

Why God Tested Abraham

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Date: 10 September 2023

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[0 : 00] Good morning. This morning's reading is taken from Genesis chapter 22 beginning at verse 1. Genesis chapter 22, the sacrifice of Isaac.

! After these things, God tested Abraham and said to him, Abraham. And he said, Abraham, and he said, Abraham, and he said, Abraham, and he said, Abraham, and 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. So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and 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, Abraham lifted up his eye 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 his son, Isaac, his son. And he took his son, Isaac, and the boy will, sorry. 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. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went, both of them together.

And Isaac said to his father, Abraham, my father. And he said, here I am, my son. He said, behold the fire and the wood. 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 Isaac, his son, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.

But 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.

[2 : 58] 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.

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, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son. I will surely bless you. And I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies.

And in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Because you have obeyed my voice. So Abraham returned to his young men and they arose and went together to Beersheba. And Abraham lived at Beersheba. Now after these things, it was told to Abraham, Behold, Milcah also has born children to your brother Nahor.

[4 : 28] Uz, his firstborn, Buzz, his brother, Kimuel, the father of Aram, Kised, Hazel, Pildash, Jilaf, and Bethuel.

Bethuel fathered Rebekah. These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother. Moreover, his concubine, whose name was Rumah, bore Tiba, Giham, Tehash, and Meaka.

Thank you very much, Faye, for reading for us this morning. Well, we are continuing our sermon series in the book of Genesis. Genesis. And this morning we have come to what is indeed the most heart-wrenching account in the life of Abraham.

Indeed, this is the most heart-wrenching account in the whole book of Genesis. This call by God to Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac as a burnt offering.

And I think the obvious question that arises is, why would God call Abraham to do such a thing? And this is the question that, by God's grace, I want to seek to answer as we consider this passage. [6 : 11] But first, let's pray. Father, we look to you this morning and ask that you, in this moment, would speak to all of our hearts.

we ask that you would grant us illumination. We ask that you would grant us the ability to not just hear your word, but to obey your word.

God, I pray that above my audible voice, your voice will be heard. And your voice will be obeyed. and that your name will be glorified.

We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. So why did God command Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac?

And I believe there are two main reasons that the Lord called Abraham to do this. And I want to consider them in our remaining time.

[7 : 20] The first reason that God tested Abraham was to prove Abraham's love for God. It's the first reason, to prove Abraham's love for God.

Now let me alert you right up front that this point is the longest point. The second point is not as long. And I don't want you to think, well, we can be here all day when we consider the first point. and the next point you may want a coffee break or something. But it won't be as long, I hope, the second point.

Notice that Genesis 22 begins with these words, after these things. And by way of reminder, these things that the narrator is talking about, we looked at last week in Genesis 21, the birth of Isaac, God finally fulfilling that promise that he had given to them over a few decades.

The casting out of Ishmael, making it very clear that Isaac was the promised son, the one through whom the covenant will continue. And then, the beginning of Abraham possessing the land of Canaan, beginning to possess the promised land.

[8 : 40] And we saw it in that token or earnest kind of possession when he got that well. When he and Abimelech signed that, they agreed to that covenant, they sealed that covenant that the well belonged to Abraham.

And so, we see God fulfilling both of these important promises to his servant Abraham. Now, Genesis 22 is a transition chapter.

It's a transition from Abraham to Isaac. And we're able to see this transition for one, as we've been working through Genesis, we know that whenever we see these genealogies, it's a sign of transition.

We see the genealogies at the end of chapter 22 where Abraham hears about his brother and the children that he has and we see one of the children's name is mentioned, Rebecca.

And in a short while, we're going to see that Rebecca becomes Isaac's wife. And so, this whole chapter is very critical because a transition is taking place.

[9 : 49] Abraham has begun to step off the scene and Isaac is going to come on the scene. in chapter 23, we're going to see that Sarah dies.

In chapter 24, we're going to see Abraham securing a wife for his son, Isaac.

And then in chapter 25, Abraham himself dies. And one of the reasons that chapter 22 is so important and such a transitional chapter, perhaps the most important chapter in the life of Abraham and his relationship with God.

