

# Real Faith and The Only Beloved Son

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at ChristChurchEastBay.org. Good morning. My name is Brian and I am a member of the Alameda Community Group. It's good to be here this morning.

Today's Old Testament lesson is a reading from the book of Genesis. Some time later, God tested Abraham. He said to him, Abraham, here I am, he replied.

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 him with two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about.

[ 1 : 22 ] On the third day, Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there.

We will worship. Then we will come back to you. Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac. And he himself carried the fire and the knife.

As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, Father? Yes, my son. Abraham replied, the fire and the wood are here, Isaac said.

But where is the lamb for the burnt offering? Abraham answered, God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son. And the two of them went on together.

When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar on top of the wood.

[ 2 : 27 ] Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, Abraham, Abraham. Here I am, he replied.

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, your only 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. And to this day it is said, on the mountain of the Lord it will be provided. The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, 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.

[ 3 : 46 ] Then Abraham returned to his servants and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba. The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever.

Thank you, Brian. Good morning. My name is Andrew and happy to open up God's word with you this morning. Let's pray. Father, we ask that you would make our hearts tender to receive your word.

Open up our eyes to see who you are. The kind of God you reveal yourself to be in this incredible passage of scripture.

Would you help us to see your fatherly heart? Would you help us to feel your heart in this passage? And to encounter you in a fresh way, Lord God.

In a way that allows us to live the way you want us to live. Offer up to you what you want us to offer up to you. With gladness and with faith.

[ 4 : 54 ] So, Lord, we ask that you be present to us. In Jesus' name. Amen. Alright, so we've got five more Sundays in our series in the book of Genesis.

But today is our last Sunday in the story and life of Abraham. And what a crazy way to end, right? This passage, Genesis 22, it's wild.

I remember back in seminary, this passage was a passage that we were tested on in my Old Testament history and theology course. We had to be able to parse every single word and translate every single sentence from the Hebrew into the English.

And so I remember just sitting in my bedroom at my tiny little desk, just going through this text. And this is a story that, you know, I had been exposed to since I was a child. I grew up in the church.

I knew this story. But reading this in the Hebrew, it really just was like relearning the story. It really just stirred my heart. It mesmerized me. This is an incredibly rich, incredibly beautiful passage.

[ 5 : 57 ] This narrative in the book of Genesis. Some people say this is one of the most beautiful pieces of literature of all time. And so I was telling Jonathan, I was like, oh yeah, I get to preach it, Genesis 22.

I'm glad it's me on that day in our preaching calendar. But then Jonathan reminded me, it's also like crazy challenging. This passage is incredibly challenging as well. And I think it's pretty clear why, right?

It's a story about a God who tests his servant Abraham by commanding him to offer up his son, it says here, as a burnt offering.

As a burnt offering, right? So it's no wonder Jonathan was glad not to preach today, right, on this text. So the question is, what do we do? What do we do with this morally reprehensible, emotionally disturbing, and also theologically confusing story?

That's also at the same time a divinely inspired story from God. It's a big question for us this morning. What kind of God would write such a story? What kind of God would give such a command and expect such faith from his servants?

[ 7 : 05 ] And is this God worthy of our worship? Worthy to receive what he asks of us? If you're here this morning and the story unsettles you, makes you recoil in horror and disgust, whether you're a Bible-believing Christian or not, I want you to know that that's exactly how you're supposed to feel when you come to this passage.

That's how Abraham felt. That's how we're all supposed to feel. And get this, God himself, the writer of the story, he gets it. He's not offended. He's not surprised by or even unfamiliar with our reactions to the story.

No, he gets it. And he even intends for us to have these reactions. So I'm not here to defend God this morning. That's not my job. Only God needs to defend himself. What my role is is to help us see more clearly this God who reveals himself through incredibly provocative stories like the one we just heard.

So as we open up this difficult passage today from the Bible, I want to ask you to consider this question. What if, what if the true scandal of this text isn't that God asks for what we love most, but that he's the only one safe enough to give it to?

I want to suggest that the real scandal of this text isn't that God asks us for what we most cherish, but that he's the only one good enough to receive such an offering. So let's open up God's word together.

[ 8 : 26 ] Verse 1. Some time later. Okay, so what do we know about Abraham up to this point? Abraham's been on a journey. He's left everything. He's left his hometown of Ur, all for some like relatively vague, yet grand and even cosmic promise of blessing from God.

