



HEROES FROM HEBREWS, #6

Abraham and Isaac: The Ultimate Stress
Test | Hebrews 11:17-19; Genesis 22
Tim Badal | June 24, 2018



We've been looking at the different characters in Hebrews 11, a chapter that is often called "The Hall of Faith." These are ordinary people whose faith allowed God to do extraordinary things through them. Our goal is not to enshrine these people as being different from ourselves, but rather that they would challenge us to have the kind of faith that would enable us to do bold things for God and serve Him as they did. This is possible for us as well, because we have been bought by the blood of Jesus Christ, Who is the Author and the Perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2), and because we have His Spirit living in us.

God wants to write a story of faith through us. Our faith may be feeble or immature at this point, but Jesus is able to finish the work He has started in us. And as we grow, He will give us greater and greater opportunities to use that faith for His Kingdom and His glory.

Today we're coming to the second part of our study of Abraham. You may recall that Abraham is given the longest section of Hebrews 11. In these verses we read about two different faith experiences that Abraham had. Last week we learned that he was called by God to leave his home in southern Iraq to go to what is now modern-day Israel. He went without knowing where God was calling him, but he obeyed God's command. In a similar way, God sometimes calls us to uncomfortable places or unfamiliar ministry opportunities. We, like Abraham, need to be willing to walk in faith in those places.

Today we come to what is quite frankly one of the most uncomfortable stories in the Bible. It's very hard to wrap our minds around the test that God gave Abraham. It's hard for us to comprehend how a loving and righteous God expected one of His servants to do what He asked Abraham to do.

There will be times in our lives when God may ask us to do things that confuse us, things that go against every human instinct. But we will have to let go of our prerogatives, our way of thinking, and even some of the most important things we have in order to obey Him. Abraham did this and that's why he is called a man of great faith.

The question for each of us today is do I have enough faith in God to offer back to Him all I hold dear? In other words, we need to ask ourselves what is our Isaac? Abraham was asked to sacrifice the most valued person in his life—the miracle son whom God had promised would one day be his. He waited his entire life for that son—and then God asked Abraham to give his son back to Him.

What prized possession do you have that God is requiring you, as His follower, to give back to Him as an act of worship? The thing you're holding on to could be a sinful habit, but often it's the most lovely and precious thing you have. It could be a person, or a ministry, or an opportunity. Yet anything that becomes more important to us than God is an idol. Elisabeth Elliot once said, "Christian growth is about breaking down the idols in our lives one by one. Oh, how painful this is, because by definition we love our idols. We protect them, because they give us strength, hope and meaning." We don't realize many of these things are idols to us. Abraham could have made his son Isaac an idol, but he didn't. He was willing to offer his most precious possession back to God.

Today my goal is for us to understand the kind of faith his decision took—and hopefully, by God’s grace, that we might be inspired to have that kind of faith as well. Our texts today will be Hebrews 11:17–19 and Genesis 22. After we read the verses in Hebrews, we’ll go to the story in Genesis, so we can better understand what the writer of Hebrews is talking about. First, the verses in Hebrews:

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, ¹⁸ of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” ¹⁹ He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

Genesis 22 then gives us the background story:

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I.” ² He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” ³ So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. ⁴ On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. ⁵ Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.” ⁶ And 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 they went both of them together. ⁷ And Isaac said to his father Abraham, “My father!”

By the way, this is the only conversation we have recorded in Scripture between Abraham and Isaac, two of the patriarchs of our faith.

And he said, “Here am I, my son.” He said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” ⁸ Abraham said, “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So they went both of them together.

⁹ When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I.” ¹² He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.” ¹³ And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ So Abraham called the name of that place, “The Lord will provide”; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.”

About a year ago I was going a mile a minute. There was so much happening here at church and with my work and family. I had decided we would go on a last-minute summer trip to the east coast. So we packed the car and did a marathon drive to the coast. We did all the activities, then drove 14 hours back home. Right after that, I immediately went to work preparing my sermon, plus I had a wedding to do that weekend. I knew I was running on empty. I got to the point where I’d think, “If I can just make it through one more day, I’ll be fine.” But with every breath, I knew there wasn’t enough oxygen, enough energy, to continue. Maybe you’ve been at this point as well.