And the reason is that when you think of the journey that Abraham has had up to this point, there really is very little in it that demonstrates Abraham's love for God.

up to this particular point, if you were to do a summary of the life of Abraham up to chapter 21, it would be about this old man that God called and God promised him a son through his old wife who was unable to have children when she was in childbearing years, promised him this child and fulfilled it.

[11 : 09] We would see a story of a man who didn't love his wife the way he should, who exposed his wife at least two times to sexual abuse to save his own skin.

And although there were some high points in his life, we saw how he sacrificially rescued Lot and the people of Sodom, how he interceded before God for the people of Sodom.

But when we look at the life of Abraham up to chapter 21, we really don't see a person who was demonstrating his love for God in any real and outward ways.

The best that we saw was in chapter 15 where God promised him that he was going to give him a son. And the Bible says that Abraham believed God and God counted that to him as righteousness. righteousness. And the Lord told him, you can count stars, that would be the number of your children, your offspring. God made a covenant with him, a unilateral covenant, that he was going to perform this.

[12:20] And then after God did all that, the very next chapter in chapter 16, we see Abraham going along with his wife, Sarah, not believing God, and going in a scheme to try to have children through his slave, Hagar, and they have this child by the name of Ishmael.

And so when we come to chapter 22, we really meet a man whose life at that particular point is devoid of evidence that he really loved the Lord.

It's a wonderful relationship. God was blessing him left, right, and sadly. Even when he sinned, God multiplied him with wealth and possessions. But we don't see evidence up to chapter 21, in chapter 21, before we come to 22, that Abraham demonstrated a love for God.

I think it's pretty fair to say it was a one-way relationship. relationship. But here in chapter 22, something happens. Here in chapter 22, before Abraham steps off the scene, God comes to him, and God commands him to sacrifice his most precious blessing and possession, his only son, Isaac.

and he tells him to sacrifice him in the most graphic way, to sacrifice him as a burnt offering.

[14:06] And so this is not God taking something away from Abraham, although we see that it's different now. This is not God giving him something, but it's also not God taking something from him. It's God saying to him, I want you to give up something.

I want you to give up this son whom you love so dearly, your only son, as a burnt sacrifice. Notice again verses 1 and 2.

After these things, God tested Abraham and said to him, Abraham, and he said, here am I. 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.

Now the writer of Genesis, Moses, signals to us that this is a test. He tells us that at the beginning, not at the end.

Imagine if this was written in such a way that we just read through the whole thing and realize, oh, it was just a test at the end. No, what he does is he tells us right up front, that this was a test, that God was testing Abraham.

[15:24] Now, anyone has a King James version of the Bible? Anyone reading King James? No one? Okay. That's fine. I heard that if King James were alive today, he wouldn't read King James because he wanted it in modern translation when he wrote King James, and so he would read something else.

But in the King James Bible, it says that God did tempt Abraham, Abraham. And tempt is not a good translation of that because tempt speaks about trying to cause someone to fall in a sin or in a trap or something like that.

And James tells us in James 1.13 that God does not tempt us. God doesn't tempt his people, but he does test us. He does test us to prove the quality of our love for him and of our faith for him.

And we all test things from time to time. I think most of you know how NEMA, the National Emergency Management Agency, they will send out these text tests across their emergency system every now and then to make sure that it's working during a time of a national emergency. And so it's a test. It's not the real thing. And so that's what's happening here, and we are signaled to it that this was a test that the Lord gave to Abraham.

[16:47] But Abraham didn't know it was a test. Abraham was not told, hey, let me test you. No, Abraham heard God's voice, and God commanded him to sacrifice his son.

And Abraham knew God's voice well enough to know that this was the same God who called him out of Ur of the Chaldees. This is the same God who was appearing to him and telling him you're going to have a son, telling him all the things he told him.

Abraham knew this was God. And yet he could not deny that God was calling him to do something that was horrific, something that was horrendous, something that was heart wrenching for him to do.

It's very interesting that in this instruction that the Lord gives to Abraham in verse 2, where he says to him, take your son, your only son, whom you love.

This is the first time that the word love is recorded in scripture. It's very instructive, very instructive. love. Whenever we see a word mentioned for the first time, it generally takes on its highest meaning.