And though this faith has wavered, God's faithfulness has not. God protected him from Pharaoh, from the Philistines. He gave him victory over four powerful kings who threatened his family. And finally, after 25 years of waiting for God to fulfill his promise of an heir, when Abraham is 100 years old, God grants he and Sarah a son, Isaac.

And so now, it's some time later. We don't know how many years have gone by since Isaac's born. We know he's at least old enough to carry some wood on his back. All right? That's about all we

know.

Let's say he's 15 years old, okay? Probably the best 15 years of Abraham's life up to this point. 15 years as a father, finally living up to his name, the father of multitudes, right? And just like, you know, 15 years of marveling at this miracle in his household.

15 years of enjoying how God had done the impossible and brought laughter to their household. Imagine those 15 years living in the bliss and the blessing and the literal fulfillment of God.

[ 9 : 39 ] But, sometime later, verse 1 says, God tested Abraham. And that word tested is super important. I want to make this very clear that God is testing Abraham and not tempting him.

There's a huge difference. God doesn't tempt people. He doesn't entice them to fall or fail. He isn't up in heaven hoping to trip people up. The Hebrew word here for test, *nasah* here, means to prove genuine, to reveal what's real, to bring to light what's already inside, to show forth and demonstrate the nature and character of a thing.

So, really, a divine test isn't meant to make you fail. It's meant to reveal what's true and refine what's already there. And just to be clear, this test isn't God trying to find out something he doesn't already know.

He's not scratching his chin like, hmm, I wonder if Abraham fears me or not. No. God is all-knowing. This test isn't for God's sake. It's for Abraham's and ours.

It's kind of like when I challenge my daughter, Cammie, in basketball. All right? Sometimes I'll take her out to the backyard and I'll say, you can't do anything else. You can't even go back into the house until you make three baskets.

[ 10 : 46 ] Got to give me three buckets, little girl. And then, like, sometimes it takes a while. All right? Fifty shots or more. And she'll tell me she cannot do it.

And she'll cry. And she'll stomp her feet. And she'll slam the ball because three buckets feels impossible to her. But here's the thing. I'm her dad. And I know what she's capable of.

She and I both have seen her do it more than once. And eventually, Cammie always gets her buckets. That's what Onga's do. We get our buckets, all right? Even if there are a lot of air balls in between, we get our buckets.

Cammie gets her buckets. But the point is never to berate her for all her missed shots. No, it's to show her what she can do. It's to prove to her.

It's for her to prove to herself what she's capable of when she focuses and when she doesn't give up. And it's to remind her that she can trust her father who only wants to help her strengthen and grow and who will never put her in a situation where she's left out in the hot sun or in the pouring rain all day long.

[ 11 : 53 ] So come to our children's parenting seminar next week with me teaching it, all right? But this is what God is doing when He tests Abraham and when He tests all His children, us included.

Remember what the Apostle James says. He says, consider it pure joy, brothers and sisters, when you face trials of many kinds. He doesn't say if. He says when. And maybe that's where you are today, many of you, walking through something hard, confusing, painful.

You may not realize it, but your faith is being tested. And not to break you, but to show you something true and good about yourself and about God. Would you consider that this morning? That maybe the hard thing you're going through isn't random, but part of God's good plan for you. Here in this passage, God's not playing games with Abraham. He's inviting him into deeper faith, deeper communion.

God tests us, and His tests are never random, but they're always relational. He has something He wants Abraham and the world to see through Abraham's faith in even the most unbearable trial.

[ 12 : 57 ] Another thing I love here in verse 1 is how when God approaches Abraham to test him, and Abraham has no idea what God is about to say, you can tell that they've cultivated a beautiful, intimate relationship.

God calls him by name, Abraham, father of multitudes. And Abraham simply responds, here I am. In the Hebrew, *hineni*. *Hineni* means literally, behold me.

He's saying, look, I'm here. Here, you have made my, you have, God, you have my whole and undivided attention. So say what you will because your servant is listening, even if what you're about to say is hard to hear.

And then, in the still, in the matter-of-factness of that moment, Abraham stands there, right, open and ready to receive yet another word from God, maybe a word of blessing, maybe a word of

warning, maybe a command he's about to find out.

