

## Session 1

March 4, 2018

### OUR PROVIDER

Genesis 22:1-14

The story of Abraham and Isaac is rich with significance. As the drama plays out, you can't help but see the foreshadowing of God's drama of redemption: the climb up the mountain, an altar erected, a loving Father willing to sacrifice His only begotten Son. Abraham certainly made his share of mistakes; yet through his life's journey, he became the symbol of great faith. This story provides some notable lessons about trusting God.

**Faith believes that God leads (vv. 1-2).** You may recall that Abraham's initial call from God in Genesis 12 involves leaving where he is and going to a "land that I will show you." Again in this passage, he is directed to go to "one of the mountains I will tell you about." How strange that sounds to us, who are so used to having a plan all worked out before we embark. But Abraham has learned that God knows the end as well as the beginning, and provides us with exactly what we need, exactly when we need it. Not having all the answers up front is not a way for God to "adjust" his plan as He goes (God never changes!), but rather enables us to adjust *our* plan—as well as our thinking—as we go.

**Faith still requires work (vv. 3-6).** Let me be clear: faith does not incorporate works into *salvation*. But the presence of faith never negates the necessity to act (after all, I believe God will keep me safe...but I still lock my doors at night!). James reminds us that faith that does not manifest itself in works is not faith at all (see James 2:26). Here, Abraham's faith is backed by his efforts. God will test him (v. 1), yet Abraham provides the ingredients. He gathers supplies, he splits his wood, he saddles his donkey, he leads his son, he walks the path that God has appointed.

**Faith leaves room for God to work (vv. 7-8).** We tend to see Abraham as stoic and resigned to Isaac's fate, but I doubt that was the case. Abraham knows God's requirement, but there are a lot of details he likely did not know. Isaac was confident that his wise father had all the answers, but Abraham's replies are brief and God-focused. Abraham has no doubts...but nor does he have all the answers. The good news, is that Abraham didn't *need* all the answers! Faith trusts that God is in charge...and He knows what He is doing...even if we don't.

**Faith is founded on God's promises (vv. 11-12).** Contrary to some popular teaching, faith is not blind, neither is it a "leap." Our faith in God is based on the faithfulness of God to us. This story would be a story solely testing Abraham's *obedience*, if it were not for the commentary given to us in Hebrews 11: "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac. He received the promises and he was offering his unique son, the one it had been said about, 'Your seed will be traced through Isaac.' He considered God to be able even to raise someone from the dead, and as an illustration, he received him back." In other words, Abraham had been promised a nation through Isaac. If God required Isaac's death, then He would surely raise him back to life. He promised it...and God cannot lie. The claim to his waiting servants that "we" will go over there and worship, and "we" will return (v. 5) is evidence of Abraham's confidence in God's promise.

**Faith knows that God will provide (vv. 13-14).** It would be incorrect to assume that Abraham knew all along about the ram caught in the thicket. But Abraham was correct in his claim that "God will provide." The essence of faith is not trusting in a promise, but rather trusting in the One who made the promise. While Abraham may not have known the exact nature of the sacrifice God would make, he trusted that God would provide one...and indeed He did.