But dumb me, I blew through all the warning signs. I was standing right here when it all caught up with me. I was doing Brandyn and Tori’s wedding. I knew I was tired, but I thought if I could just make it through the ceremony, I’d be fine. I wasn’t thinking about the fact I had to finish preparing a sermon and then preach it the next day. As I watched the wedding party enter the room, my body felt like it was collapsing from the outside in. I felt a cold sweat coming over me and my chest began to tighten. I thought, “Dear Lord, I think I’m having a heart attack.” But instead of raising my hand and saying, “I think I’m in cardiac arrest,” I decided to push through it.

As a result, my cadence began to pick up. I was determined to make it through the wedding, living or dead. But I was a sweaty mess. I remember Tori and Brandyn looking at me and probably thinking that a Slip ‘N Slide was falling from my head. I told myself, “Just get through the wedding. Just get through the wedding. These are wonderful kids. I need to just get through this.”

I ended up giving the final announcement as I was running off the stage. My only thought was, “I need to not be in front of these people when I collapse.” I made it to the sound booth and I fainted. Amanda came over to me, “What’s going on?” Like Redd Foxx, I told her, “I think this is the big one.” She told me I looked pale and not right, so she drove me to the emergency room. My blood pressure was awful, and I ended up spending three days in the hospital. They thought for sure I had some heart issue.

Now, I know I have a marathon runner’s body. I know heart issues would never apply to me. My diet is so well-ordered. I’m certainly not a prime candidate for cardiac arrest at 42 years of age. But eventually they figured out that it wasn’t my heart. Still, they wanted to run one more test—a stress test.

Now, stress tests can be run in two different ways. They could medically induce stress, but they said that can result in a false positive. Or they could put me on a stepping treadmill, which they preferred. They told me, "Looking at you, it shouldn't take more than four to six minutes to get your heart rate to the right place." So I got on the treadmill and heard the nurses betting on how long it would take either for my heart rate to get to 170 beats per minute or for me to die. They said four to six minutes. But 27 minutes later...

I'm thinking about writing a book called *27 Minutes in Hell*. We were in the basement of the hospital. The nurse kept increasing the incline and I was thinking I was on the stairway to heaven. Finally, after those 27 minutes, my heart rate reached the pace it needed to be. At that point, I needed another three days in the hospital just to recover. But they decided my heart was in great shape. My doctor—God bless him—told me, "You have the body of a sumo wrestler on the outside and a marathon runner's heart on the inside." That's what my skinny doctor said.

You're probably wondering how this illustration connects to anything. But think about it. The doctors intentionally put me in a place where I felt like I was going to die in order to find out how my heart would handle an adverse circumstance. They literally took me to the edge of my existence. They wanted to stretch me as far as I could go. I remember thinking, "I can't do this any longer—I've got to be close." And that was after 45 seconds.

My point is this: God does faith stress tests in our lives as well. We may be feeling vibrant and everything may be going well, then He intentionally puts us on a spiritual treadmill that keeps escalating higher and higher. It gets harder and harder, so the muscles of our faith are being stretched to points we never thought they could reach. We desperately want it to be over.

I can't tell you how often during those 27 minutes I wanted to tell them, "I have a bad heart. Let's just admit it. I'll do whatever I've got to do, but I can't do this any longer." Similarly, God wants to know how we'll respond when we're pushed to the limit. Today, as we look at Abraham's potential sacrifice of his son, it's clear he was pushed to the limit. We can ask the question, "Why would You do that, God?" I was asking the doctor that same question. I wondered if he gained some morbid pleasure in watching a large man die a slow and arduous death.

Some of us are wondering, "Why are You stretching me, God? Why are You pushing me to the limits?" This morning I want you to see three lessons about why God gives us what I would call the ultimate stress test of our faith.

God has the right to test our faith.