But in this moment, the one whom God called father of multitudes now hears these words of command. And these are the words that brought tears to my eyes the first time I translated this. Abraham, father of multitudes, take your son, your most treasured possession, the one you waited all your life for, the one you've been enjoying for the last decade or so, my greatest gift and fulfilled promise to you.

[14:12] Take your son, the one through whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed. And then he further specifies, your only son, you and Sarah's only son, Ishmael's gone, there's no plan B, take your only son.

And then he presses even further like he knows exactly what he's saying to Abraham, almost like he himself feels the full weight of what he's commanding. Your son, your only begotten son, whom you love.

And by the way, this is the first time in all of the scriptures that the Hebrew word for love is used right here to describe the father's love for his son. Take your only son whom you love, Isaac, your son of laughter and joy, God says.

And go to the region of Moriah, sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain, I will show you. The story ends much the way it began in Genesis 12 when he tells him to go to a land I will show you.

He's doing again, once again here in Genesis 22. And parents in the room, really anyone with a heart or an imagination, can you feel Abraham's heart stop? His knees buckle.

[15:21] The air sucked out of him. Because again, remember Isaac was so much more than just a child to a loving parent. He was the child of promise. Through him was supposed to come the Savior of the world, the living proof that God keeps his word.

For over a decade, Abraham had watched this boy grow up, laugh, stumble, pray. He'd been teaching this boy about the kindness and the goodness and the generosity of God and how worthy this God is of our worship, including burnt offering sacrifices.

And every night, because of Abraham's faith in God's word, he could look upon his slumbering son in bed, thanking God that this boy would be safe. Because God had promised descendants and a nation through this boy.

Abraham was living every parent's dream, the guarantee of safety, security, prosperity, and greatness for our children. And now God is saying, take him and offer him back up to me.

So Abraham isn't just caught up in the conundrum of a parent, but he's caught up in the conundrum of a theologian. Why would God give me this command? How do I reconcile this command of God with the promise of God?

[16:29] See, sometimes the test of faith isn't just a struggle between faith and unbelief, but between faith and faith. And it's not just the conundrum of a parent or a theologian, but for many of us, it's the conundrum of an ethicist too, right?

Like, what kind of a God would even ask this? We ought to recoil at the prospect of human and specifically child sacrifice. Child sacrifice is evil. It's always been evil.

It always will be evil. The law of Moses forbid it. It's crystal clear. It was evil when the ancients practiced it to manipulate the gods, and it's evil even today. But again, why would God ask him to do this?

This thing that God hates. How can he command Abraham to practice child sacrifice? Well, this is where the Hebrew helps us, because it's worth noting that in the Hebrew, God, he doesn't literally say slay or kill or burn or even sacrifice your son.

There's another word for that. Instead of sacrifice, the Hebrew literally says, olah, which means cause him to go up. It doesn't say sacrifice.

[17:36] It says call him to go up. It doesn't even say burnt offering. Actually, the word for burnt offering is olah, which is literally the going up offering. So he says, cause him to go up as a going up is literally what it says.

And I'm not saying that the NIV translation is bad or wrong here. Sacrifice him as a burnt offering. That's exactly how people would have read and understood this, especially in light of the Hebrew sacrificial system, an offering that was going up to God in smoke.

But most literally, the command is simply this, cause him to go up as a going up. And that is a window into the heart of God's command here. See, he's not commanding Abraham to do

something radically irrational and violent in the name of faith or to prove his devotion.

No. He's calling Abraham to lift Isaac up with open hands, to surrender and offer Isaac back up to the one whom Isaac always belonged. And Abraham and the original audience of this story would have understood this, especially considering Isaac's firstborn status to Abraham and to Sarah. See, in the ancient world, the firstborn represented the whole family. The life of the firstborn stood for the life of the whole household. He was the heir, he was the future, and he was the continuation of the family story. This is why the firstborn are made such a big deal of in the Old Testament.

[18:52] Remember after passing over the firstborn in Israel, over those doors that were covered in blood in Egypt, God then claimed that every firstborn belonged to him. And then remember how these firstborn were to be redeemed year after year through the sacrifice of firstborn lambs.

So what God is asking of Abraham on Moriah, which by the way, Moriah is the same place where Solomon's temple was built and where countless firstborn animals would be sacrificed.

What God was asking of Abraham wasn't random, cruel, or pagan, but covenantal. It was covenantal. And this is so key because so many Christians have like moralized this story.

