

Abe – Part 2 – Genesis 22

I have a confession to make. I cheated in French class. Yep. I'm a cheater. In high school, we had to take a foreign language and I took French, probably because my buddy Kevin was in there and my girlfriend at the time was in there, so why not? Now, when I say I cheated, I don't mean I cheated one time by glancing at my neighbor's paper. It's a little more than that. On the first day of school, the French teacher passed out the textbook for the year and also a workbook. We were to read a chapter in the textbook every day and then, for our homework, we would take a little quiz in the handbook. But the handbook had all the answers to the quizzes in the back. They were printed on perforated paper and the teacher told us to rip all the answers out of the workbook and pass them forward. She made sure we all did that and she took them all up and then she put them in a tall, metal storage cabinet at the front of the room. We all watched her put them on the top shelf and then she closed the storage cabinet... that was not locked. About that time, if I remember right, something happened and she got called out of class. Maybe it was another teacher calling her into the hallway to discuss where happy hour was that evening or something. I don't know. But when she left, my buddy Kevin looked at me and then he looked at the cabinet. He looked at me again and I knew what he was thinking and I just nodded. So, he walked up to the front of the room, opened the cabinet, took out two answer packets and walked back to his seat and handed me one. Nobody said a word. So, all year, all during the week, I made perfect 100's on every quiz. But there was a problem. I'll give you one guess as to what happened every Friday. Yep. Every Friday, we had a test on what we had learned during the week, a test that couldn't be taken home and cheated on. And I hadn't learned anything during the week so, every test, I bombed. Now, I'm not proud of what we did although I will always blame Kevin for being the instigator. But don't you worry, I have asked God to forgive me of that and a billion other things and He has forgiven me. But even today, I still don't like tests. Can you imagine how I felt in high school French class though on Fridays? I knew I had no chance of passing that test. I had zero confidence in myself to be able to pass that test.

It is the same way today. When I go through tests and trials in this life, I have no confidence in myself. I am not smart enough or strong enough or wise enough or anything enough to get through what this life throws at me. But I have something better than a cheat sheet. I have a personal relationship with the Teacher, the Great I Am, the King of kings and Lord of lords and He loves me. In fact, I am the Teacher's pet. This does not mean that I don't go through tests nor does it mean I always pass the first time I go through them. Sometimes I still bomb. But He forgives me and helps me and guides me and is always there to provide everything I need. But it is not because there is anything special in me. In fact, He will do all of that for you as well. Yes, you too can be the Teacher's pet and you may already be. If you are not, I will tell you how you can in just a minute. But first, I want us to look at a major test that Abraham and his son, Isaac, went through. We are continuing our study of Abraham and we have come to **chapter 22 of Genesis** where we read the famous story of Abe and Isaac. And like so much in the book of Genesis, we are left with a lot of questions but also a lot of instructions and examples and ultimately a wonderful picture of who God is. Let's see it in **Genesis 22:1-14**.

1 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.

2 Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you." 3 Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. 4 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. 5 He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you." 6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, 7 Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" 8 Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together. 9 When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and

arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. 12 "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." 13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided." Before we get any further, I think we need to answer some questions about this story. And there are lots of questions but only a few do we really need to know the answer to. I would like to know how old Isaac was when this happened but we aren't told. Experts say anywhere between 10 and 33. However old he was, he could have refused and we will talk some more about that later. I would like to know how Abraham felt about all of this but nothing is written of his emotions. I would also like to know what Isaac thought. That would be interesting. But the real question is, what did they tell Sarah when they got home? *"Hey guys! How was the camping trip?"* What do you tell her? I can imagine Isaac saying, *"Well, it was okay until dad tried to plunge the dagger into my heart."* Right? That conversation didn't get recorded and while it would be interesting to know the answers to those questions, we don't need to know them.