It is so important for us to recognize that God has every right to test our faith. In Hebrews 11 and Genesis 22 we're told that God put Abraham to a test. This wasn't the devil. It wasn't his enemy. This wasn't part of normal human trials and tribulations. It wasn't one of those "bad things that happen to good people" which no one can explain. This was God deliberately testing His child Abraham.

I want to point out that testing is very different from tempting. Satan tempts; God tests. James 1:13 tells us God never tempts anyone to do anything evil. It's completely against His character to do that. Satan uses temptations for the purpose of destroying us. God uses tests to develop our faith. As our omnipotent and omniscient Creator, He has every right not only to test us, but to do whatever He wants with us whenever He wants to do it in whatever fashion He chooses.

Moses makes it clear in Genesis that the test Abraham was facing came from the hand of God. Abraham wasn't the only person God tested in Scripture. Most of the men and women mentioned in Hebrews 11 faced very difficult situations, where they were stretched beyond what seemed to be human capacity. He did that with Moses, Joshua, some of the judges, Samuel, David and Solomon. We also know God tested Jesus' disciples. We see that most explicitly in Peter's life, as well as in some of the things the believers faced in the book of Acts. Paul writes how he was tested over and over and over again.

God tests His people. Maybe today you're in a test as well. You've experienced some loss or you're in a circumstance that you can't figure out. It could be that your enemy is trying to hurt you, or it could be that God is testing you to see how you're developing in your faith.

These tests come after the calm seasons of life.

Much has happened since Abraham arrived in Canaan. Remember, he was called to go there when he was 75 years old. His dad is now gone and he's living with his wife Sarah and his nephew Lot. He's settled in well. Genesis 22 begins with the phrase, "After

these things..." What things? We know by this point that Isaac had been born, so that means that at least 25 years have gone by, because he was born around Abraham's 100th birthday.

We don't know how old Isaac was in chapter 22. Some commentators believe he was as young as eight to ten. He had to be strong enough to carry wood. Some believe he could have been as old as 30. You would think, though, that a 30-year-old man would not let a 130-year-old man tie him up to put him on an altar. If my dad had been trying to kill me, I think I would have wrestled him. So my speculation is that Isaac was still quite young. He obviously also respected and trusted his father.

In any event, Abraham had been living in Canaan for quite a while. In Genesis 21, we read that he had signed a treaty with Abimelech regarding the rights to some wells. Some of Abimelech's servants had taken over a well that Abraham owned. Water was so important in their world for their families and livestock, so it was a big issue. Abimelech told Abraham he would take care of it, so he gave Abraham the area of land known as Beersheba.

It was after this discussion, we read in Genesis 21:33, "*Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God.*" Remember that for most of his life, Abraham had lived in tents and moved from place to place. We might say he was living the RV life. He carried everything he had from campsite to campsite. Home was wherever he was at the time. But the fact that he planted a tree leads us to believe that was going to change. When you're living the RV life, the last thing you're going to do is plant a tree at the campsite. Apparently, Abraham had found a place he wanted to call home. He was on good terms with the neighbors and even when there was an issue, it was settled peaceably. Abimelech, who was a leader, respected Abraham.

I suspect, however, that the reason Abraham left the RV life was that at last he had a son to raise. Kids need a place to call home. Maybe Abraham was thinking about hanging a tire swing from that tamarisk tree. Okay, I know they didn't have tires back then, but you know what I mean. For whatever reason, it seems Abraham was planning to stay there for a while. In other words, Abraham was living in a season of peace. Earlier in his life he had many challenges, but during these years things seemed to be going well for him. And for those of you whose lives are now in a good stretch, may I suggest that you stay alert, because this is often the season in which God chooses to test us.

In the middle of Abraham's peaceful time with his son, God says, "I've got a test for you." It's the greatest test Abraham would ever face. Quite frankly, I think it's the greatest test any father could ever face. Oh, how Abraham loved Isaac. After decades of infertility—the waiting and waiting, then giving up hope—God came to Abraham when he was 99 years old to tell him that His promise was still good. "Next year at this time, you will have a son."

Sarah laughed at the thought. "Are you kidding? I'm old and my husband is as good as dead. There's no way it could happen." But of course, we know that God was faithful to His promise and Isaac was born.