They've reduced it to basically, no matter how crazy or outrageous the command, just obey. Just obey God. That's what he demands of you. And the measure of your faith is how extreme, irrational, and radical your obedience is.

And while, yes, Jesus does teach us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, he tells us to deny ourselves and take up our cross. He says if we don't hate our mother and father and brother and sister, we are not worthy of him.

[19:56] If our emphasis is simply, though, on reckless obedience, we're missing the point. Look, if God wanted Abraham to do the most outrageous, nonsensical thing, he would have said, hey, Abraham, go slaughter your son in his sleep in his tent.

Just go stab him to death again and again and again. And drink his blood and eat his flesh. And then go for Sarah too. That'll be wild and really show how devoted you are to me. That'd be the craziest thing. But no, God calls him by name, Abraham.

Take your son. And I know it's your only son, the one whom you love. And trust me when I tell you to cause him to go up as a going up. The point isn't reckless obedience but relational surrender. It's not blind faith but grounded faith. If the meaning of this text is to do radically irrational and even violent things to prove our devotion to God, the religious skeptics and the atheists have every reason to condemn us and our religious beliefs and practices.

But this is not at all Abraham's situation. No, Abraham's obedience isn't a blind leap in the dark. It's actually a step into the light of everything he already knew about God.

[21:06] Remember, Abraham had now been walking with God for over 30 years. Speaking with him, hearing from him audibly, seeing visions and dreams, seeing the fulfillment of the most impossible promises.

This isn't super subjective, charismatic, God told me to do this crazy thing, Christianity. Abraham isn't being called to demonstrate a speculative faith but a seasoned faith. Abraham didn't act on whim or feeling but on a clear, direct, consistent communication from God.

And for us today, that's what the Scriptures are. We don't need to wait for a voice from heaven.

God's final word has come in Jesus. And the Scriptures here bear witness to him.

That's why we emphasize the Bible so much here. To read it, to meditate on it, to memorize it.

Because that's how we hide God's word, his will, and his ways in our heart. And that's how we know what God wants from us.

And we need to hide it in our hearts because the truth is when our faith is tested, what God is doing is he's calling us to trust in something that he's already taught us about himself. Something we already know to be true.

[22:07] God's not asking us to trust and believe something new, but something we already know about him. And see, that's what's happening with Abraham here in verse 3. And notice, notice in verse 3, the text gives us no record of what or whether Abraham spoke back to God.

There's no protest. There's no bargaining. There's no, like, sleepless night journal entry. As soon as the impossible command is extended, the impossible obedience commences.

Early the next morning, it says. No hesitation. He doesn't hit snooze. He doesn't linger. He doesn't procrastinate on the plans and purposes of God. He got out of bed, and he did the hard thing immediately.

No deliberation with Sarah. No weighing in his mind whether or not he wanted to obey. Verse 3. The story just begins to slow down here.

You're supposed to notice every single verb again. He got up. He loaded the donkey. He took his servants and his son. He even cut the wood for the going up offering. Imagine that, loading up the donkey like you're packing for the worst camping trip of your life.

[ 23 : 16 ] Imagine the stillness and the silence of that morning broken only by the thud of his axe. The silence continues in verse 4. On the third day, Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance.

So for three days, Abraham walks. There are no words. There are no new words. No new commands from God. Just the crunch of sand beneath their feet for three days. Three days of heavy heartedness.

Three days of one step after another. Each step heavier than the first. Each step inches closer to the worst moment of Abraham's life. Yet each step taken in faith, in trust, in obedience, in loyalty, in allegiance.

Each step, a step of surrender. And sure, he's not running ahead, but he's also not turning back. He's just putting one foot in front of the other. This is faith in action.

Often not dramatic leaps, but daily, quiet, faithful, and honestly uncertain steps. Until at last, he sees the place. In the distance.

[ 24 : 15 ] And here comes some of the most astonishing lines in the whole story. Verse 5, 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.

Did you catch that? Not I. We. We. We. Was he lying to them? So they wouldn't, like, try to stop him from slaughtering his son, obeying God?

Or is it possible that there was another possibility in his mind? The writer of Hebrews helps us out here. Hebrews chapter 11 says, Did you hear that?

What did Abraham do when he was tested with an impossible situation? When he found himself caught between the promise of God to bless Isaac and the command of God to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham trusted in what God had taught him about himself.