[18:12] When we think of love, we think of romance and all the other kinds of things, but no, the first understanding of love that we get here in scripture is sacrifice. So the Lord says to him, I want you to take your son, your only son, whom you love.

And I want you to sacrifice him. Notice that the Lord refers to Isaac in three different ways. Your son, your only son, whom you love. To make the point of how much Abraham loved Isaac. Abraham knew what a burnt offering was.

A burnt offering, you would take the knife and you would slit the throat of the animal and then you would cut the animal in pieces and then you would burn all the pieces. And that's what Abraham understood that God was calling him to do.

Couldn't shake it, couldn't say, this is not God, because he knew the voice of God. And so he obeyed. And notice that Abraham's obedience was prompt.

[19:30] It wasn't delayed. In verse three, we're told that he arose early the next morning. He didn't sleep late that morning. He arose early the next morning, saddling his donkey, taking with him two servants, taking his son Isaac and the wood for the burnt offering and he went with them to the place that God had told him to go.

And we can be sure that Abraham didn't tell Sarah what he was doing. He didn't talk to Sarah and tell her what the Lord told him. But evidently he told Isaac. He told Isaac because as they're going on, and we'll see this shortly, Isaac says, but dad, where's the, where's the, the lamb for the burnt offering?

And that's the first time it's mentioned from him and we don't see a direct conversation between Abraham and Isaac. So at some point, Abraham told Isaac that they were going to worship the Lord with a burnt offering.

He promptly obeys. Look at verses four and five again. It says, on the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar.

Then Abraham said to the young men, stay here with the donkey. I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again. Abraham had settled in his heart from the moment God spoke to him and said, you are to sacrifice your son as a burnt offering on the place that I will show you.

[21:09] From that very moment, when Abraham had determined that he was going to obey God, Isaac was dead. Isaac was as good as dead because Abraham was determined to obey God, to do this thing that screamed against every single thing in him.

But he knew God had spoken and he was going to obey the Lord. We see Abraham's expression of faith in verse five, incredible faith in God to work supernaturally and miraculously when he says, I and the boy will go over there and worship and come to you again.

Now we really can't be certain what Abraham meant by that. But I think something can be said about that statement. I want to come back to it towards the end of the sermon.

In verse six, we see Abraham walking to the place of sacrifice and he takes the wood for the burnt offering and he lays it on the back of his son Isaac.

And that helps us to see that Isaac was not a little boy. Isaac at this time would have been around 15 to 16, thereabout. And he obviously was strong enough to carry wood on his back and to walk up a hill with that wood.

[22:38] So this is no little toddler, no little young child. This is a young man who is doing this. He lets him take the wood and Abraham is taking the instrument that's going to kill his son, the knife, and the instrument that's going to burn his son, the fire.

And they're going up to obey the Lord. And in verse seven, Isaac questions Abraham. He says, Father, and we see the intimacy between the two of them, very much like how the Lord in verse one calls to Abraham, Abraham, here am I.

And he says, Isaac says to Abraham, my father, and he said, here I am, my son. And Isaac asks, behold the fire and the wood, but where's the lamb for a burnt offering?

Abraham's response is God will provide for himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son. And so they both went on together.

Now exactly what did Abraham mean that God was going to provide for himself the lamb for the burnt offering? The truth is we can be sure from this passage exactly what he meant, but I want to

come back to this as well.

[24 : 07] We see them in verse nine, arriving at Mount Moriah, the place where the Lord told him to go, and Abraham builds an altar, he lays the wood on the altar, and then he binds his son Isaac, who again is no little child, and he lays him on top of the altar, and then he takes the knife, and he is about to slaughter his son, and the angel of the Lord calls out to him and tells them not to lay his hand on the child, not to do anything to him.

And so Abraham's test was over. I can imagine the relief that he must have had as the angel stopped him and the angel goes on to explain to him all that was happening and what he was actually doing.

Notice the Lord's conclusion in verse 12. He says to Abraham, now I know that you fear God, seeing that you have not withheld your son, your only son from me.

Now, exactly what does that mean? How does the all-knowing God make such a statement in terms of saying, now I know?

God's omniscience, we talk about God knowing everything, he knows everything in the past, everything in the present, everything in the future. So this statement has to mean more than that.