I have three sons, as you know, and I love them dearly. They bring me more joy than anything I could ever do on my own. I've been telling people, now that my boys are old enough for sports, I would far rather watch them play sports than I enjoyed doing sports myself when I was younger. There's something about watching the gifts God has given you being evident in them as well. So, as you might imagine, this is a hard sermon for this dad to preach.

Now remember, Abraham had another son, Ishmael. But this passage indicates that the relationship Abraham had with Isaac was different. God told Abraham to take his son—his "only son, the son whom you love." Can those of you who are dads of sons relate to this? Think about the horseplay, the unlimited energy they have, the fishing and camping, the sports—all the activities that young boys have, the joy they bring to our hearts.

Now God has given this joy to an old man. Abraham also knows it's his job to protect his son, this child through whom the promise was to be realized. But then God says, "I want you to take this boy, cut him up into pieces and burn him on an altar." That's what God was requiring. Oh, my!

As a 14-year-old kid, I watched my father grieve the loss of his 16-year-old son. It was beyond unbearable to watch my father bury his son. No one should ever have to do that. But this is worse. Not only would Abraham bury his son; he would have been the one who deliberately ended that boy's life. Yet that is what God had told Abraham to do.

I hope you see the absolute absurdity of this command. And let's be honest—this wasn't that uncommon in their day. Followers of false gods like Molech and Baal often required child sacrifices. People did this as the ultimate sign of allegiance to their gods. "I will give even my children to prove to you and to the world that you are most important, O god Molech, O god Baal."

We think, “Are you kidding? This is barbaric.” We live in a country where we are very concerned about children being taken from their parents. There’s the whole debate at the moment about the children of illegal immigrants being separated from their families. We’re quick to judge this practice. Yet, America, we have killed one-third of our children before they’re even born. We call it a choice. We see it as a convenience. So, let us be careful not to quickly judge Abraham. We do this every day without batting an eye. We live in a country that sacrifices its children all the time. Who are the barbaric ones now? They didn’t know better. We consider ourselves to be civilized. Our science tells us that aborting children is violent—but we keep fighting tooth and nail to keep the law that permits it. Shame on us.

These tests usually confuse us but make total sense to God.

Abraham has been asked to do the horrific. I want to tell you that when God tests us, it usually confuses us but makes total sense to God. When facing these tests, the last thing we need to say is, “Lord, why are You doing this?” We can’t understand from our human point of view.

I believe the loss of my brother was a test for my parents that was designed to grow and strengthen their faith—and it has done that wonderfully. It hurt deeply, but they have learned to follow God in a way they never could have without that trial in their lives. From a human standpoint, I’ve never had God answer my “why” question. “Why would you take a firstborn son at just 16 years of age?” It has never made any sense to me. Yet somehow it makes sense to Him. The longer we allow God to reveal His plan in our lives, the more we might understand. But I have to be honest. My brother died in 1990, and my parents still don’t fully understand the reason for it. It’s futile to keep asking for reasons. Sometimes we just have to let go and let God, accepting that it all makes sense to Him.

When I was a child, my grandmother had a lot of needlepoint pictures on her walls. One time we took them down to dust them and I remember being amazed at how the pictures had been created. When I turned them over, the threads were all tangled and frayed. There was no picture that made any sense. God is doing heavenly needlepoint and from His view point the picture is beautiful. We’re only seeing the underside with all the frayed and tangled threads. But God tells us, “One day, in My timing and not yours, I’ll show you the picture I’m creating.” We have to wait.

I want us to realize that what God asked Abraham to do went against everything that he knew about his God. He knew His God was different from all the other gods. His God loved people and made promises to them that were good. Now Abraham had been told to do something he couldn’t believe. But we see nothing about Abraham reacting negatively to God’s instruction. He’s not discouraged. He doesn’t delay. After he heard the word that the child he’d been promised—the child he had waited so long for—was to be taken to some mountain, bound and sacrificed, Abraham “*rose early in the morning*” (Genesis 22:3). Are you kidding me? No, Abraham was determined to obey quickly.

