

Get Ready!

Abraham's Faith is Tested

By: Seth Ross



Text

Genesis 22

Key Quest Verse

“Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind’ ” (Matthew 22:37).

“In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33).

Bible Background

Abraham had previously been childless for years, until his wife, Sarah, asked him to have a child with her concubine, Hagar, which he did. That son's name was Ishmael. But, just as God had promised, in his old age Abraham finally had a son through his wife Sarah, named Isaac. When Isaac was only a few years old, Sarah (knowing her blood line would be established through Isaac) began to resent Ishmael, so she had Abraham send Ishmael and Hagar away.

This left Abraham with only one son in his household. Only one son, only one chance, to have all God's promised descendants. I can only imagine how protective Abraham would have been with his growing son, because should anything happen to the boy . . . then what? Abraham was already over 100 years old. There were no other children. It's into this situation that God spoke and asked Abraham to sacrifice his only son on an altar.

Get Ready!



Lesson Quest

What I want my students to:

Know: We cannot out-give God, and He expects believers to give willingly.

Feel: A sense of gratitude for all God blesses us with and respond generously.

Do: Begin tithing, or at least begin giving regularly.

Leader’s Devotion

This is one of the stranger stories in the Bible, because God calls Abraham to give the life of his very own son as a sacrifice, which was similar to some of the pagan religions at the time. God seems to be testing whether or not Abraham will be obedient. Notice, there’s no promise of any specific blessing tied to the sacrifice of Isaac. It’s not like God said, “sacrifice your son and I’ll give you eternal life,” or “offer your son, and I’ll give you all the riches of the world.” God simply tells Abraham to offer his son Isaac.

He does it. There’s no hesitation, no rebuttal, no reluctance, no resistance. It just says he got up the next morning and cut wood for the fire. This story is usually told as an example of great obedience on the part of Abraham. And, while that is true, I’m struck by the motivation behind the obedience . . . Abraham’s priority list. God was right at the top, number one, head honcho, numero uno. Nothing else in Abraham’s world was even a close second to God in value . . . not even his son. And, it’s not JUST his son, but remember how long Abraham had to wait for this son to be born! He spent much of his life wondering if he’d have ANY children at all, so when Isaac was born, Abraham must have treasured him all the more. And now God was asking that he give up his only, long awaited, miracle birth son. The willingness to give up what’s most important to us, to make a sacrifice, reveals our love for God.

So, what might God ask you to give up? Maybe in today’s world, it’s our money. Nothing is as important to us as our money . . . maybe not even our children. I mean, we’d rather spend extra time at work to make more money, to buy more stuff, than come home to our children. Sure we say we work for their benefit, but if they miss out on having parents involved in their lives, what have they truly gained? Some of your students live in homes like this.

And, that’s why God says we’re to test Him in the area of finances. Read Malachi 3:8-10, it’s all there. Abraham had already figured out tithing; notice he was tithing even before it was even a part of the Old Testament Law (Heb. 7:1-4), so God tested him in another area of life . . . his son. But, to some of us, tithing seems archaic, irrelevant and even legalistic. And yet, Jesus says, “where your treasure is, there your heart is also.” In fact, there are more parables on the issue of money management than any other topic. More than love, more than the Kingdom, more than forgiveness, more than any other single issue. Amazing. It must be important.

Get Set!**Option A****PRIORITIES****Materials:** None**Procedure:** Ask students to answer the following questions concerning priorities and give reasons for their answers.

Would you rather . . .

1. . . . be bitten by a shark or by a Pit bull dog?
2. . . . be ugly and have 10 good friends, or attractive and have only 1 good friend?
3. . . . eat too little and be hungry, or eat too much and be sick?
4. . . . know you have only 1 year to live, or die unexpectedly?
5. . . . have a great body or a great mind?
6. . . . have one thick bushy eyebrow or long nose hairs?
7. . . . give money to a religious cult or to an abortion clinic?
8. . . . ignore God and enjoy life with your son, or obey God and lose your son?

