

WEEK 5

Some Questions to Reflect on Before Reading the Text

- What was the hardest test you ever had to take? What's your feeling about taking tests?
- What are the most difficult subjects for parents & children to discuss with each other? Why?

Reading: Genesis 22:1-19

The Command to Sacrifice Isaac

22 After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, 'Abraham!' & he said, 'Here I am.'² He said, 'Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, & go to the land of Moriah, & offer him there as a burnt-offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you.'³ So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, & took two of his young men with him, & his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt-offering, & set out & went to the place in the distance that God had shown him.⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up & saw the place far away.⁵ Then Abraham said to his young men, 'Stay here with the donkey; the boy & I will go over there; we will worship, & then we will come back to you.'⁶ Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering & laid it on his son Isaac, & he himself carried the fire & the knife. So the two of them walked on together.⁷ Isaac said to his father Abraham, 'Father!' & he said, 'Here I am, my son.' He said, 'The fire & the wood are here, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?'⁸ Abraham said, 'God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son.' So the two of them walked on together.

9 When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there & laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, & laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out his hand & took the knife to kill his son.¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, & said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' & he said, 'Here I am.'¹² He said, 'Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.'¹³ & Abraham looked up & saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went & took the ram & offered it up as a burnt-offering instead of his son.¹⁴ So Abraham called that place 'The LORD will provide'; as it is said to this day, 'On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.'

15 The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven,¹⁶ & said, ‘By myself I have sworn, says the LORD: Because you have done this, & have not withheld your son, your only son,¹⁷ I will indeed bless you, & I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven & as the sand that is on the seashore. & your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies,¹⁸ & by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.’¹⁹ So Abraham returned to his young men, & they arose & went together to Beer-sheba; & Abraham lived at Beer-sheba.

After reading the text, you may wish to consider the following:

Choose questions according to your interest & time

- Do you see any similarities between 12:1 & 22:2? What other similarities can you find between the account of God’s calling Abraham in 12:1-9 & the account of the binding of Isaac in 22:1-19? The similarities suggest that the two incidents are linked. What meanings emerge from viewing the two incidents together?
- Compare 21:14 with 22:3. What are the similarities? In what way is this session’s reading similar to the account about Ishmael in 21:8-21? In what way does 21:8-21 deepen the meaning of this session’s reading?
- Find all the instances in which Isaac is called “*my son*” or is referred to as “*your son.*” How do these uses of son affect the story?
- Compare Abraham’s behaviour in this situation with his behaviour in earlier situations (e.g. 12:1-4; 21:12-14). When we put these incidents together, what overall picture of Abraham emerges?

After session 5, you may wish to consider the following

Questions for Application

- What do you think Abraham was thinking as he travelled for three days to Moriah & then walked up the mountain with Isaac?
- To what extent does faith in God involve trusting him in the dark, believing in him when we cannot understand his ways? When have you experienced the challenge to trust God?
- In what ways do all parents have to let go of their children?
- How might this incident have affected Isaac's relationship with his father?
- At what points in life have you become aware that you & all you have belong ultimately to God?
- Why do you love God? How can you tell whether you love him for his gifts only or for himself? How can a person grow in love for God?