One question that we do need to know the answer to is, **why** would God ask Abe to do this in the first place? What kind of God do we serve that would ask a man to do such a thing to his son, especially after promising old man Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation? And then at the last minute say, *"Aw, psyche! Just checking to see if you would do it."* That sounds cruel, doesn't it? The answer to that question is in the **first verse**. God did it to "test" Abraham. But to understand that we need to know the difference in a test and a temptation. The difference is in the expected outcome. You may be tested by God. If so, He wants you to make the right choice because He wants to bless you. Satan will tempt you hoping you make the wrong choice so you have to endure the consequences. And sometimes God may test and Satan may tempt in the same circumstance. When General Motors tests a Ford vehicle, what outcome do they hope to see? They hope to see failure. When GM tests a GM product, what do they hope to see? Success. It may be the same test. They just hope for different outcomes. Sometimes it is obvious in our lives. Is God testing you by presenting you with an opportunity for a weekend of booze and prostitutes? That's an easy one to see. Of course not. But maybe you find yourself with an opportunity to have a new job. And in this opportunity, God is testing you to see if you will hear His still, small voice that is saying, *"That's not the best for you."*, but Satan is screaming, *"Take it and get rich, big boy!"*

Here in **Genesis 22**, God is testing Abraham. But He is testing Isaac as well and that is the fascinating thing that often gets overlooked in this passage. Like I said, Isaac can be anywhere between 10 and 33 and was probably closer to 33, I think. But however old he was, he could have refused. He could have said no to Abe and just run off. What was Abe gonna do? He was over one hundred years old at this point. So, obviously Isaac had faith in God and faith in his father at the same time. So, what about you? Let's get right to the application of this passage. Do you have faith? How do you know? I have been told that soldiers can go through basic training and every kind of preparation, school, physical and mental training and every pep talk and motivational speech the military can provide for them but they will still never be prepared for combat...until they see combat. Nothing can prepare you or prove that you are ready for combat until you are there and not everybody is able to handle it.

Ben works on airplanes and he told me that when they get a certain type of airplane ready for production, they take one of them and test it on some kind of big machine that shakes it and puts pressure on it and simulates all the stresses of air travel. That helps them to know if any bolts are going to come loose or if under pressure something is going to happen that they didn't plan on. But nothing proves that airplane is safe and effective until a test pilot flies it and puts it through some live tests and those tests are difficult but they prove the plane's stability. So, if I ask you if you have faith, what would you say? Of course, you would say you have faith, right? But God tests us to prove that faith. And your faith is for your benefit, the benefit of others and for God's glory. God wants all that to happen so you can expect God to give you plenty of opportunities to prove that faith. Before this happened, if you had asked Abe if he had faith, I'm sure he

would say he did. He could have pointed to the fact that it was already said of him in **Genesis 15:6** that he believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. But after this, he didn't have to say anything. Nobody would ask that question because it was obvious by how he and Isaac both reacted to being tested.

James 2 in the New Testament says, *"21Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 23And the scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,' and he was called God's friend. 24You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone."* Scripture was proven to be true. Abraham and Isaac were both proven to have faith and God was proven to provide through this one test. That is a situation with "God" written all over it. Yes, it was difficult. But in one test, God proved His word was true, His servants were faithful and He would provide AND prove another scripture that people have a hard time understanding in **Romans 8:28** that says that God causes all things to work together for the Christian's good. This difficult test proved to be for the good of Abe, Isaac and every believer from then until now. And isn't that just like God? When God says He will provide, He provides more than we could ever ask or imagine, especially when you go through a test and make it to the other side in faith. So many times, when it looks like God is taking away just what we always wanted, he provides something for us that is so much better. How many of you can testify to that?

I heard the story of a little girl that loved to wear her mother's pearl necklace. Her mother would put it on her sometimes and let her wear it in front of the mirror for a few minutes but they were, of course, too valuable to let her wear all the time. But that little girl just thought those pearls were the most beautiful thing she had ever seen and thought when she grew up, she wanted to wear pearls like her mama. Then one day, while the girl was playing outside, she found a cheap strand of fake, plastic pearls. They were made in China and not the right color and the string was even broken. But the little girl didn't care. She took them inside and cleaned them up and tied the string back together and she wore those pearls everywhere. She never took them off. She thought she now looked just like her mama and she was quite the little miss thang, you know? She was so proud! But then one day, her mama came to her and asked for the little girl's necklace. The girl asked "Why?" but her mama just asked again. The girl was confused. She couldn't understand why her mama would take the necklace from her. She was so proud of it and now they looked alike. Why would she ask for her necklace when she had one of her own? She cried and cried and just refused and her mother kept asking. This went on for awhile and finally it was bedtime. The little girl went to bed but couldn't sleep thinking of how pretty she looked and why her mother would be so mean to take away her pearls. But the longer she laid there, the more she knew what she had to do. So, she went to her mama in the middle of the night and through tears in her eyes, gave her the prized necklace. And you know what happened, right? The mother opened up her own jewelry box, pulled out the real pearls and put them around her daughter's neck. And everybody was happy.

