly." This test put God's command in conflict with God's promise.

Isaac was most likely a teenager at this point. He had brought much laughter and joy to his elderly parents. He was the son promised to Abraham. Everything was focused on him. Abraham loved him with aching parental love, the kind that hurts.

Those sweet, endearing terms are followed by unmitigated horror: *“Offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you”* (vs. 2b). God’s command was to “take,” “go,” and “offer.” Verse 3 tells us that Abraham rose early the next morning, gathered the needed supplies, and left for Moriah. They traveled for three days. It was a 55 mile journey northeast from Beersheba to Moriah (modern day Jerusalem). With every step and every passing mile came a new opportunity to trust God.

Humanly speaking, the command made no sense. Parentally speaking, the command was devastating. But the writer of Genesis was not concerned with the emotional state of Abraham. He focused on what Abraham did rather than what he thought or felt.

Faith is believing God and acting upon it.

Appl: God’s testing, though difficulties, are new opportunities to exercise faith by trusting God.

## **2. God’s testing of you is an opportunity to worship Him.**

Upon arrival at the base of Moriah, Abraham told his two servants to *“stay with the animal, I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you”* (vs. 5).

Worship is ascribing worth to God. It is the offering of our best to the Lord. It is giving to God what He requires. Isaac was the most precious thing in Abraham’s life because all the promises of God were

rolled up in the boy. God required Isaac as a sacrifice. He was Abraham's greatest asset; he symbolized the very best he had to offer. Therefore, Abraham freely gave him to God.

Abraham didn't understand much of anything that God was asking. But he did understand three of the most important things:

- God has spoken.
- God is faithful.
- God is worthy.

Appl: When God calls you to a new task, a difficult task, or an impossible task He is testing your faith. He is growing your faith. Trust Him. Trust the process. Learn to worship God on the mountaintops and in the valleys.

### **3. God's testing of you is an opportunity to watch Him.**

Abraham and Isaac ascend the mountain with the wood, fire, and a knife. At some point Isaac realized that the sacrificial animal was missing, so he asked his father about it (vs. 7). *"God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son"* (vs. 8).

This statement shows Abraham's absolute trust in God, but it also allows God to be God. The truth is Abraham didn't know exactly how God would play out this scene. The question probably consumed his thoughts during the three days of travel. Hebrews tells us that he concluded that God would resurrect Isaac (Heb 11:19).

Abraham didn't know. God had simply said, "Go, take, and offer." Abraham was resolved to be faithful in His trust of God. I believe that alongside of his grief, there was an element of hopeful excitement. "How is God going to do this?" "How will He provide this time?"

Appl: When God calls you to do what seems to be impossible, remember that it is an opportunity to watch God be God. It is an opportunity to see the impossible become not just possible but reality.

#### **4. God's testing of you is an opportunity to grow in Him.**

Abraham told Isaac that God would provide the lamb for the burnt offering. He spoke in faith, fully trusting that God would provide. In his mind, he believed that Isaac was the lamb who would be resurrected to life. This testing created an avenue...an opportunity for Abraham to learn new depths of God's faithfulness and love. He learned in a way that he couldn't have learned from any other way. The lesson was concrete rather than abstract. It was reality and not just theory.

Appl: As Christ-followers, we believe and thus read it. We read the Bible and thus believe it. Our belief doesn't really become belief until it is put into practice. Last week we said, "You only believe those parts of the Bible that you practice." God allows and even creates storms in your life so that your faith is moved from theory to reality. He stretches our faith, and by doing so our trust in God is deepened.

#### Faith Principles:

- The testing of your faith is not for God; it is for you.

God didn't test Abraham because He was unsure of his trust level. God tested him so that Abraham would know how much he trusted God.

The trials and testings you go through are for your good. It helps you know where you are spiritually and where you need to improve.



- The testing of your faith works to increase your faith.

Boeing and Lockheed Martin don't design a jet and immediately put it into service. The design phase is intense. After design they build a prototype. That prototype is put into all kinds of tests. Pilots take it up in the air and push it to its limits. They test the jet to know what it can do in order to trust its abilities.

When God puts you in a testing situation, He does it to develop your faith...to stretch your spiritual muscles.

- The testing of your faith opens the door to more of God's provisions.

Abraham would not have been able to trust God with Isaac if his faith had not first been stretched through other tests in life.

Through the trials of life our *timid* faith becomes *tested* faith that then becomes *triumphant* faith.

**Conclusion:** Abraham's faith was triumphant. He had experienced the provision of the Lord. It was no longer the theory of verse 8; it became reality as God provided himself a ram (vs. 13). He learned that the Tester is also the Provider. As we go through the tests of growing a greater faith, as God tests us and stretches us, we believe and He provides. God is *Jehovah Jireh* – the God who provides.

Today, like the lost man in the desert in desperate need of a drink of water, will you take the word at face value and believe? Will you faith into God and believe His Word? If you will, He will provide. He is *Jehovah Jireh*.