[25 : 45] It cannot mean that God is getting some information that he didn't have before. That's not what he's saying. I found a quote, an explanation on this, very helpful from theologian Bruce Waltke, and here's what he said about this statement in his commentary on Genesis.

He writes, the narrator, he's referring to Moses, the narrator does not wrestle with God's omniscience, which entails that he knew Abraham's faith, commitment beforehand.

Instead, he focuses upon the reality that God does not experience the quality of Abraham's faith until played out on this stage of history.

And so we'll miss the point if we get sidetracked in a debate about God's omniscience. That's not the point. The point is that Abraham's act of obedience to carry out this command that must have been horrendous for him to do.

It enabled God to experience the quality of Abraham's faith lived out. And that's the point. That's what it means, now I know that you fear God, saying that you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.

[27 : 18] God to do it. So here we have Abraham at the end of his life. He's going to die in a short time. And we see that Abraham demonstrates that he fears the Lord.

He demonstrates that he fears the Lord. But exactly what is that? What is it to fear the Lord?

Fearing the Lord means that we obey the Lord out of an awareness of who he is and that he is the one who blesses the obedient and he is the one who is able to punish the disobedient with death.

He blesses the obedient with life. He punishes the disobedient with death. And so the fear of the Lord is to be aware of that, to know this God in that particular way, that he blesses the disobedient with life.

He punishes the disobedient with death. And really, when we talk about fearing the Lord, fearing the Lord and loving the Lord really are interchangeable terms.

Ultimately, what it means to fear the Lord is to love the Lord. It is love for God lived out. Fearing the Lord and obedience that comes from that is love lived out.

[28 : 46] And this really is a very important truth about having a genuine relationship with the Lord. Love for God is evidenced not by our lips, not by the words of our lips, but love for God is evidenced by the obedience of our lives.

It's a very important thing to see. love for God is demonstrated and evidenced by obedience to God in our lives.

Jesus said this in John 14, 15. He said, if you love me, you'll do what I say. You'll keep my commandments. It's more than singing, I love you, Lord.

It's more than singing the most popular feel-good song that you may sing. It is by demonstrating in our lives that we love the Lord by obedience to him and obedience to his word.

Again, in John 15, 10, Jesus says, if you heed my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my father's commandments and abide in his love.

[30 : 03] So, obedience to the Lord is the way that we give evidence that we love God and that we are abiding in his love for us. Now, again, prior to Genesis 22, all we could really say about Abraham is this, ultimately, Abraham believed God and was credited to him for righteousness.

Abraham had this expression or profession of faith in God. He believed him and God credited that to him for righteousness.

righteousness. But because Abraham's faith in God was genuine, because it was genuine faith, it wasn't just from his lips, because it was genuine, we see his obedience.

We see him set out to obey God in a matter that tore his soul apart, but he knew that God had spoken and so he was obeying God.

And he gave evidence that his faith was genuine, that his faith was real and not just talk. And this is what James gets at in James chapter 2, verses 21 to 24.

[31 : 23] This is what James is addressing when he talks about faith without works being dead. I want us to consider this this morning because it's very important for us to see this in Abraham, connect the dots in our own life.

Here's what James writes in James 2, 21 to 24. Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?

You see the faith, you see that faith was active along with his works and faith was completed by his works. And the scriptures, and the scripture was fulfilled that says Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness.

And he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. So what James does is James connects what Abraham did in chapter 15.

He believed God. And he's connecting that in chapter 22. He says because he believed God, he offered up his son. And his point is that faith is always accompanied by works.

[32 : 35] Genuine saving faith is accompanied by credible works that say the faith is real and the faith is genuine.

So here at the end of Abraham's life, Abraham is giving testimony in the most graphic way, the most dramatic way, that his love for God was real and genuine.

that his faith in God was real and genuine, that it was saving faith. And this is why it is said again and again, again and again, we are saved by faith alone.

But saving faith is never alone. It will always be accompanied by works. We're saved by faith alone, but saving faith is never alone.

It will be accompanied by works. And so in Abraham's life, we see this kind of gap. We see for a while it was just his profession of faith, just saving faith, holding on to God.

