

LIFE CHANGING STORIES FROM THE BIBLE

“GIVING GOD THE BEST”

In our last lecture we looked at Abram building an altar which is a picture of fellowship with God. Then we saw Abram going down into Egypt when the going got tough, resulting in him getting out of fellowship and getting his life in a bit of a mess. Finally he makes a fresh start and goes back to the place where he lost fellowship and renewed his dedication to God.

Now we want to look at him going deeper in his dedication to God. When he started his journey with God his name was Abram, which means, “high father” then later God changed his name to Abraham which means, “Father of many nations.” This was because God had given him a promise that if he went to the land that God had told him to go to, he would become a great nation. Genesis 12:2. But you don’t become a great nation from one man if you don’t have a son and Abram had no children.

As we read his story in Genesis we see God kept giving him promises but still no son was born. Like us, he and his wife got tired of waiting for God and decided to take things into their own hands and help God out, which is always a dangerous thing to do. His wife suggested that they follow a custom of the day and that he marry her servant girl as an extra wife and have a son through her. She suggested this because she was getting old and past the normal time to have children. When we don’t work with God and in his timing we can make decisions that cause problems for generations to come. A son is born to the servant girl and many of his descendants are the Arabs today.

Finally God’s time arrives and we read, “Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him.” Genesis 21:1,2. It was through this son, Isaac, that God brought about the Nation of Israel.

Isaac was Abraham’s delight, his dearest and best. It was a joy to see his son grow, but God was about to test Abraham, he wanted Abraham to go deeper in his devotion. We read in Genesis 22:1,2. “Sometime later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!” “Here I am,” he replied. Then God said, “Take your son, Isaac, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.”

“Wait a minute God!” “Isn’t Isaac the one, a great nation is going to come from?” “How come you want Abraham to offer him up when you don’t even believe it’s right to do it?”

God was testing him, Abraham had failed the test when a famine came and he went down into Egypt. He had failed when he wasn't willing to wait God's time when God promised to give him a son who would lead to a great nation. But something had happened to Abraham, he had learned from his failures. That's something we all should do, learn from our failures.

Instead of questioning God we read how he took his son to where he was directed and built an altar. On that altar he was just about to sacrifice his son when we read, "The angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said, "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." V's 11,12.

Abraham's faith was so strong he believed God could have even raised his son from the dead to fulfil the promise that from Isaac would come a great nation, the nation of Israel which would be a great blessing to humanity because out of them would come the saviour of the world.

Notice God did not ask him to sacrifice one of his sheep or goats, that would have been easy. No God asked him to sacrifice his dearest and best. That was not easy, but God was not wanting him to do it, he was just wanting to see if he was willing to do it. It resulted in Abraham going deeper with God and receiving great blessing from God.

God often gives back to us with his blessing what we give up to him like he did with Abraham. Before I became a Christian at 18 my big ambition in life was to be an artist. But then God tested me, was I willing to give it up? I surrendered it to the Lord and discovered I could use it for God. So instead of trying to become a famous artist I used it as a servant of God and God blessed my drawings to many people. Like the 8 year old boy who saw me draw a picture of Jesus on the cross which resulted in him accepting the Lord. He later became a missionary. Like the man who decided to go into full time Christian work after seeing one of my drawings. Like the lady who gave up an addiction as she watched me draw. Like numbers of children and others who decided for Christ as they heard me speak and draw here in NZ and overseas.

Sometimes God takes away what we give up to him. But he always gives back to us something better. A young man in Scotland was very good at soccer, he was on his way to becoming a famous soccer player. He became a Christian and God tested him was he willing to give it up. He said, "Yes," to God and God took it away but gave him something better, the ability to preach and win people to Christ. In his own country and overseas he saw many come to Christ. He gave up hearing the big crowds cheer as he scored goals to even the greater cheers from angels as he won souls. For Jesus said, "There is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." Luke 15:10.



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OR
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