That this was a God who could do the impossible. He'd done it already. He'd always, somehow, even in ways yet unimaginable, he'd always kept his promises.

[ 25 : 34 ] So Abraham, he isn't bluffing here to his servants. He's believing. He's believing even in the yet unseen resurrection power of his God. A God who, up to this point, had never resurrected anyone in history yet.

And by this faith, he continues in obedience in verse 6. And look down at the verse. I'm going to read to you my own translation of this. It says, Abraham took the wood, or you could translate it, he took the trees.

He took the tree. He took the tree for the going up and placed it on Isaac, his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the cleaver, and the two of them went on together.

So now it's just the two of them, one knowing far more than the other, but both ascending, both going up Mount Moriah. Abraham with fire and cleaver in his hand, and Isaac carrying that tree on his back, that heavy load of wood, up the hill, where they will both worship and where they will both sacrifice to God.

And as they go, the silence stands out. One commentator says that this is the most poignant and eloquent silence in all of literature. Until at last, Isaac breaks the silence in verse 7.

[ 26 : 47 ] Isaac, son of laughter, spoke up and said to his father, Father of multitudes. Actually, here in the Hebrew, he says, My father. My father. And just can you imagine that dad?

It's like, Daddy, my daddy. Abraham answers, as he did to God early. He, Neni, behold me. Here I am, my son.

My son. You have my whole undivided attention. He's fully present, trembling but tender. Then Isaac says, quite astutely, he's been discipled, right? He's been discipled well by his father about how to worship God.

He asks, The fire and the wood are here, but where's the lamb for the going up? Such an innocent question. Such a loaded answer.

What was Abraham supposed to say to that? Verse 8. Abraham answered, God himself will provide, or you can translate this as, God will provide to himself or for himself the lamb for the going

up offering, my son.

[ 27 : 46 ] And the two of them went on together. This is actually where we get Jehovah Jireh from. Yahweh, Yerah. Yerah literally means to see. Literally means Yahweh will see to it.

He will see to it. He will provide. So Abraham is not just confessing that God is the one who will provide, but that God is the one who sees what he cannot see. And he will see to it that his promise will still be fulfilled, even as Abraham continues to obey this crazy command.

That's what Abraham says here. Jehovah Jireh. This is what Abraham knows of Jehovah. And therefore, this is what he confesses. And even dares to prophesy about. As they continue going up Mount Moriah, the Lord will provide.

Abraham's faith and now his son's faith are in the Lord who will provide for himself, the lamb for the going up offering. So now they reach the place in verse 9.

And it says, Abraham built an altar there and arranged wood on it. Think about that. Stone by stone. The heaviest he'd ever lifted, right? All while wondering, how am I going to go home and tell Sarah about this?

[ 28 : 50 ] How am I going to explain this to my community? That God asked me to sacrifice our son. Our only son. The son whom we love. The son of promise. What are they all going to think about me?

What are they all going to think about my God? But again, Abraham is committed to acting in line with what he knows to be true about God. He knows this is the God who called him out of Ur. Who gave him a son from a barren womb. Who has never once lied or failed to him. And by faith, he builds that altar. Then it says he arranged the wood. And then fascinatingly, and without any extra detail, verse 9 says, And like, all there is is just more silence here.

There's no struggle. There's no questioning. Like a lamb that's led to a slaughter or sheep before its shearers. Isaac does not open his mouth. And I mean, we're talking about, you know, he's probably a teenager here.

He could have taken this 115-year-old dude, right? If he wanted to get away, he could have gotten away. But he doesn't. He trusts his father. He trusts his God.

[ 30 : 05 ] The one who carried the wood up the hill now lies upon it. The innocent, obedient son, willing to give himself over to the will of his God and father. Then in verse 10, Abraham takes the cleaver.

With every intention of obeying God's command. And just as he raises the knife, the angel of the Lord, the God who sees, sees again. He comes to the rescue again. Calls him by name, Abraham, Abraham.

And Abraham says, Behold, me. Here I am. The angel of the Lord says, Do not lay a hand on the boy.

Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God. Because you have not withheld from me your son. Your only son. This is the sign of Abraham's faith.

This is a sign of his fear of God. He did not withhold his son. His only son. Whom he loved. And this is why we call him the father of our faith. But lest we think that this whole story is about the demonstration of this great hero of faith.

