

# SERMON GUIDE

## The Testing of Abraham

### Genesis 22



#### SERMON NOTES

Today, I'm going to give you a theological test.

#### 1. What is the doctrine of sola fide?

**A) Salvation by faith alone, apart from works**

B) Salvation by a combination of faith and works

C) The belief that God's grace comes through the sacraments

D) The assurance of salvation based on human goodness

#### 2. In the doctrine of the Trinity, which of the following statements is correct?

A) God is one person who manifests in three different forms

**B) God is one in essence, existing as three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**

C) The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three separate gods

D) Jesus is the only true God, and the Father and Holy Spirit are lesser beings

#### 3. What does the doctrine of original sin teach?

A) Humanity is born in a state of moral neutrality

B) Sin entered the world only through individual choices, not through Adam

**C) All humans inherit a sinful nature due to Adam's disobedience**

D) Sin exists but has no effect on human nature

#### 4. Which of the following is not a key attribute of God's nature in classical theology?

A) Omnipotence (all-powerful)

B) Omniscience (all-knowing)

**C) Omnivorence (all-consuming)**

D) Omnipresence (present everywhere)

#### 5. Which statement best captures the doctrine of justification?

**A) We are made righteous through God's grace alone, by faith, apart from works**

- B) We are made righteous only through our good works and obedience to the law
- C) We achieve righteousness by obeying the sacraments of the Church
- D) Justification is a result of human moral improvement alone

**6. What is the theological term for God's unearned, undeserved favor towards humanity?**

- A) Mercy
- B) Grace**
- C) Justice
- D) Providence

**7. In Reformed theology, what is sanctification?**

- A) The initial moment of being declared righteous before God
- B) A ceremonial rite performed in the church
- C) The eternal state of perfection achieved after death
- D) The process of being made holy and conforming to Christ's image**

**8. What is the primary role of the Holy Spirit according to Christian theology?**

- A) To replace the Father and Son in the life of believers
- B) To dwell within believers, guiding, teaching, and sanctifying them**
- C) To primarily perform signs and wonders as proof of faith
- D) To condemn sinners without offering grace

9. What do baptism and communion (the Lord's Supper) signify?

- A) Baptism symbolizes personal commitment, while communion represents communal unity
- B) Baptism and communion are symbols of our participation in Christ's death and resurrection**
- C) Baptism is a sign of spiritual maturity, and communion is a symbol of prosperity
- D) Baptism and communion are symbolic only of individual piety

I hope you all did well on the test. Your faith was just tested. However, today we're looking at a different way our faith is tested in this life and we're going to look at the reasons why God does it.

**Exegesis**

**Genesis 22:1-24 – After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.” And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. And Isaac said to his father Abraham, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” He said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” Abraham said, “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So they went both of them together. When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.” And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, “The Lord will provide”; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.” And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.” So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba. And Abraham lived at Beersheba. Now after these things it was told to Abraham, “Behold, Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: Uz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram, Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel.” (Bethuel fathered Rebekah.) These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham’s brother. Moreover, his concubine, whose name was Reumah, bore Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.**

This is a dramatic scene. As a reader of this story/account, we've been waiting for God to fulfill this promise to give Abraham and Sara a son. It's been years of anticipation, struggles, and doubts. But in the last chapter, we finally see Sarah conceive and has Issac. We are relieved. The promise is fulfilled. God did what He promised. Then, in the very next chapter (our passage today), we read that God tells Abraham to go and sacrifice Issac. In Genesis 21, we see Abraham trust God with the fate of his son, Ishmael. God has plans for Ishmael, but the promised son, the heir, is Isaac. So Abraham sends Hagar and Ishmael away. Now we get to our passage today and he is told to do something similar to Isaac. Once again Abraham's faith is going to be put to the test.

The first verse of this passage tells us that God is about to test Abraham. God tests Abraham by telling him--without giving him any indication that Isaac would be spared or that it was a test--to go sacrifice his son, Issac. When you hear the word "test," do not equate it with temptation. This isn't a temptation. This is a test. Like an exam given by a school or teacher to measure your competence of a subject or concept, God is giving Abraham a test to see what his faith is. One of the statements that catches your attention is when he says, "your only son." You think, "but Ishmael is his son." Yes, but this is his only son from Sarah, and it is the only son connected to the promise of making Abraham a great nation. This is the promised son.

The LORD tells Abraham to take Isaac to Mt. Moriah. Moriah will later become the location of Solomon's Temple in the heart of Jerusalem. In fact, the tradition has it that the Temple mount, the place where sacrifices would be made, was located at the place where God foreshadowed sacrifice in the story of Abraham and Isaac. And obviously, the sacrifice of animals for the atonement of sins all foreshadowed the coming of Christ, the Lamb of God, who would save His people from their sins.

