

Sermon Series: The Courage to Be...
Sermon Title: "The Courage to Choose"
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Genesis 22: 1-14

1 After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 2 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 that I shall show you." 3 So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt offering and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him. 4 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away. 5 Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the boy and I will go over there; we will worship, and then we will come back to you." 6 Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. And the two of them walked on together. 7 Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "The fire and 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." And the two of them walked on together.

9 When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. 10 Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill[a] his son. 11 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And 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 And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called that place "The LORD will provide,"[b] as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided."[c]

Summary and Commentary

This is a well-known passage in the Hebrew Bible. Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son in obedience to God's command has traditionally been used as an example of Abraham's faithful obedience to God, even to the point where he was willing to sacrifice his only son. If one, however, views it through one's own reason and lived experience, the text raises some questions and concerns. Abraham's faithfulness to God came at the expense of Isaac who though he ultimately survived, had to live with the trauma of having been tied down, laid on top of wood as his own father wielded a knife in his hand ready to kill him. Isaac would have to live with the fact that Abraham's obedience to God came at Isaac's expense.

When viewed through a lens of suspicion, we must look at this narrative in a different way, one that is consistent with who we know our loving God to be. It is not within the character of God to lead a father to harm his own son. So perhaps the real test is a set-up to determine if Abraham is really in tune with God's voice. Perhaps Abraham's desire for God to "make of him a great nation," his own personal ambition, was so great that he was even willing to respond to a voice that was clearly inconsistent with God's character.

We need to deconstruct any voice that allows us to oppress others, especially our children, as being God's voice. Our youth believe in the God we show them through our own actions. And if we are not in

tune with the authentic voice of God, one that speaks in ways that is consistent with God's character, we will act in ways that harm our children and say that God told us to. We need to ensure that our own ambitions, our own need to be "great" don't come at the expense of others. You can have the desires of your own heart without hurting others. And, if you have been, like Isaac, the victim of an "Abraham-like" ambition which caused you harm, as you heal from your wounds, you must offer grace to him or her because they were acting out of their own hurt from being wounded.

Reflection Questions

1. What is your traditional understanding of this text based on how you've heard it taught or preached?
2. Do the lens of suspicion or your own reasoning and experience allow you to see this passage differently?
3. Describe a person from your childhood church experience who shaped your understanding of who God is in a negative or positive way.
4. What traumas have you experienced that were done in "God's name?"
5. What harm have you inflicted upon others in order to pursue your own ambitions?
6. How can the church offer support, healing and grace to those who have been wounded and those who have wounded others?