[ 31 : 09 ] Verse 13 invites us to lift up our eyes. As Abraham's eyes were lifted. Verse 13. And Abraham looked up. And there in a thicket, he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and caused it to go up.

Instead. Instead of his son. And that's the gospel. That's the key word. Instead. Now don't get me wrong.

Isaac points to Christ. But even more so, Isaac's substitute, the ram, caught in the thicket, is a picture of Christ. The true lamb of God. Whose own head would one day be caught in a thickety crown of thorns.

But there was no substitute for him. Because he was the substitute for us. So what kind of God writes a story like this? Gives such commands as these?

And expects such faith from us? It's the one who did not spare his own son. His only son. The son he loved. From all eternity.

[ 32 : 11 ] But gave him up as a going up offering for us all. And who promises to graciously give us all things in Christ. He alone is worthy of our worship.

Our utmost for his highest. Because this God who so boldly asks for our most cherished treasure. He's already given his to us. And has raised him up again.

There is no one safer to give our everything to. When we behold the way our Father in heaven has not withheld his son. His only son.

Whom he loves. We have every reason to say now we know. Now we know that you truly love us. Because you have not withheld your son. Your only son whom you love. The beauty of the gospel. Is that the God who asks for our everything. Is the same God who gives us everything in Christ. And you can never. You can never out give this God.

[ 33 : 12 ] Because listen. Our going up offerings. They could never go all the way up. So this is the kind of God who comes down to meet us. Descends into human flesh.

To carry on his own raw naked back. That tree. That heavy wooden cross. Offering himself to be our perfect coming down and going up sacrifice. He's the God who provides.

And the God who promises. It's so beautiful here in verse 16. God then he swears by himself to Abraham. Meaning that the surety of his promises. It never depends on us.

That's good news. It never depends on us. But always and only fully upon God himself. This is God saying even if you fail. I will not fail. Even if you let go. I will never let go.

And even if you falter. My covenant will stand forever. For salvation belongs to the Lord. And rests not on our offering to him. But on his offering to us. So what reason could we have?

[ 34 : 08 ] Not to open our hands to him. Not to offer up our Isaacs to him. What good gifts, friends? From God have we begun to clutch with tight fists.

Abraham may not have slaughtered Isaac. But he truly did offer him up as a going up. And we're called to do the same. He walked him all the way up to the mountain. He put him on top of the altar. We're called to do the same. And to respond to God calling our names. With the same way Abraham responded to him. Hineni. That's the word he puts on our lips to say back to him. Hineni. Here I am. Behold me. With faith that the Lord will provide. No matter what he asks of us. So again, what is your Isaac? What in your life are you tight-fisted over.

And unwilling to present palms up to God. Your family. Your career. Your future. Your relationships. Your reputation. How might we practice open-handedness this week?

[ 35 : 07 ] Or what's one area in your life that we have yet to trust God with? Maybe one hard obedience that you've been putting off. Delaying. How might you take that step? That small, quiet, uncertain, faithful step.

Initiating that conversation with that person you've been putting off. Reconciling with. Asking someone. A brother or sister in Christ to help keep you accountable around your addictions. Your sex addictions. Your porn addictions. Your substance addictions. Or maybe it's just trusting God with your time. It's mine. Surrendering your precious, valuable time to the seemingly inefficient and suboptimal practices of serving other people.

Or spending time in silence and solitude with God. Memorizing the scriptures. Giving a whole 24 hours of devotion to the Lord as a Sabbath.

What precious going up offering will we lift up this week? I can guarantee you though, whatever it is, He is worthy of it. He is worthy of your surrendered time.

[ 36 : 10 ] Your surrendered treasures. Your surrendered desires and plans. So when you come to Him. When you come to this table. Come with open hands.

Come with open hands to your open hearted Lord. Receive this bread and this cup. As a sign and seal of the best news ever. That your abundant and eternal life are being upheld. Not by your devotion to Him.

But by His devotion to you. The Lord will provide. The Lord will see to it. So open up your hands. Let's open up your hands. Lift up your eyes.

Lift up your hearts. And let's taste and see how good this Lord is. Amen. Let's pray. Lord open our eyes to what we withhold from You.

And more importantly open our eyes. To who You did not withhold from us. Lord would that be the best news in our lives. And would that transform the way we live.

[ 37 : 11 ] In love toward You and toward others. To the glory of Your name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.