GO TO THE BIBLE STORY**Option B****MORE PRIORITIES****Materials:** None**Procedure:** Ask students to answer the following questions concerning priorities and give reasons for their answers.

What if . . .

1. . . . you were the star of a nightly TV show?
2. . . . you could change one thing about how your mom and dad talk to each other?
3. . . . you could control the weather?
4. . . . you had 30 seconds on worldwide TV?
5. . . . you could do anything you wanted for one day?
6. . . . you could see into the future but not alter it?
7. . . . God asked you to sacrifice your child for Him?

GO TO THE BIBLE STORY

Get Set!**Bible Story**

Teacher Tip: Provide markers for students to highlight portions of the story in their Bibles

Genesis 22:1-24 (Contemporary English Version)

Some years later God decided to test Abraham, so He spoke to him.

Abraham answered, “Here I am, Lord.”

[2] The Lord said, “Go get Isaac, your only son, the one you dearly love! Take him to the land of Moriah, and I will show you a mountain where you must sacrifice him to me on the fires of an altar.” [3] So Abraham got up early the next morning and chopped wood for the fire. He put a saddle on his donkey and left with Isaac and two servants for the place where God had told him to go.

[4] Three days later Abraham looked off in the distance and saw the place. [5] He told his servants, “Stay here with the donkey, while my son and I go over there to worship. We will come back.”

[6] Abraham put the wood on Isaac’s shoulder, but he carried the hot coals and the knife. As the two of them walked along, [7-8] Isaac said, “Father, we have the coals and the wood, but where is the lamb for the sacrifice?”

“My son,” Abraham answered, “God will provide the lamb.”

The two of them walked on, and [8] [9] when they reached the place that God had told him about, Abraham built an altar and placed the wood on it. Next, he tied up his son and put him on the wood. [10] He then took the knife and got ready to kill his son. [11] But the Lord’s angel shouted from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!”

“Here I am!” he answered.

[12] “Don’t hurt the boy or harm him in any way!” the angel said. “Now I know that you truly obey God, because you were willing to offer him your only son.”

[13] Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in the bushes. So he took the ram and sacrificed it in place of his son.

[14] Abraham named that place “The Lord Will Provide.” And even now people say, “On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.”

[15] The Lord’s angel called out from heaven a second time:

[16] You were willing to offer the Lord your only son, and so He makes you this solemn promise, [17] “I will bless you and give you such a large family, that someday your descendants will be more numerous than the stars in the sky or the grains of sand along the beach. They will defeat their enemies and take over the cities where their enemies live. [18] You have obeyed me, and so you and your descendants will be a blessing to all nations on earth.”

[19] Abraham and Isaac went back to the servants who had come with him, and they returned to Abraham’s home in Beersheba.

Go!**Priorities Collage****ARTS AND CRAFTS**

Materials: Stack of magazines and newspapers (lots of advertisements), scissors, glue, poster board

Quest Connection

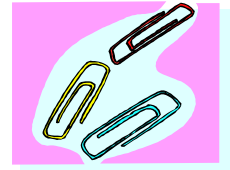
People fill their lives with all kinds of things that take the place of God. In fact, there’s not much room for God left for many people even if they wanted to include Him. And, you don’t have to look far to see what things replace God on a daily basis. God is NOT a top priority for many people.

Procedure: Ask students to go through the magazines and newspapers and select ads that depict what they feel is most important to our society (judging by the ads). Then, have them cut out ads and create a “Priorities Picture Collage” showing a collection of our society’s priorities.

When they’re finished, ask them if there’s anything that represents God, Christianity or church anywhere on the poster board. **What are things that replace God in our lives? What would we have to give up in order to put God first?**

Close

End the activity by asking God to help us keep our priorities straight. And, when we’re tempted to replace Him with other things, ask Him to help us maintain a Biblical perspective on life.

