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Sunday School Lesson

TOPIC:

"Abraham's Faith is Tested"

Genesis 22:1-14

VERSE DISCOVERY: Genesis 22:1-14 (KJV, Public Domain)

Prepare

- As your students enter and get settled in the class, ask, *Has anyone ever taken a test before?* (Wait for responses and some mild discussion). Then ask, *Has anyone ever had to take a surprise test?* (Again, wait for responses). Ask, *How does a surprise test make you feel? Were you prepared, etc.?*
- Some tests are fun, and some are not. If you go to a carnival and bang that big hammer down on the button it causes something to rise that "tests" your strength. These kinds of test can be fun to play while a test given at school to see how much knowledge you have retained about a certain subject may not be as fun.
- The test that really gets people is the surprise test or pop quiz. There was no time to prepare. We're not sure exactly what kinds of questions will be on the test and for most, that makes it a little nerve racking.

Life can come with some surprise tests also. Things that happen out of the blue that we weren't prepared for. How we respond makes all the difference. Today, we are going to learn about Abraham and a very hard test he was given and how he responded to the test.

Explore – Full Lesson Available on pages 6-14

It's one thing to sit in a classroom situation and be tested on what you know, or to be scrutinized by another in some other area of life, but what about when one sets about to test themselves. According to the Apostle Paul, it is a very wise thing to do.

In a devotional I previously published, referring to his statement written in 2 Corinthians where he says, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves..." (2 Corinthians 13:5), I wrote:

"When was the last time we really pushed the envelope with ourselves to see what we have in us? When watching television, I sometimes come across shows where people are doing what seems to be the impossible; people who love the adrenaline of seeing just how far they can go with a particular feat. Some of the things I see just make me

want to shake my head, and yet, others are actual, honest assessments of endurance; to see if they have what it takes to make it all the way, or to break some sort of record. It's a testing of one's strength and stamina.

Tests, for most people, are not pleasant at all. It doesn't matter if its elementary age level test all the way through college, or a learner's permit; tests make individuals uncomfortable because they are designed to see what one has in them. If speaking in terms of education, it is probing one's intellect to see if enough knowledge has been retained and also able to be applied. If speaking in terms of physical endurance, it is working out in the body to see if one is deficient in a particular area, to point out any weaknesses that need to be strengthened for one to gain a particular goal.

This is why tests are not pleasant. Because, it goes beyond the façade on the outside to see what one really has in them. No truer is this more prevalent then in our spiritual lives. The stuff on the inside is quickly hidden as we enter the church doors on a Sunday morning. No one else can see the battles or struggles going on inside. That is, no one else, but God. "For the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart, (1 Samuel 16:7). And, it is the test of the heart that really matters; the places where others can't see.

I live around the corner from a prominent cemetery in our area. It serves the needs of all people, but they specialize in handling the burials of fire fighters and police officers. It is not unusual to see a processional of cars go by on any given day to lay a loved one to rest. Sometimes the line is long and sometimes it is short. If it is one of those specialized burials, then the whole affair is catered to honor the life of the one who has served. There are what seems like hundreds of police cars from all over, horses, raised flags, gun salutes, honor guards and the like. It becomes a beautiful send off in the midst of sorrow.

No matter who it is I often wonder about the individual being laid to rest. It becomes a stark reminder for me to follow the prudent advice of Paul and examine myself. We all have areas that need improvement; things that we can do better. Sometimes a close, personal examination is the only thing that will draw it out of us, to see "whether ye be in the faith." Are we where we need to be when our time comes to be at the head of that processional? Do we have that quality of faith that will settle our eternity positively? Maybe it's time we take a deeper look inside of us." (Word For Life Says/Examine Time, Check it Out!)

Through all of this, we see that tests come in many different forms and fashions. All are designed to see what's in us and to bring out the best of us. This is what we find happening in today's lesson. God was going to test the heart of Abraham to see where his faith really stood. Would it fizzle out or would he follow God and obey even through a difficult circumstance?

God already knows our hearts, but it is through testing where we get to discover what we are truly made of as well.

Activities

- Not all days are peaches and rainbows. Some days come with hard times of testing. Using the **Journal Pages**, write something that stood out to you in this lesson that is helpful to your faith.
- In the **Draw the Scene** section found on site, students can draw a picture of Abraham and Isaac worshipping God together.
- Younger students can also put together an Abraham and Isaac craft found on online to help support the lesson shared.
- Alternate activity sheets such as **Word Search and Crossword** are available on site for those who just want to work with printed materials.

Review

- Commit to memory the base verse from the lesson: ***“And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him,” Genesis 22:3.***
- Fill out the review sheet provided (page 15)
- **Bible Tic-Tac-Toe:** To review the lesson, put together a series of questions. Break the students up into teams, some can be the x's and some the o's. As students answer the questions correctly, their team gets to pick and mark a square until one team wins. The tic-tac-toe board can be as simple as drawing one on a board, or it can be elaborate one displayed for example on the floor with other markers standing in substitution for the x's and o's. Really, the only limit is your imagination.