[33 : 39] But there came this moment where he's going to exit the scene where there's the evidence, the credibility of the faith that he had because he obeyed God.

and he obeyed God in a matter that is just even hard to think about, much less to have to walk through up to the point that God stopped him.

And brothers and sisters, the same is true for us. We who profess to belong to Jesus Christ, our lives and the salvation we claim to have must be more than a profession of faith and our lips, we need to evidence that by an obedient life.

There must be no one, there must be nothing that we love more than God, that we get in the way of us obeying God, whatever God calls us to do.

If Abraham was his son, what might it be for you? What might it be that is so cherished and so precious that could be an issue that could be something difficult to obey the Lord around, to obey the Lord concerning?

[35 : 15] Perhaps it's a job for some of things that may be a career decision, maybe a business relationship or some other thing, maybe a relationship.

Maybe a relationship where the Word of God explicitly speaks against an unbeliever being in a relationship with a believer, with us being believers, professing to belong to Christ, but having fellowship with unbelievers in different degrees.

We tend to think of it primarily in terms of opposite-sex relationships, but it's broader than that. And oftentimes, these things are challenging.

The Lord calls us, and He says, I need you to obey me in this way. In His Word, it's already there. And the question is, how do we respond? What do we do? Do we demonstrate our love for God sufficiently by being willing to make that sacrifice, to obey Him in that way?

Or do we hold on to that and refuse to sacrifice in however the Lord calls us to? Brothers and sisters, anything or anyone that we love more than we love God is an idol.

[36 : 44] Anything or anyone that we love more than God is an idol. And while we may not say, oh, I don't love that more than God, if we are not going to obey God because of that thing, we don't need to say we love that more than God.

Our actions are saying that. But anything that gets in the way of our obedience to God is an idol. And one of the consistent, repeated witnesses of Scripture is every idol comes down. Every idol comes down because God will have no equals.

miracles. Now let me say this in connection with God speaking to Abraham.

God does not speak to us today the way he spoke to Abraham. He doesn't do that. He gave us his word. We have his word. And yes, there may be times in our lives that we get impressions, we sense that the Lord is speaking to us, leading us.

[38 : 01] But you know, people say, oh, the Lord spoke to me. If the Lord spoke to us audibly, how would we even know that's God? If you just heard a voice and say, go to Bimini and do this or whatever, how would you know that's God?

We have nothing to measure it against. And so sometimes we do get these impressions that the Lord may be directing us in a certain way, calling us to do a certain thing.

The best thing we can do with that is get Godly counsel, get people around us and try to discern what God might be saying. But here's one thing we know. God will not call us to do anything.

We're not impressing our heart to do anything that's going to violate his written word. He makes no exceptions for anyone. And so we need to hold very closely to the word of God when we talk about what the Lord has told us to do.

Brothers and sisters, here's the point as we think about this moment in Abraham's life and we try to connect our own lives to it. Jesus said, if you're going to follow me, you need to take up your cross every day.

[39 : 13] Every day you take up your cross. That is the symbol of sacrifice. That is the symbol of dying to self. We're called to take up our cross.

here in Genesis 22, Abraham, Moses is using Abraham's loving obedience to God and his commitment to love God above all else as an example to the children of Israel that this is what God calls us to.

This is what God requires of us. And indeed, it's an extension to all of God's people, not just to the children of Israel. It's a call to all of God's people that God calls us to this loving obedience.

Even sometimes when we don't understand. Even sometimes when it goes against everything that is within us, but we know God has spoken. We cannot deny that God has spoken.

God has done. In 2nd Chronicles chapter 3 verse 1, we're told that this same location, Mount Moriah, was where Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem.

[40 : 37] And so the whole idea, the reputation was that it is on this location that God has modeled and God has laid before his people what serving him and living for him looks like.

It is a life that would withhold nothing from him that he calls us to do. The Christian life is a life of sacrifice.

It's a life of sacrifice unto God, the creator, the ruler of heaven and earth.

And so this place where they would be going and they'd be offering up all these sacrifices, that's the place where Abraham willingly sacrificed, offered up his son to the Lord.

It's quite interesting that Abraham did not sacrifice Isaac. But some of you may have picked this up.