Abraham rose early and left with his servants, supplies, and Isaac. This mirrors the last story where Abraham rose early and packed up Ishmael and Hagar. This is a test of faith.

There are a few things worth mentioning quickly here:

First, YHWH (the Living God) is not a God who asks for human sacrifice. Unlike neighboring nations, the God of Abraham doesn't require human sacrifice. So this should catch our attention in this story when He does.

Second, this threatens to undermine the very promise that God made to Abraham. This act, if carried out, would make God's promise a lie (and God is not a liar). It's not that God simply promises Abraham the experience of having a son with Sarah. It's that this son will be the heir and the line from which God will build Abraham into a great nation. He can't die on a mountain, and this be fulfilled.

So as readers, there is tension. And if we experience the tension, imagine Abraham's feelings.

Abraham acts in obedience. We don't see him question God or delay actions. He packs up and heads out. It's not a short walk. It's a multi-day walk. When they reach a place where the mountain becomes visible, Abraham leaves his servants back and takes Isaac up the mountain. Isaac questions aloud where the sacrifice is. Abraham, like a calm father, trusting God, says, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering."

When they reached the place for the sacrifice, Abraham built the altar and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac. We have no insight into what Isaac is saying or Abraham is saying, but we know as Abraham reaches for the knife to do as he was told, an angel of the LORD calls to him and stops him. And the angel of the LORD says, "now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." When Abraham lifts his eyes and looks, he sees a ram caught in a thicket by his horns. This is not the unluckiest ram in the history of the world or luck for God. This is evidence that God provides the ram, and literally directs the ram to the thicket, as seen in what Abraham names the place: "The LORD will provide."

After this, God calls to Abraham again and reaffirms His covenant with him. Another reminder to Abraham of God's promise and His commitment to fulfill it. Abraham's offspring will number more than the stars or the sand on the shore. All the nations of the earth will be blessed because Abraham obeyed God's voice. How? Because through Abraham, Jesus Christ would come. The Messiah of Israel would become the light of the Gentiles. It is through Jesus that every nation, tribe, and tongue would be reconciled to God. Through Abraham the redemption of the world would come.

In fact, this story is in many ways a foreshadow of what would take place on that same hill 2,000 years later. Like Abraham, God would take His Son up a hill, and they would lay him on the wood to kill Him. But in the case of Jesus, unlike the case of Isaac, His father would not stay His hand. It would come down as an act of judgment against sin.

### **Application**

Have you ever thought about getting a grade for your faith? Rather than seeing that grade as a permanent fixture hanging above you, you should see it as a grade that is constantly being assessed as you go moment-by-moment throughout your day. When we stop to think about God testing our faith, we must remember that it's not so He can find out what is going on. He doesn't need to test us for His sake. The testing is for our sake.

In this passage, Jesus tells them a test is coming. He could stop what Satan is going to do, but this is a test. In fact, He graciously tells them it is a test so that they see it as such. It is meant to strengthen them and encourage them.

### **Let me show you some things the LORD is doing when we are tested:**

1. Testing matures and strengthens our faith
2. Testing creates greater dependence on God
3. Testing reveals to us what the condition of our hearts and faith are
4. Testing prepares us for future callings and responsibilities
  - a. David endured testing as he awaited his placement as king
  - b. Moses endured testing
  - c. Jesus tests His disciples
5. Testing refines us for God's glory

What should we do if we have experienced testing and failed? Maybe we faced a trial and questioned God's goodness or faithfulness. Maybe we experienced criticism or risk of rejection for our faith and it muzzled us. Maybe we crossed a line we knew was sin (with a boyfriend or girlfriend, an ethical dilemma at work, or something else). What do we do when we recognize we failed a test? We confess it before the Lord, repent, and follow Him. Don't believe the lie from Satan that would tell you it's too

late or that you're not welcome home. Judas believed that. It wasn't true. Peter denied Christ too, but instead of going the route of Judas, he repented. We can, and should, do the same. Testing comes from the Lord. He has purposes in it. Even failures can prepare us for future success. Peter would deny Christ on the eve of His crucifixion, but one day Peter himself would be crucified because he refused to deny Christ again. He passed the test. We can turn again as well if we fail to pass the test. The grace of Christ restores those who have failed.



## LOOK BACK

- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you grow in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you go to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?
- What is a sin you have been struggling with that you need to repent of?