Life

In the devotional I shared with you, Paul called us to examine or test ourselves. This lesson gives a good opportunity for each of us to examine our own hearts. Take some time during



this week to do some inner reflection. Write anything of note or revelations you would like to remember on the blank journal pages provided on site.

TOPIC:

"Abraham's Faith is Tested"

Genesis 22:1-14

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Even in the hardest and most difficult circumstances we may face, as Abraham finds out in this lesson, God calls us to still be obedient to His calling, walk with Him by faith, and He will provide the end results.

ABRAHAM'S TEST

Genesis 22:1 "And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am."

If we take a step back to view the story as a whole, we can gain a better understanding of everything that is transpiring here. God has already spoken a promise for Abraham to be fulfilled through Sarah. She was going to be blessed by God to have a son and "she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her," (Genesis 17:16).

God followed through on His promise. "And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him," (Genesis 21:1-2). Every wonderful promise God spoke to this elderly couple was fulfilled. That set things up for the future course of events to play out according to the rest of the promises given to Abraham concerning this child.

But as we approach this lesson there seems to be a proverbial wrench thrown in the midst of the plans. At a time when Abraham probably thought everything was safe, secured, and at rest in his life, God disrupted his comfort zone and asked Abraham to do the seemingly impossible.

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“And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham.” Some time had passed since the birth of their promised son had arrived in their tents. Abraham's other son, Ishmael, the one born of the slave Hagar, was sent away by this point in time (Genesis 21:8-10). The reason being, God declared, “In Isaac shall thy seed be called,” (Genesis 21:12; Romans 9:7). And, although God would take care of Ishmael (Genesis 21:13-21), he was not included in this promise of God.

With that move of obedience to send his firstborn away, and with the settling of the covenant between himself and Abimelech (Genesis 21:22-34), surely Abraham must have thought that was it. Perhaps there was a sense of accomplishment that all he had to do now was to sit back, enjoy and raise his son, get on with life, work and live it to its fullest. No worries.

But God came with a new message that may have shaken any ease Abraham possibly felt. This message and what it required was meant to put Abraham to the test, or **“tempt,”** as our lesson translates it.

We must be extremely careful in how we apply that word **“tempt”** when we're talking about God. Often when we are thinking of tempting, we are thinking along the lines of one trying to get another to sin. This is a far cry from the plan that God is setting up through the line of Abraham that will eventually bring in the Messiah to save mankind. Furthermore, God can NEVER be accused of tempting someone to sin (see James 1:13-14). Sin is against the holy nature of God. God wants people to be where He is, and sin would be a hindrance to that. If one is drawing away it is of their own doing, not God's.

Rather, the word **“tempt”** here means to test or to prove. How far would Abraham go in obeying God? Was he all-in? Was he really with God all the way, no matter what? Was his heart really tied to God? Or, did Abraham love something or someone more?

A lot of people can have a bold profession of faith on the outside, but the real teller of what's inside an individual is when the heart is tested. And, God wanted to see what was really in Abraham.

Not knowing what was in store, when God called his name, Abraham responded, **“Behold, here I am.”** He opened himself up to receive whatever it is God was getting ready to speak. Not only to hear but with a readiness to obey. How would his faith in God and obedience to God hold up under the pressure of the next words the Almighty will speak?

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Often, one never even knows the fullness of their own heart until it has been pushed and pulled beyond familiar limits. Only when it is stretched with trials can one tell how their strength and stamina in the Lord holds up.

Genesis 22:2 “And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”

God didn't beat around the bush with His instructions. He was very specific with what He had asked Abraham to do.

“Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac.” Many Bible students are very familiar with Abraham's lineage. But, as noted earlier, Ishmael was not included in this promise. At this time, he is off the scene and the focus is on **“Isaac, whom thou lovest.”**

Love can be a sweet thing, but if it keeps you from the will of God, if it keeps you from being fully devoted to God, it can be a bitter thing because it keeps you tied in an affection other than God.

Promises are wonderful, but they can never replace the relationship with God we are called to have. God must always come first in all things. The heart must be measured to see what it is really full of because when we want our cup overflowing, we want it to be overflowing with Him and not things that keep us from Him. So, the focus of Abraham's test is something his heart is attached to; something he loves.

Will the thing that he loves stand in the way of complete obedience to God?

Surely at the mention of Isaac, God has Abraham's undivided attention and with that, He further relays His instructions of what to do. **“Get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering.”** One of the hardest things that another could ask is something that would bring harm to their child. Mama bears are notoriously known for the protection of their children, and people are too.