[41 : 47] When Faye started to read, she read the caption. And the caption says, the sacrifice of Isaac. And you think, historically, that's not true because he did not sacrifice Isaac in reality.

But that's what all Bibles have. The Jewish Bibles, they have the binding of Isaac. Isaac. But again, Isaac was as good as dead when God spoke to Abraham.

And he knew God spoke to him. And he was determined to obey. His son was dead in his heart from the moment God spoke to him. Isaac.

The mercy of God was that he did provide the lamb for the sacrifice. We see that in verses 13 and 14. Abraham lifts up his eyes, he looks behind him, he sees this ram who's caught in this thicket of bushes, and he takes the ram, he offers up the ram instead of his son, Isaac.

And then in verses 15 to 18, we see the Lord speaking to Abraham for the final time. This is Abraham's final encounter with God.

[43 : 09] And the Lord reaffirms the covenant of blessing to him. And here's what God does. This is the extent to which God now goes to Abraham, even though he has repeated this covenant

blessing to him, again and again.

He now says, I swear by myself. And the writer to the Hebrew says, the reason he does that is because he couldn't swear by anyone greater, so he swore by himself.

He says, I swear to you by myself that because you have done this, because you have not withheld your son, your only son from me, I am going to bless you.

And we see that the Lord adds to the blessing in a more expansive way. Before he was saying, your seed is going to be like the stars of the sky.

Now he says it's going to be like the sand of the seashore. And he tells him another aspect now. He says to him, and your offspring will possess the gates of his enemy.

[44 : 23] And through that offspring, all the nations will be blessed. Well, that's the reason that God tested Abraham, to prove Abraham's love for him.

At the end of his life, where it seemed like their relationship was just a one-way street. And Abraham is just on the taking side, the receiving side.

God tests him. And God experiences the quality of Abraham's faith and love. That he did not withhold his most precious possession on this earth from God.

The second reason that God tested Abraham, second and finally, is this, to reveal God's love for us. Now, let me explain how that is so and why that is so.

This is the most important part of the message. One of the ways to understand the Bible and to get the most out of the Bible is to understand what the Bible is about.

[45 : 42] Unfortunately, many people approach the Bible to get from it what God never intended to give us from the Bible. The Bible is a story of redemption.

It is one big story in 66 books by many different authors, but one divine author and it's telling one story from Genesis to Revelation and it is a story of redemption.

And brothers and sisters, that's all that we should go to the Bible for. We don't go to the Bible to find things on motivation and positivity. We don't go to the Bible to find things on leadership.

We go to the Bible to learn about that amazing story of a God who redeems. And from Genesis to Revelation, that is the story.

story. If we bear this in mind when we read our Bibles, it'll help us to get the most out of our Bibles and just revolutionize the way we read our Bibles.

[46 : 54] We don't go in there looking for ourselves. We go in there looking for God's story that he has revealed to us in his word.

So two scriptures I want us to consider from Luke chapter 24. And both of these scriptures clearly make this point.

They're going to be projected for you. The first one is Luke 24 verses 25 to 27. This is Jesus speaking to the two men on the road to Emmaus after his resurrection.

They were downcast and they were sad because he was crucified. And this is what he says to them. And he said to them, O foolish ones and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

[48 : 00] Now that would have been from Genesis to Malachi. When it says beginning at Moses, that's the first five books of the Bible. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. That's where he began.

And Jesus takes them through and he says, this is about me. It's written about me from Genesis to Malachi, which was their Bible at the time. He says, it's all about me.

How wonderful would that have been to hear Jesus walk them through starting in Genesis and say, this is what it is about. It is about me. It is about what I have accomplished just three days ago on the cross.

The next one is in same chapter, Luke 24, 44 to 47. He spoke these words to his disciples, who also didn't get it.

Then he said to them, these are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

[49 : 13] Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures and said to them, thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead and that repentance and

forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in all the nations beginning with Jerusalem.

This is God's big story. From Genesis to Revelation, we see the seed of it as it were, the seed of the flower in Genesis and we see the blossom of the flower in Revelation where it comes to a full completion and God has his people who he brings to himself and they are in the new heaven and the new earth where he makes all things new and there's the garden which men were banished from with all of its abundance.