I would have procrastinated and slept in, thinking maybe I would hear a new version of the plan. But Abraham obeyed right away. How could he do that?

We’ve been part of people’s lives when hard things have happened, when tests have come to them, and we wonder how they could have weathered those storms. Well, if Christ is in us, we can weather the storms too. Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4). But how do we get there?

God readies us through proper training.

We can look at Abraham’s story as though it took place quickly. He was called from Ur of the Chaldeans to Canaan. Then a few years later, Isaac was born. Then a few years later he headed out to sacrifice his son. Nothing significant happened in between. But that’s actually not the case. God was actively involved in Abraham’s life over decades of time. We think he went from zero to a hundred in one step, but that’s not the picture Moses paints for us in Genesis. He tells us how God and Abraham had interacted over and over again, until finally Abraham reached the point of faith we read about today, where he was willing to tell God, “Whatever You require of me, I will do it.”

God’s training grows in intensity.

The first thing we see is a gradual increase in the intensity of God’s training. It started out small. All God did was ask Abraham to leave what was familiar and trust that God would lead him somewhere else. Moving isn’t really that hard—people do it all the time. Then gradually the tests got harder, until Abraham was asked to kill his own son. Even though we’re only given some cursory glances at the lessons in between these two test, we still can discern several of the lessons he learned.

First, he learned that if he tried to do something without God, it would fail. The decisions Abraham made on his own always ended in devastation. One time he went to Egypt, thinking “I don’t want anyone hitting on my beautiful wife, because they might kill me to get her.” Instead of trusting God, he came up with his own plan, claiming that she was his sister. That didn’t work too well. Then another time, Lot got in trouble and was captured by four kings. Abraham went to rescue him with 318 men from his clan. That’s not good odds: 318 men verses four whole armies. But the Bible tells us they killed them all. God was definitely in that.

Then when Lot moved into Sodom, Abraham had to rescue him from the judgment that was about to come to that city. Abraham had to negotiate. “God, if You find 50. God, if You find ten.” But God still judged that city with fire for their defiant behavior, and Lot barely escaped.

Abraham experienced a number of miracles from God, especially when his 90-year-old wife gave birth to Isaac—something a year earlier God had promised would happen. We need to realize that God never expects us to move directly from zero to one hundred. Instead, He gradually gives us greater and greater tests to strengthen our faith.

I’ve seen this in my own walk with God. I’m glad the tests I have to face as a 42-year-old weren’t things 20-year-old Tim had to deal with. My tests today are hard. I don’t mean this to speak poorly of my children, but I’m glad God doesn’t give us teenagers right off the bat. The doctor doesn’t announce, “Here’s your 16-year-old son.” As the children grow, we grow with them. We think the terrible twos are bad—but wait until the terrible 16’s.

My son isn’t here, so I can say this. Yesterday he wanted to play basketball. “Dad, can you move the car?” “Yeah, I can—give me a minute.” As I’m walking out the door, my son was moving the car. “You can’t do that!” “Well, you took too long.” Sixteen-year-old problems are way worse than two-year-old problems. That’s why young parents need to get around old parents. We’ll tell you some things.

God gives us little problems, then bigger and bigger ones. He doesn’t do this to hurt us, but to help us. And there’s grace in that. At 42, I’ve seen the grace of Almighty God get me through problem after problem after problem. Today’s big problem would have killed young Tim—but now, it’s just the next hurdle. I’ve just got to get to the next level. Abraham had seen God meet him every step of the way.

God’s training allows us to imitate our God.

The similarities in this story are striking. Tests of faith are getting harder and harder. Trusting God is the key. Sacrifice that leads to sorrow. A father giving up his son. In this amazing story, we see Abraham walk the road God walks. The main difference with God’s story is that Jesus actually went through with the sacrifice on Calvary’s cross. He didn’t provide another sacrificial lamb—Jesus was the sacrificial Lamb.

Peter tells us this about our trials and struggles in 1 Peter 4:13 (NLT): *“Be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world.”* We worship a suffering Savior. We worship a God Who gave up His one and only Son Whom He loved—and He did so for you and me.

God’s training forces us to determine what’s most important.