God didn't ask Abraham to take Isaac with him to offer a burnt offering, but He told Abraham to **“offer him there for a burnt offering.”** Give up what you are holding dear in your heart, Abraham. What must've been going through his mind at the idea of such a request? Did he experience that moment of trepidation, those tingling twinges in the stomach that make one's

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heart flutter in the wrong way? Did beads of perspiration gather on his upper lip that couldn't utter any words at the impact of what was being said?

The Scriptures don't clue us in on the emotional side of what Abraham maybe was feeling. But, regardless of how he felt, it tells us of what he did that mattered.

ABRAHAM'S OBEDIENCE

Genesis 22:3 "And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him."

"**Abraham rose up early in the morning,**" not to flee and try to get away from this hard thing that God asked him to do like Jonah did (Jonah 1:3), but he "**rose up**" to move closer in obedience to God; to pursue his faith on a deeper level. Not knowing completely how the end of this journey would turn out, Abraham set out and prepared to follow God's leading through the pain of this hard thing.

He gathered all the necessary things to follow through with the "**burnt offering.**" He followed his normal routine and preparedness to make a sacrifice to God, right down to making sure he had an adequate "**wood**" supply needed for the offering. He didn't give himself room to negotiate out of what he was asked to do, like, "Well, God, you see, I didn't bring enough wood or such and such. I'll just have to come back another time and try again." Nope. Abraham prepared to fully comply with God's instructions no matter the cost. And, this offering would cost. It would be painful.

Genesis 22:4-5 "Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you."

Traveling three days journey, "**on the third day,**" coming into the land where God directed him, Abraham "**saw the place afar off.**" Moriah was in his view, but obedience was in his heart. If thoughts plagued him such as, "I can't go through with this," he didn't let on. He didn't give them room to plant in his conscience. He traveled this far to complete the task at hand,

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and he wouldn't let how he felt about it disrupt his observance of what God wanted from him. He was a determined worshiper if I ever saw one.

Resolutely staring at that place, his mind and heart were fixed to go all the way with God; to follow through to the next level of what he needed to do. With what I am sure was a painstaking move, Abraham instructed the **"young men"** who accompanied him and Isaac on this journey how this would all go down.

"Abide ye here with the ass." They were not invited to join him and Isaac on the next leg of this journey, the actual approaching of and performing the burnt offering. How would they have responded if they did accompany Abraham all the way? Would they have stood by and not gotten involved or would they have run interference, preventing Abraham from following through?

When God calls us to a task, some steps of that journey may have to be walked without the assistance of others. They may not comprehend it being a journey of faith as you do. And, faith is exactly what Abraham had and what he was going on. He knew what he was called to do, but his next words tell us he also believed for a better outcome.

"I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." If suspicions were raised, Abraham's confidence in what was going to happen must have allayed any concerns. Abraham's words relayed nothing but faith in God.

"I and the lad will go... and worship... and come again." After they worshiped, Abraham's expectations were to return with his son. What went into this sort of faith? One can only imagine that Abraham held tightly in total belief of all God already promised. He may have not known the ins and outs of how all this would transpire, but he was in a covenant relationship with the only God who did. He kept that as a light before him, shining the pathway as he took steps closer to that place of worship.

Going over into the book of Hebrews, we get a peek behind the scenes to some of Abraham's reasoning and thought processes during this event: "Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence he received him in a figure," (Hebrews 11:19). Romans also tells us, "...he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were," (Romans 4:17). The process looked like it

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was going to be painful, but that didn't diminish Abraham's faith. Abraham believed God and the promise He had for him, more than the pain of the process.

Genesis 22:6 "And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together."

A three days journey required the help of the men, but with their command to stay put Abraham and Isaac would literally have to shoulder the weight of the offering. Each of them would carry, physically and spiritually, the responsibility of this offering.

Physically, **"Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son."** This picture really comes to light in the New Testament where we see Jesus bearing his own cross in the march toward His own place of sacrifice, Calvary (John 19:17). This, along with other implements necessary for the sacrifice, the **"fire"** (coals), and the **"knife,"** the two of them walked **"together,"** closer to the testing grounds of faith.

The spiritual aspects would be soon in coming as noted in the next few verses. However heavy their load is now; it would become an extreme weight in just a bit. Oh, what strength it took to continue that march forward.

Genesis 22:7 "And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

Isaac, presumed to have attended these sacrifices before, and of age enough to know that something important was missing, had a very good question to ask his father regarding this particular offering. He sees the fire and wood, but **"where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"** he asked. I wonder if those young men he left behind were thinking the same thing? How would they carry out a proper sacrifice without a **"lamb?"** There needed to be an animal for a burnt offering (compare Genesis 2:20 and Exodus 29:38).

Genesis 22:8 "And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together."