And so when we think about Genesis 22, we want to think about it as they would say Christocentrically. We want to think about it in a Christ centered way.

We want to think about it in terms of what in God's redemption story is Genesis chapter 22 all about. I want to tell you brothers and sisters, it is perhaps one of the most obvious parts of God's redemptive story that we will find in the Old Testament.

God tested Abraham, calling him to sacrifice his only son, whom he loved, to prove that Abraham did love God, but to point to himself and his son, to point to himself and his son, to point to him, the ultimate father, and to point to his son, the ultimate son, Jesus Christ, who would come and live and die as a substitute for sinners.

[51 : 23] Isaac, Abraham and Isaac were the test. God the father and God the son were the reality. And so we are called to look at Genesis 22 through the lens of the finished work of Christ on the cross, and what we see is that not only God called Abraham to sacrifice his son to demonstrate his love for God, but God orchestrated this so that God might demonstrate, and give us a picture of his love for us.

Here's what I like you to do. I'm not going to count it for you, but I want to encourage you to do this. Maybe try to do this this afternoon. Take some time and count the number of times sun is in Genesis 22.

Count the number of times you find sun in Genesis 22. What you'll notice is that that's something for you to do, but I'll point out something else to you.

Three times, three times in Genesis 22, Isaac is referred to as Abraham's only son, his only son whom he loved.

And this should be ringing in all of our ears, one of the most familiar verses of scripture that we learned from when we were a little child. What is it? John 3.16. For God so loved the world that he gave his only son.

[52 : 57] His only son. That whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. And so in Isaac we see a picture of Christ. We see a picture of Christ in a number of ways.

Isaac is Abraham's only son, came into this world through miraculous birth, pointing to Jesus, the ultimate supernatural, a miraculous birth, God's eternal son.

We see Isaac carrying the wood for the sacrifice on his back. Jesus Christ took his cross. He took his cross to Calvary.

In case you're wondering how is it that a strong young man between 15 to 16 lets his elderly father tie him up and lay him on an altar of sacrifice.

And there's not a registration of a word from him, not a registration of a protest from him. How does he do that? He does it because the sovereign God is working it all out to show us his love and show us his son's love for his people.

[54 : 24] This is what it says in Isaiah 53 verse 7. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth like a lamb that was led to the slaughter, like a sheep that before his share is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

This is the sovereign God working out through his servant Abraham and Isaac a picture, a drama for us to see that we might understand his great love for us.

And he does it early on in redemption history, he does it from way back in the book of Genesis. But here's one of the big differences between Isaac and the Lord Jesus Christ.

See, these analogies only go so far. You can never press these analogies one for one. At some point they break down. And where this one breaks down with Isaac and Jesus is that Abraham was stopped and he did not kill his son.

He did not slaughter his son. But God did not stop in the slaughter of his own son, whom he offered for sin on the cross.

[55 : 42] And it was the wrath of God, not of the Romans, not of the Jews. It was the wrath of God that was poured on Jesus for sinners like you and me because Jesus was our substitute.

He was the substitute for God's people, for the elect of God. And he bore the full fury of the wrath of God without anyone to say don't touch him.

The father did more than touched him. The father slaughtered his own son. Do you remember the question that Isaac asked his father?

He said, Father, where is the lamb for the burnt offering? Abraham's response was that God will provide, God will provide for himself the lamb for the burnt offering.

But the immediate provision is in the ram that was caught in the thicket. That was the immediate provision for Isaac, the substitute for Isaac.

[56 : 54] But the ultimate provision, the ultimate provision, the question that John, the question that Isaac asked, really was not answered until the day that John the Baptist on the banks of the Jordan River pointed to Jesus and said, behold, the lamb of God takes me to the sin of the world.

That was the lamb. The ram was a diversion. It was some temporary measure.

The ultimate lamb for the sacrifice whom Isaac asked about, whom God himself provided, as Abraham said, was the lamb who takes away the sin of the world.

Isaac's question was finally answered in Jesus Christ. It was temporarily answered in the ram that was caught. it was finally answered in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I said I would come back to verses 4 and 5. When Abraham arrived at Mount Moriah, three days after the Lord commanded him to sacrifice his son, and he told his servants, the lad and I are going to go, and we're going to come back after we have worshipped.