Go!**The Big Replacement****ARTS AND CRAFTS**

Materials: Craft materials of your choice: clay, paper clips, toilet paper tubes, duct tape, cardboard, paint, markers, etc

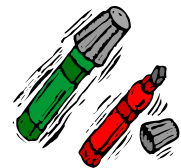
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Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son on an altar, probably because Isaac was the most important thing in Abraham's life. What would God ask you to put on an altar for Him?

Procedure: Have students create a modern day image of whatever it is in their lives that they might have to "sacrifice" on an altar for God.

Close

End the activity by asking God to help us to remember that everything we have has come from Him. And, if He ever asked us to give up our prized possession for Him, that we might be willing to do that.



Go!**Wearing Our Wealth****OBJECT LESSON**

Materials: Calculator, pen, pencil

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We often don't think we're in danger of having anything in our lives replace God, because we don't think we have that much stuff. But, America is the richest country in the world . . . and we're among the richest 10% of the world's population . . . even as teenagers. Let's see how wealthy we are right here, today.

Procedure: Have students list everything they're wearing at the moment. Don't forget to include things like glasses and contacts. Have them place a dollar value next to each item they've written down. Even casually dressed kids will come up with totals above \$200 . . . have them each total their lists. Finally have the class collectively total all the student values.

The average annual income in many 3rd world countries is \$200-400 which means that most of us walk around with more wealth on our bodies than millions of people earn in an entire year.

Close

End the activity with a prayer asking God to help us be mindful of how blessed we really are and not to forget that it all comes from God. It's not that much to return 10% to Him.

Go!**Chariots of Fire****VIDEO**

Materials: TV/VCR and movie “Chariots of Fire,” Resource Page

Quest Connection

What would you be willing to sacrifice for God?

Procedure: The Movie: (drama, PG)

This is the true story of 2 men training to run in the 1924 Olympics. Both love to run, but they do it for different reasons. Eric Liddell (Ian Charleson) incorporates his Christian beliefs into all that he does, believing that the power to finish the race comes from within and a commitment to Christ helps him run. But, Harold Abrahams (Ben Cross) runs as a weapon against being Jewish. When Harold wins a race, he believes Jews don't appear so inferior, and he finally feels accepted by the world around him.

The Clip (about 3 minutes)

START 1:26:50

“Your Royal Highness, may I present Mr. Eric Liddell.”

STOP 1:30:13

“Sir, God knows I love my country; but I can't make that sacrifice.”

Close

End the activity with a prayer asking God to help us remember what's really important in life, and that it's not money and fame.

Go!**Rudy****VIDEO**

Materials: TV/VCR, movie "Rudy," Resource Page

Quest Connection

All of us have relationships we highly value. And, we're willing to make sacrifices for people depending on how close they are to us. How much are you willing to sacrifice?

Procedure: The Movie (drama, PG):

Based on the true story of Rudy Ruettiger, this film is about friendship, courage and sacrifice. Rudy (Sean Astin) grew up in a small steel town with the dream of someday playing football for Notre Dame. Despite many obstacles, he refused to give up and his determination inspired his friends and helped him accomplish his goal.

The Clip (just over 1½ minutes)

START 1:33:44

The interior of the coach's door.

STOP 1:35:20

Close-up of a jersey

Close

End the activity with a prayer asking God to take control of our money, so that we can respond appropriately to all God has given us.

Go!**Priority Placement****BRAINSTORMING**

Materials: A copy of “Priority Placement” worksheet for each student, pen or pencil

Quest Connection

The world has many causes for which people are giving at least part of their lives. We are going to do an activity that will give you a chance to put some of your priorities in order.

Procedure: Hand out the worksheet and give students the following instructions. **Cut this page into 9 pieces, arrange the causes in order of importance to you. You'll have 5 minutes. Once you have arranged your 9 causes, take your top 3 causes of which you have identified as being most important to you. On the back of each paper, write down how much time you've spent in that area during the last month.**

Close

What are some ways that we can keep our priorities straight? List answers on a chalkboard or flip chart. (Talk with God regularly, read the Bible, attend church, friends with the same priorities.)

