

Living by Faith

Lesson 6: Faith That Surrenders All: Abraham and Isaac -- Hebrews 11:17-

19

Imagine the silence of that morning. Abraham rises before the light, splits the wood for the offering with his own hands, and saddles the donkey while the household still sleeps. He wakes the boy, his boy, the laughter of his old age, the child God Himself had promised and finally given. They set out for a mountain three days away, and for three days Abraham walks beside the very promise he believes God has now asked him to give back. Picture the weight of those days, the meals eaten in the shadow of an unspoken command, the nights lying awake under the stars God once used to number his descendants. We are not reading about a man who felt nothing. We are reading about a man who trusted while his heart was breaking.

On the third day Abraham lifts his eyes and sees the place. He tells the servants to wait, and then he says something we should not rush past: 'I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.' We will come again. He climbs the mountain carrying fire and a knife, and Isaac carries the wood, the same wood that was meant for him. Then the boy speaks, and the question lands like a blade: 'Father, where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' And Abraham answers with words that have echoed down every generation since: 'God will provide for himself the lamb.'

We feel the tension because we are meant to feel it. This is the hardest test ever asked of a human being, and the writer of Hebrews holds it up not to trouble us but to teach us what faith looks like when it costs everything. God had said, 'Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.' Now God seemed to be commanding the death of the only door through which that promise could pass. How does a man obey a command that appears to cancel God's own word? Abraham does it by trusting the One who gave both the promise and the command, believing, the text tells us, that God was able even to raise the dead.

Most of us will never be asked to climb Moriah with a son. But every one of us holds something we are afraid to lay on the altar, something we love so much we have quietly decided God may have anything but that. A relationship. A dream. A measure of control. A fear of what surrender might cost us. This lesson invites us up the mountain with Abraham, not to be crushed by the weight of it, but to learn the freedom of a faith that holds nothing back, because it has come to trust that the God who asks is the God who provides, and the God who provides is able even to raise the dead.

Group Discussion: Why do you think God would test the faith of a man He had already called His friend, and what does Abraham's response on the mountain reveal about what God is really after when He tests His people?

Personal Reflection: Is there something in your life you are quietly afraid to lay on the altar, something you love so deeply that surrendering it to God feels like losing the promise itself? What makes it so hard to let go?

Read Hebrews 11:17–19

Study Questions

1. Hebrews 11:17 says that ‘by faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac.’ The text stresses that he ‘who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son.’ Why does the writer underline that Isaac was the very son tied to God’s promise, and what does this tell us about the nature of the test Abraham faced?
2. Think of something you treasure deeply, a relationship, a dream, a sense of security. If God asked you to hold it loosely, even to surrender it, what would your heart’s first response be, and what would that response reveal about where your trust truly rests?
3. God had said, ‘Through Isaac shall your offspring be named’ (Hebrews 11:18), yet now He commanded Abraham to offer Isaac up. How could Abraham obey a command that seemed to contradict God’s own promise, and what does this teach us about trusting God’s character even when His ways are beyond our understanding?
4. When God’s commands or His providence have not made sense to you, how have you tended to respond, with trust, with delay, with quiet resistance? What helps you keep obeying when you cannot yet see how things will work out?
5. Hebrews 11:19 says Abraham ‘considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead.’ What does this reveal about the reasoning behind Abraham’s obedience, and how

does resurrection power give the believer courage to obey God in costly situations (compare Romans 4:17–21)?

6. Abraham reasoned his way to obedience by remembering what God was able to do. When you face a hard step of obedience, what truths about God do you most need to call to mind, and how can you build the habit of preaching those truths to yourself?
7. Genesis records that Abraham told his servants, 'I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you' (Genesis 22:5), and that he said, 'God will provide for himself the lamb' (Genesis 22:8). What do these words reveal about Abraham's confidence, and how does his trust foreshadow the God who would one day provide the true Lamb on another hill?
8. Surrender is rarely a one-time act; it is a daily yielding of what we hold dear. What is one area of your life right now where God is calling you to a deeper, more practical surrender, and what would the next obedient step actually look like?
9. James points to this very event and says, 'Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works,' concluding that 'a person is justified by works and not by faith alone' (James 2:21–24). How does Abraham's obedience on Moriah show us that genuine, saving faith is an obedient, acting faith rather than belief alone? How does this guard us against the idea that we are saved by 'faith only,' and what does it teach us about responding to the gospel (compare Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:26–27; Mark 16:16)?

10. Looking back over Hebrews 11:17–19 as a whole, what is one concrete way Jesus is forming you through Abraham’s example, calling you to surrender something to Him in costly, obedient trust this week? What is the next step He is asking of you?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Genesis 22:1–19, the full account of the testing of Abraham and God’s provision of the ram in Isaac’s place; James 2:21–23, Abraham justified by works as his faith was completed by what he did; Romans 4:17–21, Abraham fully convinced that God was able to do what He had promised, even to give life to the dead; John 3:16, the Father who did not spare His own Son but gave Him for us, the true Lamb God provided; Hebrews 11:6, without faith it is impossible to please God, and He rewards those who diligently seek Him.