For those of you that have been tested by God, you can attest to God's provision after the test. You can now see that what was horrible, He turned for your good. You can see that what Satan wanted to use for your undoing, God used for your good. You can see, like Joseph saw later in Genesis, that what your enemies intended for your harm, God intended for your good and for the benefit of those around you. (Genesis 50:20) You knew it with your mind before that God provides but now **you know** that **you know** that God provides and when He provides, He provides more than we could ever ask or imagine. (Ephesians 3:20)

God may take something away that is good so He can give you His best. It may be painful. It may be your wife, your job and your church and those might not be bad things but not what God wants for you. They may not be the best for you and God wants what is best for you and all you have to do is be obedient.

Isaac had heard his father talk about God's provision and God's promise and how he, Isaac, was the fulfillment of that promise. He knew that God provided. He would say that he had faith in God and faith in his father but it wasn't until Isaac was tested that he really knew it. Abraham and Isaac were both like privates fresh out of boot camp before this. They knew what they were supposed to do but they had not been tested.

Look back to **verse 12**. *"Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."* "Now I know", God says. And that doesn't mean that God didn't know before. God wasn't on the sidelines biting His nails hoping that Abe and Isaac would do the right thing but He wasn't sure. He knew it. He just wanted Abe and Isaac to prove it; prove it to themselves and to God and to everybody watching.

And what is it that God knows? God knows that they feared God. They obeyed because they feared God. That word "fear" in Hebrew is "yare" (yaw-ray) and it means to stand in awe of and to show the respect due. It means to revere and worship.

I have a niece who is deathly afraid of clowns. She can't stand them, doesn't want to look at them or even see a picture of them. Clowns are not a laughing matter to her. She hates them. I don't know why. But that's not the picture here of yare fear.

The fear of the Lord is knowing that God gives and God takes away. He is sovereign, all-powerful, and all-knowing. He can bless you with long life or stop your beating heart with a thought. When you know God you will fear God. You aren't scared of Him but you understand His power and you don't want any part of His wrath. When you know God, you are obedient to God and when you are obedient to God, God provides everything you need.

Abraham knew God as the God Who provides. That's what he called the place where they were in **verse 14**. We would translate that verse from the Hebrew as, *"So Abraham called that place (Jehovah-Jireh). And to this day it is said, 'On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.'"* Jehovah-Jireh means the God that provides or even the God that makes it happen. I like that.

God will test you. It will be difficult. You may lose friends, family, job, stuff, health, money, contentment or a string of pearls but all we have to do is be obedient. All we have to do is make God look good in our lives. Fear Him. Revere Him. Worship Him even when it is hard and you watch God provide. You watch God reward you.

But just like me trying to take a French test, you can't go through God's test or Satan's temptations by yourself. But even there, God provides. God has provided His Word. He has provided His Spirit to live inside you. He has provided His bride, the church, to comfort you and support you and hold you accountable. He has provided everything you need. All you have to do is be obedient.

Do you know God today? Do you really know Him or just know of Him? Do you believe **in** Him or really just believe Him? There is a big difference. You can know Him and believe Him and He wants you to and He wants to bless you. But you have to give Him everything that is you. Give Him your faith, your dreams, your future, your health, your finances and your very life and He will provide.

He provided His Son for you. Just like Abraham was willing to do, God did. Oh, the parallels between God the Father and His Son Jesus with Father Abraham and his son Isaac are staggering and maybe we will see some of that tonight but all you need to know right now is that God provided His Son as the perfect sacrifice to pay the price the Father said was due for your sins. It is a price you can only pay with death in Hell forever but Jesus paid the price for you and all you have to do is believe. When you do, you can be Teacher's pet like the rest of us. Do that right now as the music plays.