

If you doubt the value of such an extraordinary and seemingly inhumane test, then look at the results. God was perfectly faithful, providing at the exact moment precisely what was needed. And Abraham was proven faithful. History will forever carry an amazing testimony of man's faith and God's faithfulness. And Abraham will always be to us the measure of what faith is all about, encouraging us to believe God in the darkest trials and most challenging tests.

It was a test worth taking, and so are yours.

Testing

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After these things, God tested Abraham.

(Genesis 22:1)

God is ruthlessly interested in your faith. He will use everything at His disposal to develop you into a person who trusts Him. He knows that your life, the life and salvation of those around you, and His glory are all at stake. He knows that you will miss everything essential if you become a person who will not trust Him—a trust manifested by instant obedience to His leadership.



He

One of the tools in His arsenal of loving development is testing. Many people recoil at this idea. “How could a loving God do such a thing? It’s not possible that He would allow or cause circumstances to come upon us just to test us!”

Really? If you knew that your son or daughter could only be developed by such tests and that those tests were absolutely essential to their best interest, would you use the same method? If you wouldn't, you would actually be harming them—unwilling to make the hard choices that would prepare them for a life that will call for the character only testing produces.

God tested Abraham. And this test was one of the most excruciating ever recorded in human history.

“Abraham,” God said as He called him personally, by name.

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“Here am I,” was Abraham’s faithful response. I am here, I am waiting, I am ready for the next step in the unfolding journey of faith you have for me.

“Take your son,” the one possession he had that was uniquely his. Isaac had come from Abraham’s very body. If ever there was something that Abraham could have clung to saying, “No, this is mine. I have the sole rights to this,” it was Isaac. God tested him at the level of his most clear possession.

“Your only son,” God said next. Isaac was not only Abraham’s most precious possession, he was the *only* son Abraham had. He did not have multiple sons with Sarah, only Isaac. This was compounded by the fact that Abraham knew the unique place that Isaac held as the lynch pin to all the promises of God. The covenant God had made hinged on the life and health of this boy. Yet it was here—with this *only* son—that God threw his test at Abraham.

“The son . . . whom you love” Abraham’s passion, highlighted here by God, was the greatest reason this was the ultimate test. There are things that we have that we do not love. To surrender them to God is no test at all. But the things we cherish and adore and value—for God to put His hand to these calls to us at the deepest level of trust. And there was nothing Abraham loved more than his son.

“And offer him as a burnt offering on the mountains I will tell you.” We read this phrase with little emotion because we’ve heard it routinely. But imagine this moment. Strip off your familiarity with this account and it will take your breath away. Place Abraham’s robe upon yourself and hear God calling you to take *your* son, your *only* son, the son whom you *love* and place him on an altar, cut his throat and burn him as a sacrifice.

And before you react in horror towards God, add one more log to the fire of your concerns: The Bible, written inerrantly by God Himself, describes this as a “test.” It was a specific action, orchestrated directly by God to see what was in Abraham’s faith and develop him into a man of uncompromising confidence in his Father.

James would later explain to us why this method of God’s is so essential.

*Count it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the **testing** of your faith produces endurance [i.e. faith stretched out, faith that will stand fast]. **But let that test have its complete result** [i.e., run its full course, do everything it was designed to do in you] **so that you will be perfect and complete**” (James 1:2-3)*

*Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trials, for after he has passed the **test** he will receive the crown of life.”* (James 1:12)

Why did Abraham not get upset at God for originating such an excruciating test, and how can we avoid such frustration ourselves?

Abraham was humble. “Here am I,” he says twice in this passage. Abraham knew that God was the Creator with the absolute right to do anything He desired with that which He had made. This large and proper view of God kept him from the pride that makes man think he’s imposed upon when God takes him through difficult waters.

Abraham knew something. He was no novice. He had been through this drill more than once and every time he cooperated with God he discovered that the tests were completely purposeful. With each test the circumference of Abraham’s faith expanded, preparing him for increasing faith in his journey to rightness and usefulness. God would always prove faithful and provide what was necessary. In short, Abraham knew God could be trusted. And so we see no resistance.

The depth of Abraham’s confidence in God is indicated by the lack of questions. *“So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac.”* We have no record of Abraham’s thoughts, fears, or concerns. What we do see is his immediate obedience. History records his faith, emphasized by rising up “early” to obey his Father.