

Do You Love Me More Than These?

We often think of the events of Abraham and Isaac, when Abraham was asked by God to sacrifice his only son, as a faith-test only.

It certainly was a test of faith, as we're told not only in Genesis 22, but also in Hebrews 11.

Let's first read these passages to make sure everyone is familiar with what happened.

Gen 22:1-18 *Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 2 He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you." 3 So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.*

4 On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. 5 Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you." 6 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 the two of them walked on together.

7 Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" 8 Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together. 9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and

arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

*10 Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay 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 stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; **for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.**"*

13 Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. 14 Abraham called the name of that place The Lord Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the Lord it will be provided."

15 Then the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven,

*16 and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, **because you have obeyed My voice.**"*

And Hebrews 11 gives us a New Testament commentary on these Old Testament events...

Heb 11:17-19 *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only*

begotten son; 18 it was he to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED." 19 He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

It certainly was a test of faith, yet as we've studied, faith is related to **trust**.

And trust is a matter of the heart.

Now, please follow along with me...

You don't trust someone unless you believe that they love you, at least to some degree.

In this way, faith and love are intimately tied together.

In fact, we might think about FAITH being a question of whether we BELIEVE THE LOVE God has for us.... ala **1Jo 4:16**... both at the moment of salvation, and as we walk with God.

So, from a different perspective...

How about looking at Abraham's test as a test of love, as well?

Our God is a jealous God... right??! So says Holy Scripture.

He loves us fiercely; far beyond what we can comprehend.

And we know this; **He loves us so fiercely** that He gave up His perfect, beloved Son for us!

Just try to grab hold of the fact that God loves **you** that much.

Now, the question from God to us is: **do we honestly appreciate the love He has shown us/ proven to us?**

As we know, Holy Scripture says God tests the hearts and motives of man.

At times in our lives, the Lord will ask us: are we willing to love Him in return, ala **1Jo 4:19**, as **the only One** truly important, as our greatest love??!

God gives us a lot of gracious blessings in this life, right?

He gives us a lot of things we just don't deserve, including people that love us/have loved us.

Arguably, the greatest blessings are those people in our lives who love us or care about us, and people that we love and truly care about.

It may only be a couple of people in your entire life, but those relationships are **precious** to us all.

So, here's the question regarding the blessing of loved ones:

Are those people and those relationships more precious to you than the Lord Himself??

Talk about "where the rubber meets the road"!!

God wants to know; where do your greatest affections lie?

And, "do you love Me more than these?", to borrow from the Lord Jesus.

Before His ascension into Heaven, the Lord asked this of Peter.

In fact, He asked him this question 3 times in a row.

Jn 21:15 *So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, **do you love Me more than these?**"*

In context, Peter was asked to take care of our Lord's sheep.

But are we not ALL asked that question from the Lord?

Do you love Me more than these???

Back to Abraham's test; was he willing to give up his only son for the Lord?

Have you ever thought about the testing of illness and suffering, and even facing death?

I'm sure you have! Life demands it; and some of you are going through it right now!

The truth is, it can't just be ignored, by the grace of God.

Suffering and illness has **many** purposes, from God's perfectly wise point of view.

And we often see suffering, whether in ourselves or others, as a test of faith.

How about looking at it as a test of love??

Jesus demands that we are His first love, or there will be discipline!

Rev 2:4-5 *'But I have this against you, that you have left **your first love**.
5 'Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will **remove** your lampstand out of its place — unless you repent.*

There's our jealous God, once again. He loves us THAT MUCH.

And He has **every right** to be jealous for our love, as the One who laid down His life for us.

That's how fierce His love is for us.

He wants and deserves to be first in our hearts because of the horrible, wonderful sacrifice He made for us.

As we've seen in the past; Jesus said unless we "hate" our father, mother, etc.... even our own life!... we cannot be His disciple. ("Hate" refers to loving less, in comparison to loving God our Creator and Savior)

Lk 14:26 *"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.*

There we see the issue at hand is LOVE.

Whom do we love more? These precious people God has given us? Our "own life"? Or God Himself, the One who gave us all these as gifts?

Do you love the Giver more than the gifts, or the gifts more than the Giver???

If the latter, you may eventually be tested at the proper time for you.

As with Abraham, God was essentially asking "do you love Me more than your son?"

"I know Isaac is the child I promised you. I know you love him terribly, and look forward to your descendents coming from him. And you SHOULD love him terribly. BUT, do you love him more than Me???"

This **should be** a painful question for us; a heart-wrenching question...

... simply because the One asking it died for our eternal salvation!

And the only way to answer the question, truly, is through experience...

... the experience of facing a loss.

We can "say the right thing" all we want, but testing is the only way we'll truly know.

At the right time, we may all have our Abraham/Isaac type of test, although it may vary in type.

And it's not only a test of faith, it's also a test of love.

As we know from 1Co 13, we have been told to **abide** in faith, hope, and love,... and **the greatest of these is love. 1Co 13:13**

We are told to have faith in God.

We are told to have our hope in the Lord alone as our Anchor.

We are also told, ABOVE ALL ELSE, to have love for God, and no one above Him.

No idols before Him!

As the end of 1Jn teaches us: *"little children, guard yourselves from idols"*.

As the first commandment makes crystal clear, the FIRST thing God wants from us is our love.

Deu 6:4-6 *"Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! 5 "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.*

Deu 5:7 *'You shall have **no other gods** before Me.*

If you think about it...

How could we even dare to love someone **more** than our God and Creator, and Savior?!

Foolish, right? It's so horrible what we do to our God and Savior.

Thank God for His patience with us. He knows our weakness, as we've been studying.

It takes time for us all to grow as the Lord sanctifies us.

And by grace, He takes us step by step.

We go from realizing life isn't all about materialism, or about gaining things for self...

... and while we're thinking we're all spiritual...

... then He helps us realize life isn't even about all the truly good things God's given us, such as family or friends,... even brothers in the faith.

It's about HIM... loving Him.

God really wants to know if we love Him the most.... valuing Him above all other people and things in our lives.

That's what He hopes to see in our hearts one day.

God **deserves** to be **far and away** our first love.

There should be no comparisons, no idols before Him, not even our precious children which we can wrongly make into little idols...

... and not even our own lives.

"Do you love Me more than these?"

Maybe that's the right way to look at suffering and illness, and facing the possible loss of our own lives or others we love.

The Lord might say, as He sanctifies us: ***"Do you love Me even more than your own life? Do you love Me more than the life of your loved one? Are you willing to give it/them up for ME???"***

Now before we panic in our souls, let's remember God promises not to give us anything more than we can handle. **1Co 10:13**

Heck, Abraham was over 100 years old before He was given this test!!

And as difficult as it must have been, He passed the test by the grace of God, bringing tremendous glory to God before men and angels.

Abraham chose to love God more than himself or his precious son.

If you think about it, that's the LEAST we can do, as God actually DID give up His only Son for us. **Joh 3:16**

That's the perspective change God gave me.

I pray you meditate on this topic, asking God to open up your eyes and your heart.

After all, it's your heart He really wants.

May you continue in the Truth, and the Truth set you free. **Joh 8:32**