Chariots of Fire

Other Scriptures: Luke 21:14-19; Romans 14:5; Colossians 3:16-17

Questions:

1. In your opinion, is Eric's position extreme, admirable, or a little of both? Why?
2. Why is it easy or hard for you to stand up for God's idea of right or wrong?
3. How much is it reasonable to expect us to sacrifice for God in today's world?
4. In what areas of our lives would God expect us to make sacrifices? Friends? Money? Movies we watch?

Personal Reflection

What is the hardest thing for you to give up for God's sake?

Why does it have such a strong hold on you?



Rudy!

When the captain of the football team wants Rudy to take his place in the championship game, his coach tells him to do the right thing by focusing on the game, not the friendship. Believing he is doing the right thing, the captain lays down his jersey on the desk. One by one, Rudy's teammates do the same, and their coach is deeply moved by their dedication to fairness and to Rudy.

Other Scriptures: 1 John 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 9:7; Hebrews 11:4; 2 Corinthians 8:2-3; 2 Corinthians 9:6, 8

Questions:

- 1. What motivated the team captain to give up his spot for Rudy?**
- 2. Is the amount of what we give up or the attitude of our giving that matters to God? Why does He care?**
- 3. Have you ever been given something you didn't deserve? How did you respond?**
- 4. Is it easier to sacrifice for a friend or stranger?**
- 5. Why does God talk about sacrificing in the area of money so often? And, how should we respond to Him?**

Priority Placement

World Peace	Feeding the hungry	Fighting racial discrimination
Anti-abortion	Concern for military buildup and spending	The environment
Equal rights for women	Winning people to Christ	Bringing justice to the poor and oppressed

What's Most Important?

Instructions: Each phrase completes the statement, "A Christian should be . . ." Cut the 12 slips apart, ask each student to select from their 12 slips which 4 are LEAST important. After setting these aside, select the 4 MOST important from their remaining 8 slips. Once they're down to 4 values, they must prioritize those 4 according to importance. Talk about the results and how those priorities are or are not reflected in your church's programs.

Supportive of missions
Faithful in attending church
Studying the Bible to learn more about God
Active in the community
Sharing his/her faith regularly
Looking for opportunities to serve others
Daily seeking God's guidance
Truthful & dependable
More concerned about others than about himself/herself
Modeling his/her life after Jesus
Angry at what's wrong in the world
Kind and friendly to strangers

Journal Page

1. What's the most valuable thing anyone has ever given you?

2. Why do you think they made that sacrifice for you?

3. Do you think you might be able to make a similar sacrifice for someone some day?

4. How about a regular sacrifice for God?

Living Life Right

Instructions: For each item, mark how likely you would be to do that if you had only 1 month to live. And, after marking that, rank all the items according to which is most important for you to accomplish, down to the least important.

If I Had Only 1 Month to Live, I Would . . .

Not tell anyone	Yes - - - - - No
Run up credit cards buying great stuff	Yes - - - - - No
Pull off a major robbery, and give all I take to the poor	Yes - - - - - No
Sell all I have and give it to the poor	Yes - - - - - No
Use my problem to tell people about Christ	Yes - - - - - No
Make my own funeral arrangements	Yes - - - - - No
Offer myself to science to be used for experiments	Yes - - - - - No
Have as much fun as possible (sex, parties, booze, etc.)	Yes - - - - - No
Travel as much as I can	Yes - - - - - No
Accomplish as many worthwhile projects as I can	Yes - - - - - No
Spend all my time reading the Bible and praying	Yes - - - - - No
Do some high risk feat I've always wanted, figuring that if I don't make it, it doesn't really matter	Yes - - - - - No
Spend my last month with family and loved ones	Yes - - - - - No
Keep on doing what I always do	Yes - - - - - No
Write a book about my life (or my last month)	Yes - - - - - No
Isolate myself from everyone and hide out	Yes - - - - - No