This is huge. I don’t want to stretch this too far, but I believe Isaac was Abraham’s life—and who could blame him? Abraham loved his son. We aren’t told, but it’s possible that Isaac had become an idol in Abraham’s life. We tend to associate idols with gold statues and such. We think of blood sacrifices and all kinds of barbaric rituals. And we think, “I’m not an idol worshiper.”

Martin Luther said the human heart is a factory of idols. No, we don’t worship gold statues—but maybe we worship our children or our spouse or our fame or our athletic prowess or our reputation. We might even worship the name plate on our desk. Maybe it’s our home or money or education or possessions. What is most important to you? What do you dedicate your time to? What gives you your highest joy? Beware. We must not allow these people or things to become idols.

God is a jealous God and He will call us to put our idols on an altar to kill them. He will ask us to prove to Him that He is our first love. Abraham had to choose what was more important to him: the son he had waited and longed for and whom he loved, or his relationship with God.

On this beautiful June day, some of us may need to have a Mt. Moriah experience. We may have to go before God and slay the very thing we love most, so that we can love Him most supremely. How do we do this?

God's recipe for passing the test involves trusting.

Abraham did everything God commanded him to do. In fact, he didn't even delay. Early in the morning he headed out. Was it hard to trust? Yeah. Think about how hard it was for three whole days, as they walked to that mountain. But he did it. You have to wonder at his faith.

For that matter, Isaac also had to have faith. Nowhere do we read that he fought against his father. I have to be honest, if my dad binds me and sets up a charcoal grill, I'm taking him out. I'll go straight for that bum hip. Are you kidding me? "Dad, where's the lamb?" "Don't worry about it. God will provide." "I want to see it. I'm not liking where this is going right now." But there is none of that in this story. That says to me that Isaac's trust in his father was amazing.

As a dad, I was thinking, "Would my son trust my relationship with God enough to trust me, even if it meant something that radically changed his life?" Would he say, "Dad, I trust you"? Some of us dads may have some work to do regarding the trust of our children. If we were to tell them, "God is calling us to something," will they say, "Yeah, Dad, I'll follow"?

Notice that the writer of Hebrews gives us a glimpse into the mind of Abraham. In Hebrews 11:19 we're told that Abraham was confident that even if he killed Isaac, God would bring him back. Abraham fully expected to kill his son, but he also believed God was powerful enough to raise him up again. Isn't it amazing that even though Abraham trusted God, he really had no idea what God was going to do?

Some of us think trusting God means God gives us the whole game plan, then after that we'll be able to trust. Sometimes we have to trust when all we know is that God is good all the time. We have to believe He has our best interests in mind, even when we have no idea how it will work out.

There are times in those waiting rooms when we don't have all the answers. "How are You going to fix this? I know You'll take care of it. I know even if I'm harmed, good will come from it." Abraham had no idea what God would do, but he knew God was good.

Trusting means being willing to grow.

Nobody likes to be tested or pushed to our limits. But we must learn to see suffering and trials as something valuable and good.

My greatest times of growth as a child of God have not been on mountaintop times of celebration, but in the valleys of the shadow of death. It is there that I meet God. It is there that I see Him so evident in my life. We must be willing to grow in our faith. Do not push away God's tests.

Trusting means seeing the grand plan.

Second, we must look for God's grand plan. God had given promises to Abraham and his posterity. Even though in that moment it didn't make sense, Abraham took the long view. He said, "God, You have a plan and somehow You're going to work this out." Even though our answers may not come in our 75, 80 or even 90 years of life—even though our lives may only be full of questions—God wants us to know He has a plan. As I reminded you last week, "*No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him*" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Trusting means walking boldly with our God.

We have to be willing to grow, we have to be willing to see God's grand plan, then we also have to walk boldly with our God. We must ask Him to show us His power, day in and day out. That way, when He asks us to do hard things, by faith we're equal to the task. We can trust and follow Him.

This episode in Abraham's life reminds me of a song we used to sing in Sunday School and it's a good word for us to close with. "Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey." Let that be our motto this week as we walk in faith and obedience to God.