[58 : 17] again, because Abraham had resolved in his heart to sacrifice his son for three days Isaac was dead.

For three days he was dead, and God gave him back on the third day. Isaac experienced for Abraham a kind of resurrection.

Isaac was dead to Abraham, but on the third day, imagine, it's not like God says go and slaughter him right now. No, for three days he wrestled with this thing.

For three days his son was dead. Listen to what the writer of the Hebrews says in Hebrews 11, 17 to 19. By faith, Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, through Isaac shall your offspring be named.

He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

[59 : 37] Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the writer to the Hebrews gets revelation from God to give us a window into what was happening in Abraham's mind that we couldn't see in Genesis 22, but he says this, that Abraham was considering that God was even able to raise Isaac from the dead if he slaughtered him.

That was the quality of Abraham's faith in God. And the writer to the Hebrews says to us, and figuratively speaking, he did receive him back from the dead, because figuratively speaking, Isaac was dead for three days, and then at the end of those three days, figuratively speaking, he received him back from the dead.

But, brothers and sisters, Jesus didn't die figuratively. The full fury of the wrath of God was poured out on Jesus for sinners like you and me.

And he bodily rose from the dead on the third day. In verses 17 and 18, the Lord says to Abraham, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of the heaven, as the stars of heaven, and as the sand that is on the seashore, and your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies.

Notice it's singular. It's not plural. At this point, he's not talking about all of Abraham's offspring. He is zeroing in on a particular one of his offspring who will possess the gates of his enemy, and in this singular offspring, all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

[61 : 43] This offspring, brothers and sisters, is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ himself. We saw that a few weeks ago when we looked in Matthew chapter 1, that Jesus is not just the son of David.

He is the son of Abraham. He is the ultimate son. He is the son who in his cross crushed the gates of his enemy, the chief enemy, and in his cross has blessed all the nations of the earth with the gospel, so that from every nation, every nation, without exception, we see it in the book of Revelation, every nation, tongue, tribe, and people, God will have a harvest of souls.

And it's all because of this son, whom God sacrificed, whom God sent to this earth, who took our place on the cross, and through whom he demonstrates his love for sinners like you and me. brothers and sisters, in his wise providence, the sovereign Lord dramatized his amazing love for sinners through Abraham and Isaac.

He dramatized between them what he will ultimately do when he would crush his son as a sacrifice for sin. And here's what we could contemplate as we leave today.

[63 : 32] The sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross is far more horrific than what the sacrifice of Isaac would have been if Abraham had followed through and slit his throat and cut his body and burnt him on that altar.

You see, because in Jesus Christ, he is the perfect son of God, he is the spotless lamb of God, as wonderful as Isaac was, he was not spotless.

He was not perfect. He was born a sinner just like the rest of us. And however horrific we think Isaac's death would have been, just the thought of it, even looking at the test, the death of our Savior, the death of Jesus Christ, the perfect spotless lamb of God, who knew no sin, who became sin for us, that is the most horrendous and horrific act in all of human history, and it helps us to see the seriousness and the gravity of sin, that our sin deserved that kind of penalty.

If our sin did not deserve that penalty, God would have been cruel and exaggerating to do that to Jesus. Jesus. But he did to Jesus what our sins deserve in a just way, nothing more, nothing less. And behind all of that, the cross is not to horrify us, the cross is to amaze us of the love of God for sinners like us.

[65 : 21] God had Abraham to do what he did to Isaac. What he had in mind was to demonstrate to us his great love, his undeserved love for sinners like us.

What happened to Isaac was the shadow. What happened to Christ was the substance.

God help us all who put our trust in Jesus to leave amazed at the grace of God, amazed at the love of God that we have a father who would love us that way to send his only son, the son that he loved, to die in our place.

Let's pray. Oh father, we thank you for your amazing love that you dramatize in the event of Abraham and Isaac, but Lord, more than dramatize, that you demonstrated and fulfilled on Calvary's cross so that sinners like us can be reconciled to you and be forgiven of all of our sins.

Help us Lord to rejoice in the love of God today and the mercy of God that has come to us. Through Jesus Christ. This is a closing song.