Faith – Genesis 22:1-12

What is the most important quality of living the Christian life? *Galatians 5:22* says the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience.

Jesus said in *Matthew 13:35* "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." So is love the most important quality of a Christian life? After all *John 3:16* says that God so loved the world. *Matthew 13:34* where Jesus said, "love one another; as I have loved you." *Mark 12:30* Jesus said, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. Jesus was quoting *Deuteronomy 6:5*.

James 1:3 says, "...knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience." So is it endurance or faith? Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, Hebrews 10:38 all teach us about the importance of faith because each of these verse say, "The just shall live by faith." Hebrews 11:16 says this about faith, "without faith it is impossible to please God."

Of all that Jesus taught His disciples it seems that faith was the most important lesson. Jesus never reprimanded His disciples for not understanding Him, or failing to show charity and love; however, on several occasions Jesus did reprimand His disciples for having little faith. Faith is not only essential to the Christian life, but the Christian life is a life of faith. In *Romans 4:12*, Abraham is called, "the father of faith." How did Abraham get that title?

God made a covenant with Abraham 50 years prior to the time of this story. God promised to make him a great nation, however, Abraham had no children. In chapter 15 of Genesis God told Abraham look up at the stars and God promised "so shall your descendants be." Yet, another 25 years go by before Abraham and Sarah have a child. They named him Isaac, and his name means laughter. Now, another 30 years go by and God told Abraham to take Isaac, his only son and to offer him as a burnt offering.

Vs.2 – Abraham must be experiencing very high emotions at this point. In reality, words could not describe what Abraham was feeling.

Vs. 6-8 – Abraham has been reflecting for 3 days on what God told him to do, and now he and Isaac are starting up the mountain where Abraham will, in obedience, follow through with the sacrifice as instructed by God. Notice Abraham's answer to Isaac his son's question, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering."

Healthy fear of God is – to not want to displease God. In all likelihood that is Abraham's position in his fear of God.

Principle #1 – God pursues our deep transformation

The Hebrews word "test" means "to prove" or "try" or "give the occasion for development." This is a new place of faith for Abraham, he didn't know it was a test. There will be times when we do not know what God is doing. Those times will be a part of our deep transformation.

God gave Abraham instructions one step at a time, but did not give the purpose or answers to his questions until the very end. When it comes to living by faith God does not always give us the final step. The lesson here is - a full understanding is not necessary for full obedience.

God had been preparing Abraham through even past failures to prepare him for greater testing and tasks. God prepares us for the future by current testing and growth. No matter how many failures, no time is truly wasted because past failures prepare us for future testing.

The normal Christian life is a life of testing. In *Proverbs 17:3* the Word teaches us, "The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, But the LORD tests the hearts." It is God doing something in the testing and trials and working in us building our faith, and the genuineness of our faith is proven through the test and trials.

Another lesson from Abraham that is applicable to us is that true faith is of great worth in the eyes of God. The focal point in the story is not the danger to Isaac, but the danger to Abraham in his relationship to God. It is the same for us; will we be proven faithful?

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Principle #2 – God is faithful to His character and not to meeting our expectations

Do we prefer a "god" we can manage, control, and predict? There will be times in our life when we are confused and bewildered by the activity of God in our life. As long as we are a followers of God He will allow events in our life to shape and test us and develop our character and faith.

God is committed to testing us because He knows what matters most, and that is, our faith is growing and we are becoming who are to be.

Application:

Since God is faithful to His character and not to meeting our expectations, do I want my answer to a prayer more than I want God or God's answer? How will I pray differently? What will I do to stay focused on the fact that God's tests are for growing my faith?

Principle #3 – Faith is letting go of everything but God

Trusting God sometimes means to live by faith without immediate answers. Most of the prayers recorded in the New Testament are <u>not</u> circumstantial, but rather "God help me trust You." <u>Example</u>: *Acts 4:29*, "*Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word.*"

What will help us trust God is what we don't want to ask for ... faith to trust Him.

Hebrews 11:17-19, "17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called, 19 concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead," Hebrews 11:19, "concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead." Abraham "concluded" that God could raise him up from the dead. "Concluded" is a thinking word. Abraham had to do some thinking to "conclude."

What does it look like for us to let go of everything and trust God? It means, "God help me trust You without answers. Lord, help me want you more than I want resolutions, or answers to the problems." Faith is letting go of everything and trusting God totally.

Abraham Points to a Greater Father

Isaac	Jesus
Isaac is a child of the promise	Jesus is the seed promised in <i>Genesis 3:15</i>
Isaac was supernatural conceived	Jesus was supernaturally conceived <i>Matthew 1:18</i>
Isaac was the first born and only son	Jesus was the first born and only son of God <i>John 3:16</i>
Isaac is the personification of the sacrifice	Jesus was the sacrifice <i>Hebrews 10:12</i>
Isaac was a willing participant as the sacrifice	Jesus was a willing participant as the sacrifice <i>John 10:18</i>
Isaac carried the wood up the hill	Jesus would carry a wooden cross John 19:17

If Isaac represents Jesus, Abraham could represent the Father. The gravity and weight of Abraham willing to sacrifice his son is a reflection of the gravity and weight it will cost God to offer his only son. *Romans 8:32*, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." God looks at us with so much love that He did not spare his own son in order to bring us into his family and have a relationship with us.

Application:

Have I made a true confession of faith acknowledging Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and Lord of all my life? If not, today is the day of salvation.

How might God be inviting you to "let go of everything but God? What would that look like in your life? What changes need to occur in your faith for that to become a reality?