

# Faith That Lays It Down

*When God Asked for Isaac*

**Introduction.** There are moments in life when faith's no longer theoretical — when it moves from what we say we believe to what we're willing to surrender. It's one thing to trust God when the path is clear and the promises feel secure. It's something different when obedience seems to threaten the very promise God Himself has given.

Genesis 22 presents one of the most sobering and mysterious passages in Scripture. Abraham's called by God to offer up his son Isaac. This isn't just a test of obedience; it's a test that cuts to the core of Abraham's understanding of God's character, promises, and faithfulness.

As we study this account, we don't just see a father and a son — we see a profound picture of trust, surrender, and God's provision. Let's delve into the account of his life, then comment about faith, and close with some reassurances to help you, no matter what your age, to stand firm in the grace of God.

## ***I. The Narrative***

- A. God had told Abraham more than 30 years earlier to say goodbye to his past (Genesis 12:1, 4) and then again, only recently, he insisted that Abraham say goodbye to his present, his son Ishmael whom he dearly loved (Genesis 21:11-14; 17:18). Now on this occasion God asks Abraham to say goodbye to his future by sacrificing Isaac, the child of hope and promise.
- B. The Bible looks back to this old man's trust in God as one of the essential definitions of real religion.
  - 1. We can only imagine the struggle in his heart. He was to destroy all that made life worthwhile and joyous to him. All that God had told him about a blessed future now seemed over.
  - 2. It wasn't enough that he had to suffer the loss — Abraham had to build the fire, bind the boy, raise the knife, look in his eyes, and plunge it into his defenseless body.
- C. Abraham did it! No wonder he was called the "friend of God" and the "father of us all" (James 2:23; Romans 4:16). We not only need a standard by which to live (2 Timothy 3:16-17), we need examples and role models. We need people who can do more than tell us what we need. We need people who can show and inspire us to their heights of knowledge, good works, and kindness.

## ***II. The Applications***

- A. In James 1:13, the Scriptures assure us God doesn't tempt people to sin. But like any good teacher, He tests His disciples so they can improve (James 1:3-4, 12; 1 Peter 1:6-9). In Genesis 22, Abraham's put to the test and the narrative of it is written down so Israel and us can learn from it.
- B. Abraham was at a critical junction in his life.
  - 1. Sarah, who had conceived Isaac in her old age, would die in the next chapter, Abraham's life would fade in the background after this and the stage would be occupied by his son Isaac.

2. Abraham faced the most critical test of his life. Passing the test would cement his legacy in Jewish history. Stories of faith and courage would be told, Jewish history would be made and embedded, and Abraham would receive the most affectionate accolade God had ever given.
  3. Like Abraham, what you do with your test matters, possibly for generations to come. Your ability to pass the test is critical!
- C. Abraham's test wasn't over in a flash. God didn't awaken him in the middle of the night and urge him to immediately take the boy's life.
1. He had three long days to talk himself out of obeying; three long days to come up with good reasons why this command shouldn't be obeyed.
    - a) One's willingness to obey is tested by its persistence and endurance (cp. Hebrews 6:15). In the flush of passion we can all do heroic deeds. In the heat of combat very ordinary people perform extraordinary feats.
    - b) But to Abraham's everlasting credit, the delay between the order and the execution made no dent in his willingness to obey. He didn't ask for further clarification, bargain for a later date, or feign moral disgust at the request (Hebrews 11:17-19).
  2. Furthermore, it'd be easy to assume Abraham's faith kept him from pain, but that's not how he acted when Ishmael was removed (21:11), and there's no reason to believe he reacted any differently here.
- D. At the point of crisis, God provided for Isaac (Genesis 22:14).
1. Abraham believed nothing was impossible to Him, and nothing is impossible or too hard for Him to do.
  2. Israel and the church would and should understand that God would provide for them too at that point (Isaiah 43:2; Matthew 6:33-34).
  3. God's the God of provision, and won't fail you (Psalm 34:8-11; Proverbs 3:5-6; Philippians 4:19).
- E. Someone once said that before there can ever be a testimony there must come the test. And when we're tested, we want to "come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). What are some practical steps that I can remember as I go through trial?
1. Know that testing isn't strange. Scripture says trials are normal for believers, not a sign that God has abandoned you.
  2. Count it as a place for growth. James teaches that testing produces perseverance, which shapes character and hope.
  3. Respond with Scripture. Jesus answered temptation with "It is written," showing that God's Word is a key defense in testing.
  4. Pray honestly. David repeatedly asked God to search his heart and guide him, which models humility under pressure.
  5. Persevere instead of quitting. The Bible presents endurance as a mark of faithfulness and says those who stand the test are blessed.
  6. Trust God's refining purpose. Trials can function like fire on gold, revealing and purifying what's in the heart.
- F. God brings hope, glory, dignity, and comfort to those who obey (Hebrews 5:8-9). He gave us His very best, we mustn't give Him anything less than our very best, so let's put the kingdom first and love Him in every way.

**Conclusion.** Figuratively, we're left standing on Mount Moriah with Abraham, knife in hand, heart surrendered, and faith stretched to its limit. Abraham believed that even if Isaac died, God would still keep His promise. God calls us to a faith that trusts Him not only when the outcome makes sense, but when obedience is costly.

Whatever you go through, you can trust God fully because He's already proven His love completely. It means that whatever He asks of us, He isn't asking lightly — He knows the cost. When we lay our lives on the altar, we know that God is faithful and good. The question isn't whether it's easy. The question is whether you trust Him.