## LOOK UP

- **REVIEW**

- Review the theological questions in the beginning of the manuscript.
- Read Genesis 22 and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different version.
- Additional Scripture
  - Deuteronomy 8:2
  - Matthew 6:5-6
  - James 1:2-4
  - 1 Peter 1:6-7
  - Revelation 2:10
- What big takeaways did you have from the sermon?
  - What did this teach you about God?
  - What did this teach you about man?
  - What did this teach you about salvation?

- **REFLECT**

- Discuss the many ways that this story reflects the Father sacrificing the Son on the cross.
- What does this passage reveal about the nature of faith and obedience in Abraham's relationship with God?
- How might Abraham's emotions have played a role in his journey with Isaac to the altar?

- What significance does the "ram in the thicket" hold in this story? How might it prefigure later themes in the Bible?
- What can we learn from Isaac's role in the story? How does his willingness to participate mirror or differ from Abraham's faith?
- How might this story shape our understanding of "covenant" and "promise"?
- What do you think the phrase "God will provide" (v. 8) means in this context and in a broader theological sense?
- **RESPOND**
  - What is a practical step you can take as a result of this sermon?
- **MEMORIZE**
  - **John 4:27 – *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.***



- **BUILD UP:** How will you grow in your love and knowledge of the Lord this week? We have several discipleship opportunities for you to participate in.
  - **MDWK** is a time of education and growth in order to build up the Journey Church body. We offer a handful of intentionally chosen classes that cover a broad range of topics and are taught by quality teachers from within our congregation. Classes are at 6:30p every Wednesday. Contact Morgan Cates ([morgan@tjclive.com](mailto:morgan@tjclive.com)) for more information.
  - **TJC Women** seeks to equip women to be rooted in the Word of God and bold in their faith. Our events and small groups focus on letting the gospel shape all spheres of our lives. Gather is the first Saturday of every month. Contact Laura DiLeonardi ([laura@tjclive.com](mailto:laura@tjclive.com)) for more information.
  - **TJC Men** exists to equip men to show Jesus as incomparably glorious in every sphere of their lives. The men's ministry meets on the 2nd Saturday of every month at 8:00a in the student center. Contact Morgan Cates ([morgan@tjclive.com](mailto:morgan@tjclive.com)) for more information.
  - **TJC Students** is passionate to see every parent equipped, every leader developed, and every student disciplined into baptized, self-feeding, disciple making followers of Jesus who are letting the gospel shape every sphere of their lives. Our student ministry meets on Wednesday nights from 6:00p-7:30p for MDWK worship and Sunday mornings at 8:30a and 10:00a for small group. Contact Larry Davis ([larry@tjclive.com](mailto:larry@tjclive.com)) for more information.
  - **TJC Kids** believes that the Gospel saves, sanctifies, gathers and sends. It is our desire to see our kids understand that the Gospel truly does change everything and we will do this primarily by teaching our kids to love Jesus, showing them they can have fun in the process, and making sure they stay safe. Contact Nick Judd ([nick@tjclive.com](mailto:nick@tjclive.com)) for more information.



- **TJC Young Adults** exists to equip young adults ages 18 to 29 in becoming passionate followers of Jesus who enter their life in Christ. We do this through intentional relationships, fellowship, and worship centered around the gospel. The Fount meets Tuesdays at 7:00p. Contact Hunter Christian (hunter@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **SEND OUT:** Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear this story, your story, or the gospel? We have several opportunities for local and international missions.
  - **For the City:** Acts 1:8 calls us to be engaged where we live and among the nations. The people of TJC seek to bring truth, grace, and hope to Lebanon and the surrounding area by mobilizing the church to be salt and light, not only for the city, but for your city. Take part in faithfully and obediently using your gifts to declare God's glory among those who are hopeless living among you today. Contact Jeff Long (jeff@tjclive.com) for more information.
  - **For the Nations:** At TJC we exist to show Jesus as incomparably glorious to Lebanon and beyond. We are ambitious and passionate about strategically taking an active role in finishing the Great Commission as we actively pursue the unreached peoples of the world by mobilizing the entire church to pray, send, go and welcome international friends among us. Contact Shawn Casto (shawn@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **PRAYER**
  - **Pray over any request from your group members.**
  - **Pray for our directional elders:** Matt Espenshade (Executive Pastor)
  - **Pray for our replanters:** Gracepoint Church
  - **Pray for our short-term teams:**
    - Europe Team departing on November 1, 2024
    - Central Asia Team departing on March 7, 2025
    - Southeast Asia Team departing on March 7, 2025
    - Europe Team departing on March 21, 2025
    - Southeast Asia Team #2 departing on April 25, 2025
  - **Pray for our long-term units on the field:**
    - The Wilsons
    - The Grays
    - The Starks
  - **Pray for the unreached.** Want to keep up with Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>