

Read: Genesis 22:1-18

A Test?!

Genesis 22:2

Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you."

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

It's a word that is dreaded by almost all students. Everyone knows it's coming eventually, but no one ever likes to hear the word come off the teacher's lips—*test*. "Whaaat??? Nooooo!" It's funny how kids act surprised, upset, or frustrated when the teacher announces a test. But no matter what class you are in and no matter how old you are, eventually there will be a test. And if the teacher is any good, there will likely be lots of tests.

That's right. You heard me correctly. Good teachers give lots of tests. Now before you end this devotion and run away angry, consider this: Good teachers want you to be better students. They want you to gain knowledge and experience. They want you to show that you can handle things. They also want you to know where you could improve a little bit. Tests help with this. So can we agree maybe tests aren't *that* bad?

In a very similar way, God tests us, his people. God doesn't do bad things to us, and God doesn't want us to sin. However, God does *allow* us to have difficult things in our lives . . . to test us. These tests help us to grow stronger in our faith and to remember how much we need God in our lives.

Today we heard about one of these tests—and it was a big one! Abraham was tested by God when he was asked to sacrifice his one and only son whom he loved, Isaac. God was testing Abraham to see if he would come up with excuses, refuse to obey, or do anything else to get out of it. But by faith and with God's strength, Abraham passed this test. He was about to sacrifice his son when God finally stopped him and provided a ram to take Isaac's place as the sacrifice.

But Abraham didn't always pass his tests. Sometimes he failed and sinned. The same is true for us. When God allows us to be tempted or tested, sometimes we fail the test and sin too. Thank God that, just like Isaac, we have a substitute who took our place. It was the one and only Son whom God loved, Jesus. Jesus is our perfect substitute who never failed a test or fell into temptation, and Jesus is also the perfect sacrifice who paid for all the times that we have failed. Because of Jesus and his forgiveness, God looks at us now like we have straight A's in his gradebook. We are now God's perfect children through Jesus!

When you have difficult things come up in life (yes, even tests in school), or when you face temptations, know that God is allowing you to be tested. But don't worry! You have God's strength, God's love, and God's forgiveness every step of the way. In Jesus, we can pass each test just like Abraham!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- How did God test Abraham?
- Why was this test so difficult for Abraham?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- What difficult things does God allow in your life to test you?
- Even though they might not be fun, what things could God be teaching you through these difficult things?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Agree or Disagree: God proves he loves us when he allows us to be tested. Explain your answer.
- Ask your parent(s) what has been the greatest test or challenge to their faith so far in life.

Closing Prayer:

Dear Lord, we thank you for allowing us to be tested by things in life. We know that you use these things to teach us, to help us grow in faith, and to help us grow closer to you. Amen.

Hymn: CW 200:1,2 – A Mighty Fortress is Our God

A mighty fortress is our God, A trusty shield and weapon;
He helps us free from ev'ry need That has us now o'ertaken.
The old evil foe Now means deadly woe;
Deep guile and great might Are his dread arms in fight;
On earth is not his equal.

With might of ours can naught be done; Soon were our loss effected.
But for us fights the valiant one Whom God himself elected.
You ask, "Who is this?" Jesus Christ it is,
The almighty Lord. And there's no other God;
He holds the field forever.