Abraham's response was short, but it was full of the faith he carried deep in his heart. He said, **"My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering."** He doesn't know

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how, but Abraham knows **"God will provide."** This trip, this offering, would end according to God's plan and provision, even if it meant falling along the lines of what was already stated from Hebrews, that Isaac could be raised from the dead.

Abraham's faith looked beyond what he was experiencing and trusted that **"God will provide."** His hopes, his future, and his son was in the hands of God.

"So they went both of them together." Father and son carried on with the journey, trusting God every step of the way, each with the loads they bear.

Genesis 22:9 "And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood."

This and the next verse is where we really start to see the spiritual aspects of the weight they both carried.

As they **"came to the place"** where the offering was to occur, and with no alternative means in sight, Abraham continued in following all the necessary procedures for the burnt offering.

"Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order." He prepared for the sacrifice. An **"altar"** was erected, probably of stone. It is on this he would lay down his only son.

Abraham then **"bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood."** Out of all that was happening before him, Isaac appears to let it be so, without giving his father a struggle. Abraham was one hundred years old when Isaac was born, and even at this point in time, many more years have passed. It would have been tremendously easy to avert this painful process, but he seems to allow it in submission to his father's will. Doesn't that remind you of Jesus?

Oh, the burden of this spiritual weight these two were bearing. Isaac in his laying down of self to allow this happen and Abraham in the performing of it as shown in the next verse.

Genesis 22:10 "And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son."

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"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac..." (Hebrews 11:17). Abraham did not withhold his hand from the deed, his heart from following God, nor his son in his willingness to offer him up. Abraham proceeded to carry out the last detail required for the burnt offering. He **"stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son."** All the way to the very end, he continued to choose God's will over his own.

PLEASE NOTE: Sacrificing people, humans, children are **NEVER** something God condones or asks for. As a matter of fact, it is a pagan practice He strongly stood against and opposes (Leviticus 20:1-5). Evil practices such as these provoke the LORD to anger (see 2 Kings 17:17; compare Ezekiel 20:26). God states it is something, "Which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart," (Jeremiah 7:31). A human sacrifice was **NEVER** God's intention or will. Just a testing of the human heart, as the next verse proves.

GOD'S PROVISION

Genesis 22:11-12 "And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me."

God prevented the burnt offering involving Isaac from going forth. True to His holy nature, God prohibited such an action from taking place. When it seemed like the unthinkable was going to occur, God stepped in the path of the process and stayed the hand of Abraham.

Calling his name **"out of heaven... Abraham, Abraham,"** He spoke, **"Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him."** Like a rushing waterfall, relief must have washed over this man of faith and his son.

Abraham's faith was tested and proven to be true, for He said, **"Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me."** One can speak of their great faith and make a boast in themselves, or they can wholly follow God and let Him proclaim it for you.

What was in Abraham's heart was evidenced by what he did and was willing to do. Abraham's faith was active and alive, and it was for God whom he knew would provide. God recognized

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that and commended him for not keeping anything back from Him, including his **“son.”** Abraham's faith caused him to live in total surrender to God.

Genesis 22:13-14 “And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.”

At that moment, those previous words spoken by this great patriarch, “God will provide,” came to pass. For there in the **“thicket”** was a **“ram caught... by his horns.”** A substitute for the sacrifice was given. Oh, what a foretelling of what Christ would do for all mankind as He laid his life down for us.

“And Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.” Abraham used the offering God provided to bring freedom to his son. When he previously told the young men, they would both be back, surely Abraham's steps back to their point of return would be lighter, taking in all that God had done for them.

He was to Abraham, **“Jehovah-jireh.”** “God who sees; God who provides.” That place is renamed by Abraham in recognition of God's awesome provision there. Moriah would no longer just be a mount on the map. Eventually, it will be the place where God would lay down His ultimate provision for humanity in the form of Jesus Christ. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” (John 3:16).

This **“place”** would be where Jerusalem is established; where Solomon's temple is erected (2 Chronicles 3:1); the city where God refused to withhold His only begotten Son for our sins.

Since God has provided for the hardest thing, our salvation, can't we have faith and trust Him with everything else in our lives?

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TOPIC:

"Abraham's Faith is Tested"

Genesis 22:1-14

Please Answer the Review Questions Below

1. And it came to pass after these things, that God did _____ Abraham. (Gen. 22:1)

A. Thank B. Tempt C. Blessed D. None

2. Take now thy son, thine only son _____ ... and offer him. (Gen. 22:2)

A. Isaac B. Ishmael C. Lot D. None

3. What is the name of the mountain where Abraham was instructed to go? (Gen. 22:2)

4. How many young men did Abraham take with him? (Gen. 22:3)

5. How many days did they travel to get where God instructed? (Gen. 22:4)

6. **T** or **F**. Abraham fully expected to come back to the young men with his son. (Gen. 22:5)

7. Reading of how Abraham's faith was tested, what is one of the greatest things about faith you took away from this lesson?

